Despite incredible scientific progress year in and year out, 600,000 Americans and eight million people worldwide still die from cancer each year. This is the statistic that caught the attention of Steve and Joan Clark during the announcement of The Dana-Farber Campaign in May 2021 and inspired their $4 million gift to establish the first two High Pointe Investigatorships in Gastrointestinal Oncology at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.

“This is 2022 and the statistics related to cancer deaths continue to be alarming,” said Steve Clark. “After all these years and the remarkable scientific advancements, these are staggering statistics, and they cannot be ignored. It is always a matter of following the numbers and, although these numbers are incredibly discouraging, it demonstrates the dire need to continue to ramp up our attack on this disease.”

The gift from the Clarks will support mid-career investigators within the Center for Gastrointestinal Oncology, in perpetuity. The center is an international leader in the development of novel treatments for patients with gastrointestinal cancers, including cancers of the esophagus, stomach, pancreas, bile duct, gallbladder, liver, colon, and rectum. The researchers who earn High Pointe Investigatorships will have an opportunity to expand the incredible research already taking place at Dana-Farber. Currently, patients have access to 1,100 clinical trials, which represent a substantial, potential opportunity for new therapeutics, new treatments, and possibly new cures. As the knowledge base increases, the researchers at Dana-Farber will also continue to make strides in prevention and early cancer detection.

“I am extremely honored that Steve and Joan Clark continue to support the Center for Gastrointestinal Oncology,” said Brian Wolpin, MD, MPH, chief of the Division of Gastrointestinal Oncology and the Robert T. and Judith B. Hale Chair in Pancreatic Cancer at Dana-Farber. “The Clarks’ son was diagnosed with gastrointestinal cancer several years ago. This personal experience, as well as the distressing statistics related to gastrointestinal cancer mortality rates, has inspired the family’s giving to Dana-Farber. “We are incredibly blessed to be able to further this cause in this meaningful way,” said Steve Clark. “We encourage others to consider participating within their own respective means. If this community of supporters comes together, some miraculous achievements may be accomplished. The needs are huge, and we must attempt to meet this challenge.”

“We encourage others to consider participating within their own respective means. If this community of supporters comes together, some miraculous achievements may be accomplished.”

— STEVE CLARK
Dear Friends,

This year marks the 75th anniversary of Dana-Farber Cancer Institute—that is 75 years of breakthroughs and innovations that have shaped the landscape of cancer science and medicine in this country and around the world. From the beginning, philanthropy has played an integral role in Dana-Farber’s story. The incredible depth and breadth of our donor community today stands on the shoulders of early visionary philanthropists, including members of the Variety Club of New England who launched the Jimmy Fund, and many others who have been with the Institute since its earliest days. Our historic partnership with the Boston Red Sox remains the oldest and longest standing relationship in all of professional sports. And Institute leaders like President Emeritus David G. Nathan, MD, who has been witness to the evolution of Dana-Farber and has seen the Institute flourish over decades, continue to set a philanthropic example for others.

Dana-Farber’s story is one of resilience in the face of great challenges, of community coming together to change how we treat cancer. Seventy-five years later we are honored to have the third and fourth generations of families continuing to support the Institute, providing philanthropy that has led to innovative discoveries and lifesaving drugs that have improved the standard of care for patients everywhere.

A milestone anniversary such as this provides an opportunity to reflect on where we started, consider how far we’ve come, and feel inspired by how much more we can accomplish through The Dana-Farber Campaign and beyond. This progress and vision for the future is represented on every page of this issue where we started, consider how far we’ve come, and feel inspired by how much more we can accomplish through The Dana-Farber Campaign and beyond. This progress and vision for the future is represented on every page of this issue.

To learn more, visit DefyCancer.org

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**THE DANA-FARBER CAMPAIGN: UPDATE**

Dana-Farber is pursuing an ambitious, multi-year fundraising effort to change the future of cancer research and care: The Dana-Farber Campaign. This $2 billion campaign is the largest in the Institute’s history and one of the largest ever in the U.S. focused solely on cancer. Our community of support is crucial to this effort. Philanthropy through The Dana-Farber Campaign is accelerating the Institute’s strategic priorities by supporting revolutionary science, extraordinary care, exceptional expertise, and essential opportunities—helping us prevent, treat, and Defy Cancer.

Cancer prevention and early detection are critical priorities of The Dana-Farber Campaign. While we have made significant progress in this field, we have only begun to scratch the surface of what is possible. Gifts to launch new initiatives and advance research in this area provide powerful momentum and accelerate our efforts to detect cancers earlier, identify mutations associated with an increased risk of cancer, and develop interventions that prevent progression to advanced disease. Our goal is a total paradigm shift: from saving lives by treating cancer to saving lives by finding and stopping cancer at its earliest stages—and ultimately preventing cancer altogether.

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**Connolly-Long Fund advances The Dana-Farber Campaign**

While Steven Connolly and his husband, James Long, are both cancer survivors who were successfully treated at Dana-Farber in 2018, the couple’s connection to Dana-Farber goes beyond their diagnoses. For almost two decades, Steve Connolly, who retired in 2018, played an integral role in Dana-Farber’s Finance Department as senior director of financial operations and, as he states, has “seen firsthand over the years the amazing and lifesaving work that all the caregivers and scientists at Dana-Farber perform daily.”

Acutely aware of the direct impact that every donor makes with their donations, Jim and Steve decided to make a generous gift of $100,000 to establish the Connolly-Long Fund, which will support the Presidential Initiatives Fund, a strategic priority of The Dana-Farber Campaign. Overseen by President and CEO Laurie H. Glimcher, MD—a world-renowned immunologist and physician, and the Richard and Susan Smith Professor of Medicine—the Presidential Initiatives Fund helps finance key breakthroughs at Dana-Farber by allowing Glimcher to strategically deploy funds that bolster promising opportunities and meet unexpected needs.

“As a former finance person, I am aware that funding for research is not uniform across all kinds of research,” says Steve. “We particularly like the Presidential Initiatives Fund because it allows Dana-Farber leadership to direct these dollars to where they are needed most.”

Gifts like Jim and Steve’s help to provide timely support for promising, high-risk, high-reward studies that lead to breakthroughs, empowering Dana-Farber researchers to quickly bring new clinical trials, technologies, and programs to the patients and families who need them.

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**David and Jean Nathan make generous campaign gift**

Jean and David Nathan, MD, have long been at the heart of Dana-Farber’s inspiring story, and they continue to play a key part through their visionary philanthropy.

Recently, the Nathans made substantial current and irrevocable testamentary gifts to provide unrestricted funding and support the Presidential Initiatives Fund. This combined investment advances The Dana-Farber Campaign and underscores the Nathans’ integral role in Dana-Farber’s past, present, and future by building on their longstanding support and fortifying the Institute with flexible resources to drive its life-changing work, now and for years to come.

As founding members of the Dana-Farber Society—a dedicated community of individuals who make a planned gift to the Institute—Jean and David Nathans are acutely aware of the impact of their forward-thinking philanthropy. And as Dana-Farber President Emeritus and a Trustee, David knows well the importance of discretionary funds in allowing Laurie H. Glimcher, MD, president and CEO of the Institute and Richard and Susan Smith Professor of Medicine, to agilely pursue the most promising opportunities for progress. He said: “We are delighted to support Laurie and the campaign, and honored to help Dana-Farber do whatever it takes to defy cancer.”

Glimcher expressed her appreciation for David’s leadership in helping to advance the campaign, and for the personal gift from him and Jean. “I am profoundly grateful to David and Jean, who heard the call to action and, as always, responded in a most thoughtful and generous way,” said Glimcher.

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Melany N. Duval
Senior Vice President and Chief Philanthropy Officer
Firsts’ gift is changing the future of early detection

Institute Trustees and longtime supporters Debbie and Bob First are focused on a singular goal: early detection of cancer to provide more opportunities for cures. Their latest gift of $1 million continues to propel Dana-Farber toward that objective and supports The Dana-Farber Campaign through investments in revolutionary science and essential opportunities.

Debbie and Bob’s cancer journey, and their passionate commitment to early detection, began in 1977 when Debbie was diagnosed with ovarian cancer as a young professional and working parent. At the time conventional wisdom was that the disease would be fatal. Through a very dear friend, Bob received a call from the late David Livingston, MD, at Dana-Farber who became Debbie’s oncologist. From that point forward, very little about Debbie’s experience would be conventional. Livingston started Debbie on a non-traditional protocol—there was no standard treatment at the time for her illness—and his optimism and kind nature were the perfect complement to Debbie’s positive mindset. “David gave me the confidence to know my life was going to be OK,” said Debbie. “I’m here today because of him.”

Then, in 1985, Livingston called Bob to tell him that something very nice was about to happen to him—an invitation to join Dana-Farber’s Board of Trustees. Debbie would join Bob as a Trustee in 2009, and she is also a member of the Executive Council of the Susan F. Smith Center for Women’s Cancers at Dana-Farber.

The Firsts have been Dana-Farber donors for more than three decades. “It is a privilege to give back to an organization that is wide open to new ideas and a fresh look,” said Bob. The Firsts know personally how important early detection is to successful outcomes. Bob is a prostate cancer survivor and was also treated at Dana-Farber. Their recent gift supports ovarian cancer early detection, prostate cancer early detection, and the Institute’s top priorities via the Presidential Initiatives Fund.

“Thanks to Bob and Debbie’s tenacity and vision all these years, what was once a dream—a reliable diagnostic blood test—is closer than ever,” said Dipanjan Chowdhury, PhD, who is the lead investigator in the development of the first-ever blood serum microRNA detection tool for ovarian cancer. “Their stalwart support has been instrumental to our progress and I am deeply grateful for their partnership.” For this portion of their gift, the Firsts are equally supporting Chowdhury and Kevin Elias, MD, of Brigham and Women’s Hospital, who are collaborating on this work.

“So many of our highest ideals at Dana-Farber, like the value of collaboration and the importance of investing in early career scientists, evolved over the years because of committed individuals like Debbie and Bob who believed in us and challenged us to think in new ways,” said Laurie H. Glomcher, MD, president and CEO of Dana-Farber and the Richard and Susan Smith Professor of Medicine.

“It has been exciting to be engaged with an organization like Dana-Farber that isn’t satisfied with the status quo,” said Debbie.

The JPB Foundation expands research into biomedical benefits of exercise

The JPB Foundation has awarded a generous grant to Dana-Farber’s Bruce Spiegelman, PhD, director of the Center for Energy Metabolism and Chronic Disease and the Stanley J. Korsmeyer Professor of Cell Biology and Medicine, to advance his groundbreaking research into the biomedical benefits of exercise. By studying the molecular mediators of exercise, Spiegelman’s lab aims to determine how and why physical activity benefits the body and how it can be harnessed to prevent and treat diabetes, obesity, and other obesity-linked diseases and disorders, including those that lead to cancer.

“Diabetes and obesity combined have surpassed tobacco use as the largest preventable risk factors in human malignancy in the United States, and how and why these metabolic disorders lead to cancer is a major concern,” says Spiegelman. “If we are able to identify and study the molecules that are regulated in exercise that affect the metabolism of the whole body, we may be able to bring benefit to people that goes beyond physical activity itself.”

With previous support from The JPB Foundation, Spiegelman’s lab has made major strides in understanding the pathways of energy expenditure, or the amount of energy an individual uses to maintain essential body functions. Studying these pathways at a molecular level, Spiegelman’s team is learning the role they play in slowing or preventing the development of cancer and other diseases. Notably, Spiegelman’s research led to the discovery of irisin, a hormone secreted from muscles in response to physical activity that is a key link to exercise’s beneficial effects on health, including burning fat, strengthening bones, and protecting against neurodegenerative diseases.

The JPB Foundation’s latest grant will enable Spiegelman to search for other exercise-induced molecules that prevent or treat diseases and examine whether the benefits of exercise can be artificially produced. If so, drugs designed to mimic the benefits of exercise could serve as the basis of new treatments for a range of diseases, including cancer, diabetes, and other metabolic diseases.

Established in 2011 with an endowment from Jeffy Picower and led by Barbara Picower, The JPB Foundation strives to advance opportunity through transformational initiatives, including pioneering medical research. The foundation’s Medical Research program funds important research conducted through consortiums of scientists investigating targeted diseases, including diabetes and Parkinson’s disease, both of which fall within Spiegelman’s scope of research.

“Thanks to The JPB Foundation’s investment in our research, there is a growing recognition that exercise may hold a key to a new class of therapeutics for many diseases,” Spiegelman says. “We are grateful for the foundation’s support as we continue to unlock the tremendous potential of exercise to improve outcomes for patients with cancer and countless other diseases.”

10% of all designated gifts support our Faculty Research Fund to advance Dana-Farber’s research mission
Amos Program seeks to improve equity in faculty development

The Harold Amos Medical Faculty Development Program (AMFDP) seeks to improve equity in faculty development by generously providing financial and professional opportunities to underrepresented scholars. The goal of the program is to identify combinations of targeted therapies that promote adaptive resistance to therapy.

Tamryn Gray, PhD, RN, MPH, will examine the implementation and impact of the AARP-initiated Caregiver Advise, Record, Enable (CARE) Act, which went into effect in Massachusetts in November 2017. The CARE Act is intended to provide family caregivers with more support as they are increasingly expected to perform complex medical tasks after their loved ones are discharged from the hospital setting. Gray’s findings will help better identify the discharge needs of family members who will provide care at home, as well as understand the system-level factors to improve both patient and caregiver outcomes, including reducing unnecessary readmission rates and increasing uptake of supportive care services, such as palliative care following hospital discharge.

Lachelle Weeks, MD, PhD, who will pursue research on blood cancer precursor conditions, is funded by a partnership between the American Society of Hematology and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Her work is focused on developing predictive indicators of progression in the preleukemic condition, CHIP (clonal hematopoiesis of indeterminate potential)—defining expansion of hematopoietic stem cells with mutations in leukemia-associated genes. Week’s work will define risk categories for transformation from CHIP to acute leukemia and will lay the foundation for prospective studies examining the value of screening and early intervention trials in blood cancers.

“We were delighted to welcome Drs. McFaline-Figueroa, Gray, and Weeks to the Amos Program,” says Nina Ardery, deputy director of the AMFDP. “It is unusual for us to fund two Scholars from the same institution in the same cohort, let alone three. Although all of their projects are related to cancer, they are very diverse and will enrich the experience of all of the Scholars in the program.”

Support for SHE Center expands valuable resources overseas

Under the direction of Navid Madani, PhD, Dana-Farber’s Science Health Education (SHE) Center works to empower the health care community in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) to establish best practices in public health and medicine, creating a partnership between MENA health care professionals and the Dana-Farber community. The SHE Center is fueled by generous philanthropists like Faramarz Yousefzadeh, who has given $200,000 over the last two years.

Yousefzadeh first became involved in the cancer research community when his wife, Afshan, passed away from glioblastoma in 2016. Driven to propel cancer research forward, Yousefzadeh dedicated himself to transforming glioblastoma research and the clinical trial landscape through involvement with healthcare nonprofits. He met Madani in 2019 at an event, where he was inspired by her work in education and engagement of women in the sciences in the MENA region, where they are both from.

“The SHE Center is providing invaluable healthcare training and resources to Middle Eastern communities that they would not have access to otherwise,” said Yousefzadeh. “I admire the work Navid is spearheading and I encourage others to get involved as well.”

“Faramarz has been extremely instrumental in the launch of the SHE Center,” said Madani. “Not only was he our first donor, but his gifts brought in crucial internships and workshops that are furthering the center’s vision. I am very grateful for his continued support.”

Anonymous gift aims to help reduce cancer care disparities

In April 2021, Dana-Farber supporters gathered virtually for a Behind the Breakthroughs discussion on the Institute’s efforts to promote equity in clinical care and inclusive representation in clinical trials. A presentation by Nadine McClary, MD, MPH, on the SURGE project—Supporting UnderRepresented minorities in Genomics-based cancer trial Enrollment—inspired one attendee to pledge an anonymous gift of $100,000 to support this important work.

“Clinical trials are a critical step in scientific discovery, as outcomes from clinical trials inform treatment protocols and algorithms developed for care,” said McClary. “Because of this, it is imperative that patients from all backgrounds have access to clinical trials, as exclusion of certain populations means doctors don’t have information that may be crucial to developing lifesaving approaches that work for everyone.”

Led by McClary in collaboration with Christopher Lathan, MD, MS, MPH, chief clinical access and equity officer, director of the Cancer Care Equity Program, and the Hadley Family Chair at Dana-Farber, the SURGE project is designed to address the gaps in clinical trial enrollment by identifying methods to ensure historically underrepresented patient populations—specifically Black, Latinx, patients over 70 years of age, or patients from low socioeconomic zip codes—have informed opportunities to participate in the latest clinical trials, thereby increasing their access to novel therapies.

“I am really impressed with Dr. McClary and Dana-Farber’s commitment to reducing disparities in cancer care,” said the donor. “I know that if Dana-Farber makes a commitment to doing this work, they will do it in a deep and meaningful way that will make a lasting difference.”
Wong Family Awards endow next generation of translational oncologists

A gift of $1 million from Institute Trustee Winnie W. Wong, PhD, and Arthur Cheng, ScD, will go towards advancing the careers of early career investigators through the Wong Family Awards in Translational Oncology. The couple first established the Wong Family Awards in 2011, and with this most recent gift, they have given a total of $5.5 million on behalf of their family to endow these awards at Dana-Farber.

As one of three cancer survivors in her family, Wong said that a top priority for her and her husband was fulfilling unmet needs for cancers that don’t yet have cures. “I insisted on these awards being for translational research—I think something that has clinical needs in mind, and an understanding of the disease mechanisms, gets us closer to discovery of new medicines,” said Wong. “That’s very important, because basic science is in one camp, and clinical research is in another camp, and there has to be a way to bridge those two.”

They also see these awards as a crucial way to invest in the next generation of oncology researchers. With her background in pharmaceutical research as well as immunology, Wong understands firsthand the obstacles that come with traditional government funding for research. “I view this as an opportunity to try out new ideas and give the young researchers a chance to think outside the box,” she said.

The awards are given on a yearly basis and include project salary support to encourage young investigators to pursue innovative projects in clinical and/or translational oncology, biotechnology development, precision medicine, or immunotherapy approaches. They are overseen by the Institute’s Chief Clinical Research Officer Jeffrey Meyerhardt, MD, MPH, FASCO, in consultation with Chief Scientific Officer Kevin Haigis, PhD.

“It is so important that we encourage our early career investigators to pursue novel ideas, and the Wong Family Awards provide a pathway to do just that,” said Meyerhardt, who is also the Douglas Gray Woodruff Chair in Colorectal Cancer Research at Dana-Farber. “It’s a very competitive process every year, and our recipients are excited to share their findings and progress with Winnie and Arthur and thank them for supporting their innovative ideas.”

“Over the past 10 years, the Wong Family Awards have helped jumpstart the careers of many investigators, who have gone on to make their mark in the field of cancer research,” said Haigis. “Winnie and Arthur’s visionary investment is helping transform the future of cancer research and care, while also training the next generation of oncologists to drive that future.”

Wong looks forward to meeting with the new recipients every year and hearing about the projects they are working on—she always learns something new about technical advances happening in the field and where the new frontiers of research are. Above all, she encourages the investigators to continue being creative and taking risks. “New ideas deserve a chance,” said Wong. “They don’t always succeed but they deserve a chance to get tested.”

Life Sciences Research Foundation provides boost to basic science research

Since 1983, the Life Sciences Research Foundation (LSRF) has provided valuable funding to support postdoctoral fellows focused on basic science research—the early discovery science that is an important first step for future clinical breakthroughs that have a real impact on patients around the world.

“LSRF believes support at this career stage is critical,” said Donald Brown, president and founder of the organization. “Our award recognizes and encourages the creativity and passion for discovery necessary for innovative basic research.”

Supported by a $201,000 Open Philanthropy grant from LSRF, Dana-Farber’s Alex Johnson, PhD, is pursuing research on the schlafens, an ancient protein family that plays important roles in human innate immunity—our bodies’ first line of defense against pathogens and cancer. Johnson is conducting basic scientific research to uncover the molecular mechanism of schlafen proteins, and how this mechanism might be harnessed to fight cancer.

“It is well established that schlafen proteins restrict viral infection and cancer cell growth, but very little is known about how they work,” said Johnson. “With this generous grant from LSRF, I aim to determine how schlafens contribute to the immune response, and how cancer cells and viruses resist their activity. This research will answer important questions that could lead to new therapeutic options for patients.”

Doctor’s compassionate care inspires Lane Family to give back

Throughout a career spanning nearly 40 years, Jeffrey Wisch, MD, dedicated himself to compassionately caring for patients. When he retired in 2021, dozens of patients and families came forward to express their gratitude, including the Lane Family.

Robert and Linda Lane first met Wisch in the early 1990s when he treated their son, Jeffrey, for Hodgkin lymphoma and subsequent glioblastoma. Years later, in 2016, Linda’s own leukemia diagnosis once again led the family to Wisch. In both cases, once treatment was no longer effective, Wisch stepped in to provide indispensable guidance for end-of-life care.

“Dr. Wisch has an interest in the real care of his patients, beyond just treatment,” says Robert. “That’s what makes him so unique.”

In gratitude, the Lane Family—Robert, his daughters, Rebecca Lane Block and Kimberly Harrison, his daughter-in-law, Ann Lane, and their families—made a generous contribution to the Jeffrey Wisch, MD, Clinical Investigator Endowment, which supports clinicians in Dana-Farber’s Center for Gastrointestinal Oncology who embody Wisch’s commitment to patient-centered cancer care.

“Building connections with families like the Lanes, as opposed to just treating a patient with a disease, was very important to my practice as an oncologist,” says Wisch. “I’m humbled and grateful that their generous gift will carry forward compassionate care and impactful research for families like theirs for years to come.”

“We’re very appreciative of Dr. Wisch and this gift is a way to express that,” says Robert. “I hope others who have similar experiences at Dana-Farber will be encouraged to do the same.”

“Our award recognizes and encourages the creativity and passion for discovery necessary for innovative basic research.”

— DONALD BROWN, president and founder, LSRF
Driscolls give $1 million to spur advances in immunotherapy for ovarian cancer

Elena Driscoll was always healthy. So in late 2019, when she began experiencing symptoms like bloating and fatigue, her doctors insisted it was symptoms of menopause. As the symptoms worsened, Elena sensed something more was going on, and in early 2020, she was diagnosed with stage III ovarian cancer.

Elena’s story is a familiar one for many women diagnosed with ovarian cancer. The disease is often difficult to diagnose in its earliest stages because symptoms can be vague or similar to those of common conditions, like menopause.

“I think it’s important for us to advocate for ourselves, to know our bodies, and know when we feel something is not right,” said Elena. “I want to share my story to help people be more aware, and to advance the pursuit of treatments that can improve outcomes for patients facing this disease.”

That drive to make a difference inspired Elena and her husband, Tom, to give $1 million in support of ovarian cancer research under the direction of Elena’s doctor, Ursula Matulonis, MD, chief of the Division of Gynecologic Oncology and the Brock-Wilson Family Chair at Dana-Farber. The funds will support research into natural killer (NK) cellular therapies for ovarian cancer, a promising new avenue of immunotherapy being pursued by Dana-Farber’s Rieswan Romee, MD.

“From what we’ve learned, NK cellular therapy seems to be a very promising treatment option,” said Tom Driscoll. “We wanted to provide funding that jumpstarts novel and promising areas of ovarian cancer research—areas that may be underfunded. We feel that Romee’s work is clearly something that will advance the field and improve outcomes.”

NK cells demolish diseased cells and can eliminate cancer circulating in the body—but they are short-lived and often do not “remember” or recognize cancer cells to strike again. In 2012, Romee and his colleagues were the first to generate an immune response in human NK cells by employing lab-modified cytokine induced memory-like (CIML) NK cells, which are enhanced to gain memory function, proliferate inside the body, and persist longer than standard NK cells.

“This type of therapy has already shown promise in other forms of cancer,” said Romee, who serves as director of the Haploidentical Donor Transplantation Program at Dana-Farber. “Now, thanks in part to funding from the Driscolls, my team is working closely with Dr. Matulonis to test this therapy for use against recurrent high-grade ovarian cancer.”

“I am so grateful to the Driscolls for supporting this important project, which will have a significant and lasting impact on patients facing ovarian cancer,” said Matulonis. “Their incredibly generous gift enables us to continue improving the quality, breadth, and durability of urgently needed treatment options for this cancer.”

Longtime donors seek to address needs for endometrial cancer research

Building on the momentum of previous investments in Dana-Farber, anonymous donors recently made a gift of $500,000 to support the work of Ursula Matulonis, MD, chief of the Division of Gynecologic Oncology and the Brock-Wilson Family Chair at Dana-Farber.

The gift will support Matulonis and her team as they expand their research to better understand the biology of endometrial cancer, develop better treatments and new methods to overcome drug resistance, and detect endometrial cancer in its earliest stages—all of which are key priorities of the Institute and The Dana-Farber Campaign.

“Endometrial cancer is the most frequently diagnosed gynecologic cancer in the United States with nearly 65,000 cases diagnosed per year; the number of new cases is rising but unfortunately, survival is worsening,” said Matulonis. “More effective and durable treatments are urgently needed for this cancer. This steady, generous funding over the years has played an important role in our ability to speed discoveries from the laboratory to the clinic.”

Executive Council of Susan F. Smith Center for Women’s Cancers raises valuable resources for Innovation Fund

Since 2002, the Executive Council of the Susan F. Smith Center for Women’s Cancers at Dana-Farber has sought to change the trajectory of women’s cancers through education, advocacy, and fundraising. In 2021, the Executive Council raised an unprecedented $325,000. The money will support the Smith Center Innovation Fund, which provides grant awards to physician-scientists to fuel early stage research not funded by the National Institutes of Health or other government agencies.

“The funding that is spearheaded by the Executive Council helps to fund investigator-initiated trials that we do not necessarily have funding for, but we think are good ideas,” said Ursula Matulonis, chief of the Division of Gynecologic Oncology and the Brock-Wilson Family Chair at Dana-Farber. “This funding helps those ideas become recognized into clinical trials.”

The Executive Council, which historically has held an event in conjunction with their fundraising efforts, relied on a peer-to-peer campaign for the first time this year. “Everyone has a reason to support women’s cancers research,” said Meredith Beaton Starr, chair of the Executive Council. “Whether it is someone they know who is in treatment, someone who is a survivor, or someone they have lost.”

“Everyone has a reason to support women’s cancers research.” — MEREDITH BEATON STARR, chair of the Susan F. Smith Center Executive Council

The donors have been avid, longtime supporters of Matulonis’ research for many years, and credit her keen eye for investment opportunities as a motivator for renewing their funding.

“Ursula was incredibly inspiring from the moment we met her, and we knew that by supporting her work, our investment would be going to an area where we could be highly effective,” said the donors. “We’ve seen major advances in our lifetime, and we’re grateful to be a part of those advances in this way.”

—  MEREDITH BEATON STARR, chair of the Susan F. Smith Center Executive Council
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n 2021, the Breast Cancer Research Foundation (BCRF) awarded $2,285,000 in grants to 18 Dana-Farber researchers working to advance breakthroughs in breast cancer treatment, prevention, and survivorship.

Among the awardees was David Livingston, MD, one of the foremost experts on the molecular origins of breast and ovarian cancer. The entire scientific community was devastated by the news of his passing in October 2021. A luminary in the field and a longtime beneficiary of BCRF’s support, Livingston’s work in defining the tumor suppressor properties of BRCA1 and BRCA2 paved the way for studying novel approaches to breast and ovarian cancer prevention.

With funding from BCRF, Dana-Farber investigators will continue to pursue Livingston’s efforts in uncovering the molecular events that contribute to BRCA1 mutant breast cancer. BCRF’s steadfast commitment to advancing Livingston’s research will have a profound, long-term impact on the entire field of translational breast cancer research.

Also among BCRF’s grantees is one of the many scientists Livingston mentored—2019 Nobel Laureate William G. Kaelin Jr., MD, the Sidney Farber, MD, Professor of Medicine. “David taught me how to tackle important scientific questions,” said Kaelin. “BCRF is supporting such critical research at Dana-Farber that does exactly that—attempts to solve some of the most challenging problems in breast cancer today. I am grateful to BCRF for its continued support of my lab as we seek to identify novel drugs to combat breast cancer growth.”

The other awardees include Monica Bertagnolli, MD; Myles Brown, MD, director of the Center for Functional Cancer Epigenetics and the Emil Frei III, MD, Professor of Medicine; Alan D’Andrea, MD, director of the Susan F. Smith Center for Women’s Cancers and director of the Center for DNA Damage and Repair; Temidayo Fadulu, MD, MPH (co-funded by Conquer Cancer); the ASCO Foundation); Judy Garber, MD, MPH, chief of the Division for Cancer Genetics and Prevention, co-director of the Center for BRCA and Related Genes, and the Susan F. Smith Chair at Dana-Farber; Sheheryar Kabraji, MD (in partnership with the American Association for Cancer Research); Panagiotis Konstantinopoulos, MD, co-director of the Center for BRCA and Related Genes; Ian Kroop, MD, PhD; Nancy Lin, MD, associate chief of the Division of Breast Oncology, director of the Metastatic Breast Cancer Program, and director of the Program for Patients with Breast Cancer Brain Metastases; Shirley Liu, PhD, director of the Center for Functional Cancer Epigenetics; Ursula Matulonis, MD, chief of the Division of Gynecologic Oncology and the Brock-Wilson Family Chair at Dana-Farber; Ann Partridge, MD, MPH, founder and director of the Program for Young Adults with Breast Cancer and director of the Adult Survivorship Program; Kornelia Polyak, MD, PhD; Nikhil Wagle, MD, Adrienne Waks, MD (co-funded by Conquer Cancer), the ASCO Foundation); and Jean Zhao, PhD. “Dana-Farber’s world-class researchers are vital to fulfilling our mission to end breast cancer as we know it,” said BCRF Chief Scientific Officer Dorrarya El-Ashry, PhD. “As the world’s preeminent engine for funding breast cancer research, we are proud to support the brightest minds in science.”

The Breast Cancer Research Foundation has a long history of supporting Dana-Farber researchers, such as the late David Livingston, MD (left), and Nobel Laureate William G. Kaelin Jr., MD.

EMBO advances critical insights into triple-negative breast cancer

Seahawer and his team have identified two genes that could play an important role in TNBC metastasis—the epigenetic regulators KMT2C and KMT2D. Utilizing CRISPR technology, he will more efficiently analyze how these genes function in TNBC.

“Known as epigenetic dysregulation can alter cells and lead to therapy resistance and induction of metastases,” said Seahawer. “This suggests that KMT2C and KMT2D might be a target for novel therapies against TNBC. I am grateful to EMBO for enabling me to explore this exciting avenue further.”

“EMBO recognizes the importance of international mobility. Up to 30% of its postdoctoral fellows work outside Europe, and we welcome applications for a fellowship in Europe from scientists of all nationalities,” said Kelly Sheehan-Rooney, head of the EMBO Fellowship Programme.

Basile Family Memorial Golf Tournament hits the links to reach $1 million

Since 1989 the Basile Family Memorial Golf Tournament has raised money through Jimmy Fund Golf to help fund the treatment, cure, and prevention of cancer at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. After being unable to host an in-person tournament in 2020, family, friends, and business associates banded together in 2021 with the common goal of reaching $1 million in lifetime fundraising. On a picture-perfect September day, more than 150 supporters gathered at the 31st annual Basile Family Memorial Golf Tournament and raised more than $150,000, the largest amount in the tournament’s history.

“We started this tournament more than 30 years ago in tribute to our beloved family member, Joseph D. Basile, who passed away from leukemia,” said Joseph Basile, Catania Oils. “We are proud to be part of the amazing advances in cancer care and research at Dana-Farber that have benefitted patients in Boston and beyond.”

Above, the Basile Family presents the contribution from their company, Catania Oils, to their 2021 tournament’s record-breaking total.
Grant awards from the Osteosarcoma Institute advance research in treatment resistance

**Focused on an overarching mission to improve outcomes for patients with osteosarcoma, the Osteosarcoma Institute (OSI) collaborates with researchers seeking to improve our understanding of this malignant bone cancer and develop successful treatments for the disease. The work of Brian Crompton, MD, research co-director of the Solid Tumor Center at Dana-Farber, aligns with this goal. To that end, the OSI recently awarded him two grants totaling $509,973. The majority of the funding will go to a study and characterization of circulating tumor cells in the blood of osteosarcoma patients being treated in two independent clinical trials. The research funded by the OSI is part of an effort to investigate why some tumors develop resistance to treatment in patients with osteosarcoma, the most common bone tumor among children, adolescents, and young adults. There has been no significant improvement in outcomes for patients with the disease in the past 30 years.

"Ultimately, the success of these studies could lead to both better selection of patients for future clinical trials, as well as earlier identification of the need to alter therapy and understand the mechanisms of resistance to treatment," said Lee Helman, MD, director of the OSI.

Crompton and his team will take advantage of two early phase clinical trials in osteosarcoma in which serial blood samples will be collected for liquid biopsy studies. These studies will demonstrate the feasibility of using these methodologies to understand the responses of osteosarcoma to new therapies. This research supports a non-invasive approach to studying changes in DNA mutations, transcription, and protein expression in order to identify the most effective, durable treatment options for patients.

"My ultimate hope for these studies is to identify recurrent patterns of treatment resistance so that we may prevent the emergence of this resistance and improve outcomes for patients," Crompton said. "Identifying the most effective approaches to treating osteosarcoma is paramount and I am grateful to be partnering with the OSI in this critical research."
Foundation surpasses $1.5 million in funding for critical DIPG research

The ChadTough Defeat DIPG Foundation recently awarded Dana-Farber’s Mimi Bandopadhayay, MBBS, PhD, a $300,000 Research Grant to support her work investigating diffuse intrinsic pontine gliomas (DIPGs), an aggressive and difficult-to-treat type of brainstem tumor diagnosed in children and adolescents. ChadTough Defeat DIPG Foundation’s total funding for DIPG research at Dana-Farber is now over $1.5 million.

With the foundation’s support, Bandopadhayay is researching how specific gene mutations known to promote DIPG formation and growth interact with the oncogene MYC in this process. “MYC is a well-known oncogene in other cancers, and our data indicates that activation of the MYC signaling pathway likely plays an important role in DIPG formation by cooperating with H3 K27M mutations,” said Bandopadhayay. “By studying this process, we aim to identify key interactions and targets that can be leveraged to develop new therapeutic strategies.”

The ChadTough Defeat DIPG Foundation originally began as two organizations founded by Jason and Tammi Carr and Mark and Jenny Mosier. The Carrs and Mosiers both lost their young sons, Chad and Michael, in 2015 to DIPG and have since dedicated their lives to raising money and awareness for research into this devastating disease. “We are grateful for the cutting-edge research being done at Dana-Farber to find a cure for DIPG, which remains one of the deadliest forms of childhood cancer with near 0% survival,” said Mark Mosier, co-founder and director of research for ChadTough Defeat DIPG Foundation. “We thank Dr. Bandopadhayay for her commitment to fighting this devastating disease.”

Hood Foundation invests in risk prediction research for children with medulloblastoma

Since 1942, the Charles H. Hood Foundation has endeavored to improve health and quality of life for children by funding innovative pediatric research. Their Child Health Research Awards program helps early career scientists pursue ambitious studies that stand to make a significant impact.

The Hood Foundation selected Volker Hovestadt, PhD, to receive a $165,000 grant in support of a groundbreaking model, depicting scientists in the Hood Foundation. The Imagine Display is located outside Dana-Farber’s Jimmy Fund Clinic. The Imagine Display is a new giving opportunity to celebrate my uncle’s legacy than to donate her earnings to the Jimmy Fund! Upon contacting Dana-Farber, the donor learned of the Imagine Display, a new giving opportunity located outside its pediatric outpatient facility, the Jimmy Fund Clinic. The display is a whimsical representation of Dana-Farber’s “bench-to-bedside” model, depicting scientists in laboratories and doctors treating patients on a backdrop of Boston landmarks. By making a gift, donors can name items on the display, and she was excited to learn there was one naming opportunity left in the Fenway Park portion of the design—a Fenway infield sign, which she named in tribute to her uncle.

The remaining revenue from the baseball card auction was used to support the pediatric activity program and the research of Jennifer Chan, MD, director of the Neuroendocrine Tumor Program and clinical director of the Gastrointestinal Cancer Center at Dana-Farber, who treated a family friend. “I hope my family’s story inspires others,” says the donor. “So many lives will be impacted because of my uncle’s collection.”

Vintage baseball cards help donor score home run

When the uncle of a recent donor—who chooses to remain anonymous—passed away, he wondered how best to pay tribute to him. A lifelong Red Sox fan, he left her an impressive vintage baseball card collection, which she sold through an auction. She knew that the Red Sox had a close connection with Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and the Jimmy Fund, the longest standing team-charity relationship in all of professional sports. What better way to celebrate her uncle’s legacy than to donate her earnings to the Jimmy Fund!

Upon contacting Dana-Farber, the donor learned of the Imagine Display, a new giving opportunity located outside its pediatric outpatient facility, the Jimmy Fund Clinic. The display is a whimsical representation of Dana-Farber’s “bench-to-bedside” model, depicting scientists in laboratories and doctors treating patients on a backdrop of Boston landmarks. By making a gift, donors can name items on the display, and she was excited to learn there was one naming opportunity left in the Fenway Park portion of the design—a Fenway infield sign, which she named in tribute to her uncle.

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Hyannisport Jimmy Fund Classic tops $1 million raised for experimental therapeutics in pediatric cancers

Hyannisport Jimmy Fund Classic, knew that last June’s tournament would be special. The 11th annual event raised more than $114,000, bringing its total philanthropic contribution to more than $1 million since its inception with Jimmy Fund Golf in 2011. This milestone is important to the organizers and supporters of the event as the funds raised improve outcomes for our youngest patients at Dana-Farber, through the Experimental Therapeutics Program in pediatric oncology under the direction of Steven Dubois, MD, MS.

This program conducts cutting-edge clinical trials of the newest anti-cancer therapies for children with advanced solid cancers, brain tumors, and leukemia. “Cancer doesn’t discriminate—it can strike anyone and it affects us all,” said Suppelsa, pictured with tournament board members Liz Pappas, John McDonald, and Keith Quinton. “But with the help of our generous participants and sponsors, Dr. Dubois and the Experimental Therapeutics Program are working to beat cancer every day.”

The imagine Display is located outside Dana-Farber’s Jimmy Fund Clinic.
Steiners strategically invest in Dana-Farber research initiatives

For Meg and Don Steiner, philanthropy is a passion. “All people who are philanthropic understand the feeling of pleasure and delight from supporting something they believe in,” says Meg.

Recently, the Steiners took great pleasure in making a gift of $1 million to The Dana-Farber Campaign in support of cancer research under the direction of their friend and neighbor Stephen Sallan, MD, Dana-Farber's chief of staff emeritus, and Institute physician David Fisher, MD. The funds will be applied at the discretion of both physician-scientists to advance promising research through the lens of their specialties—pediatric and adult blood cancers.

The Steiners have lost loved ones to blood cancers and, over the years, have come to know Fisher, who specializes in this area. They have a keen interest in advancing research that will lead to new, more effective treatments and are encouraged by the breakthroughs in cancer medicine over the last decade. “They feel that their support can help to transform the way we treat cancer and greatly expand targeted treatment options—ultimately for both children and adults.”

Savvy philanthropists, the Steiners give to Dana-Farber and other nonprofits through their donor-advised fund—a philanthropic investment account that provides an immediate tax benefit and enables donors to increase investment grows. “We get a wonderful feeling about our donor-advised fund,” Don says. “We’ve already given the money away, so it’s no longer ours—we just get to decide where it will have the greatest impact.”

The couple, who has supported the Dana-Farber Society by making a provision for Dana-Farber in their will. “We would rather do more while we’re alive and while others are alive who might benefit from this work. With a donor-advised fund, we have the pleasure of watching Dana-Farber benefit from our dollars now.”

New IWMF award advances Waldenström’s research by early career investigators

Despite significant discoveries and advances in care, Waldenström’s macroglobulinemia (WM) remains an incurable disease. The International Waldenström’s Macroglobulinemia Foundation (IWMF) aims to change that by funding leading-edge research into new treatment options for WM—including longstanding support of pioneering work at Dana-Farber.

In 2021, the IWMF established a new award to support career development for early career investigators, empowering the next generation of leaders in WM research. Both researchers selected—Romanos Pistofidis, MD, and Maria Luisa Guerera, MD—were from Dana-Farber, receiving grants totaling $315,000.

“The further development of CAR T-cell therapies will help to continue to provide the highest level of care and treatment for our patients.”

Utilizing a biobank of specimens from patients receiving the revolutionary T-cell therapy enables researchers to explore key questions, including investigating which patients will respond to the therapy, determining predictors of resistance, exploring toxicity, and discovering new targets. With the biobank as the foundation for their work, Dana-Farber investigators are well-positioned to continue to improve the standard of care for patients and their families.

The William & Sheila Konar Foundation supports innovative CAR T-cell therapy research

Eight years ago, Don Nowill, trustee of the William & Sheila Konar Foundation, fell ill, and a PET scan at Dana-Farber revealed stage IV Hodgkin lymphoma. Don was referred to Caron Jacobson, MD, MMSc, medical director of the Immune Effector Cell Therapy Program, who immediately enrolled him in a clinical trial testing a new drug, which he took in combination with a six-month chemotherapy regimen, after which he was disease-free.

“Dr. Jacobson’s care was outstanding, and I am deeply appreciative of the professional care and moral support she provided,” said Don.

Recently, the William & Sheila Konar Foundation awarded Jacobson a gift of $250,000 to support the CAR T Biobank for Innovative Cancer Research and Care—a resource that played a critical role in Don’s treatment. “With this gift, we will be able to continue to translate innovative research into new and groundbreaking approaches to treat hematologic malignancies,” Jacobson explains. “The further development of CAR T-cell therapies will help to continue to provide the highest level of care and treatment for our patients.”

Spring 2022
Follicular Lymphoma Foundation empowers bold vision

In alignment with this work, Dana-Farber researchers hope to cure follicular lymphoma by targeting malignant cells that persist in the body after treatment. The FLF recently made a $40,000 gift to support the groundwork for this bold vision—collecting patient samples, running genetic sequencing studies on them, and testing potential drugs in the lab. This research aligns with the goal of the FLF’s Precision Medicine Programme, which aims to improve treatment strategies and speed up the development of new treatments, and ultimately a cure, for every patient with follicular lymphoma.

“With an unprecedented understanding of follicular lymphoma and the scientific opportunities available at Dana-Farber, we have entered a new era of research and discovery that can focus on cure,” said Laurie H. Glüchmer, MD, president and CEO of Dana-Farber and the Richard and Susan Smith Professor of Medicine. “The FLF’s support will enable us to take significant steps to change the trajectory of follicular lymphoma for patients worldwide.”

Vital funding drives novel hematologic research forward

S tem cell transplants are a powerful form of immunotherapy available for cancer patients with hematologic malignancies and disorders, and are pivotal in extending or saving patients’ lives. Unfortunately, those patients with a mutation in the TP53 gene—the most commonly mutated gene in cancer—frequently do not respond well or relapse after transplants. They are also at a higher risk for developing graft-versus-host disease (GVHD) post-transplant, which causes the immune system to attack normal, healthy tissue.

Because of the TP53 gene mutation’s prevalence, it lowers the recovery probability for a large portion of transplant patients. Dana-Farber’s Mahasweta Gooptu, MD, is leading vital research on the use of a therapy that would fix the proteins produced by the mutated TP53 gene, allowing them to behave correctly and eliminating TP53 gene mutation as a barrier to more successful transplant outcomes. The profound importance of this work, and its potential to impact countless patients, is what inspired David and Carlie Krolick to make a generous $100,000 gift.

“We are very excited to support Dr. Gooptu’s research on GVHD and the TP53 gene mutation. This work will truly be the building blocks that are needed for so many future advances, and we hope other donors will join us in supporting her work to solve unmet medical needs,” said Dave Krolick.

Gooptu says, “To have Dave and Carlie’s confidence means a lot. They empower our team as we innovate and find new ways to improve outcomes for patients with hematologic malignancies.”

Adenoid Cystic Carcinoma Research Foundation accelerates progress for rare disease

Since 2005, the Adenoid Cystic Carcinoma Research Foundation (ACCRF) has worked to accelerate the development of improved treatments for adenoid cystic carcinoma (ACC), a rare cancer of the salivary glands for which there are no approved therapies when the disease recurs or spreads. To that end, they recently awarded grants totaling $258,633 to two Dana-Farber researchers—Glenn Hanna, MD, director of the Center for Salivary and Rare Head and Neck Cancers, and Jonathan Schoenfeld, MD, MPH, MPhil, director of clinical trial development within the department of Radiation Oncology.

The funding will enable Hanna to begin testing combination therapies for advanced ACC beyond the VEGFR pathway—a target that has previously shown promising response rates, albeit short-lived. By using VEGFR inhibitors in combination with other novel therapies, Hanna and his team hope to stimulate a stronger and more durable treatment response in tumor models to propose new clinical trial strategies.

Schoenfeld and Hanna recently launched a clinical trial to test the efficacy of stereotactic body radiotherapy (SBRT) as a treatment option for oligometastatic ACC, an intermediate state of disease between localized and widespread metastasis. Localized therapies like SBRT have had some success in treating this stage in other cancers. Now, they will investigate whether this method, if used early enough, improves outcomes for ACC patients.

“At ACCRF, we deeply appreciate our close relationships and collaborations with Dana-Farber physicians. Drs. Hanna and Schoenfeld are excellent researchers with the drive and compassion to see their ideas enter the clinic for the benefit of their patients,” said ACCRF Executive Director Jeff Kaufman.

The Tree of Life walks past $1 million milestone for lymphoma research

The Tree of Life is a team that has raised funds in the Boston Marathon® Jimmy Fund Walk for 22 years. The team grew out of the friendship between Jonathan Wainwright and Dr. Peter Corea, who played chess every Saturday for nearly a decade. In 1996, Jonathan was diagnosed with cancer, and passed away in 1999. With Dr. Corea’s encouragement, a Jimmy Fund Walk Team was formed in Jonathan’s memory. Tragically, less than two years later, Dr. Corea was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin lymphoma and passed away in 2001.

The concept of the “Tree of Life” motivates the team to keep raising funds for lymphoma research at Dana-Farber: the leaves represent those who have died of cancer, cancer patients, and cancer survivors. The flowers symbolize the hope for research success that will benefit future patients. In 2021, The Tree of Life raised more than $120,000 for the Jimmy Fund Walk, pushing their cumulative fundraising past $1 million.

Above, left: Team Co-Captain Laurel Wainwright with her brother Stephen; right: Co-Captain Trudi Feinstein.

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Mathers Foundation grants accelerate basic biology research

Founded in 1982, the G. Harold and Leila Y. Mathers Foundation aims to advance knowledge in life sciences by sponsoring scientific research that will benefit mankind. As investigative methodologies, technologies, and tools have advanced, The Mathers Foundation embraces innovative translational research for a better future.

The Mathers Foundation recently awarded grants totaling $2.16 million to Dana-Farber’s Eric Fischer, PhD; Amy Si-Ying Lee, PhD; and Pere Puigserver, PhD, to advance key research into structural biology, translation regulation, and cell biology and mitochondrial medicine.

Supported by the foundation, Fischer will pursue research into structural mechanistic understanding of HUWE1 (a member of the HECT family of ubiquitin ligases), a master regulator of the cellular stress response that plays a role in carcinogenesis, as well as a role in developing resistance to cancer therapies. Though little is known about how HUWE1 exerts its critical function, Fischer will work to establish a molecular understanding and shed light on how the understudied class of HECT ubiquitin ligases work, ultimately providing the basis for future efforts to develop novel anti-cancer therapeutics.

Lee’s research concerns the fundamental understanding of the correlation between cellular state, gene regulation, and the ribosome. While all cells in the human body contain the same generic information, every cell has its own role and function from organ development to responding to environmental cues. The ribosome plays a key role in a process known as translation, in which genetic material is decoded to create new proteins. With this funding, Lee will study whether ribosome composition can be regulated by the cell in response to cellular stresses, and how ribosome composition provides a new mechanism by which the cell controls gene expression. Her work will close a critical gap in the understanding of gene expression, as well as specialized translational control during multiple developmental and environmental contexts. Puigserver will address an unsolved problem in cell biology: the principles that govern somatic mitochondrial pathogenic heteroplasmacy. Mitochondrial heteroplasmacy defines the severity of cellular and tissue damage in mitochondrial disorders with mutations in mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA). These mtDNA mutations and mitochondrial failures occur in aging, cardiomyopathies and heart failure; cancer; and metabolic and degenerative diseases such as obesity, diabetes, Parkinson’s, or Alzheimer’s diseases.

“Right now, very little is known about the cellular mechanisms that balance levels of pathogenic and healthy mitochondria in somatic cells, creating a need for heightened research in this area,” said Puigserver. “This funding from The Mathers Foundation will help me advance the understanding of basic human biology and the causes of genetic variation of mitochondrial organelles that leads to severe tissue damage, laying the important groundwork for new therapeutics for metabolic and degenerative diseases.”

“The Mathers Foundation is highly supportive of innovative, potentially transformative projects in the basic life sciences and translational medical research. These three projects— in gene expression, in structural biology, and with mitochondrial organelles—share that common vision and commitment,” said Zach Handelman, director of operations at The Mathers Foundation. “We’re proud to support the doctors at Dana-Farber in their journeys to change the world of cancer.”

Gift to support lung cancer research will advance prevention and cures

In appreciation of the exceptional, compassionate care and support provided by Bruce Johnson, MD, director of the Center for Cancer Genomics and leader of the Dana-Farber/Harvard Cancer Center Lung Cancer Program, an anonymous, grateful family pledged $100,000 to establish a fund that will further clinical research in lung cancer and advance the search for cures and prevention for all cancers.

Johnson’s research is focused on uncovering the molecular basis of lung cancers and the development and testing of novel targeted therapies for patients with specific genomic alterations in lung cancer. The fund from this grateful family will allow Johnson to dedicate resources to the areas of his research that can advance with the help of philanthropic support. “I am very grateful for the generosity of our donors,” said Johnson. “We have made remarkable advancements in the research and implementation of targeted therapies for patients with lung cancer, and we can go further with philanthropic support.”

Lung cancer is the most common cancer, and it causes more deaths than colon, breast, and prostate cancer combined, according to the American Lung Association. Philanthropic support will help researchers and clinicians defy cancer. “We know the research being done as a result of our gift to Dana-Farber will directly benefit the patients,” said the anonymous donor. “We saw firsthand how the work of Dr. Johnson benefitted our family and are very grateful for that experience.”

Husband forms a legacy for his wife—and pays it forward

Inspired by his wife, Joanne’s, commitment to two clinical trials during her treatment for lung cancer, Terry McAteer and his family recently made a $100,000 gift to Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in her memory to establish the Joanne McAteer Fund for Lung Cancer Research. Under the direction of Joanne’s doctor Michael Rabin, MD, the fund will support the expansion of lung cancer data contributions to Dana-Farber’s signature Profile initiative, which identifies the genetic blueprint of a patient’s cancer and helps link that information with clinical data, possibly providing new pathways for treatment.

Although Joanne passed away from her illness in October 2019, she maintained a positive attitude throughout treatment, bolstered by the compassion and care provided by Rabin and his team. The McAteer Family is hopeful their continuing contributions will help change the course of lung cancer for other families.

“This disease affects everyone and could touch us again later on,” Terry says. “Dr. Rabin is a gifted and compassionate man. We put a lot of faith in him and his research, and I’m happy to pay it forward and see if we can help in this thing.”

When Joanne was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2014, and with lung cancer in 2016, the couple chose Dana-Farber due to the Institute’s equal focus on research and care. “Through this and future gifts—and the family’s membership in the Dana-Farber Society—the McAteer Family is committed to The Dana-Farber Campaign’s efforts to accelerate discovery and defy cancer, while creating a family legacy in Joanne’s memory.”
Neher spreads awareness, raises funds for research into rare form of melanoma

When Dawn Neher first noticed blurred vision in one eye, she brushed it off as a sign of getting older. It wasn’t until a part of her eye turned black that she realized it was something more serious. A series of doctors’ appointments later, she was diagnosed with a very rare form of cancer called ocular melanoma.

Fortunately, Neher’s doctors were able to perform radiation plaque therapy to eradicate the tumor and save most of her eyesight. However, there remains a high chance of this particular cancer recurring. Neher is now focused on spreading awareness and raising money for research into her rare disease—and urging people to get their eyes checked regularly, as early detection can increase the long-term survival rate. Part of her advocacy includes a personal $100,000 gift to support research led by one of her doctors, Dana-Farber’s Rizwan Haq, MD, PhD.

“I want to help find a cure for people beyond me, because it can happen to anyone,” said Neher. “Patients with this disease need an advocate. They need a voice. We need dollars spent on worthwhile and potentially lifesaving research to establish treatment protocols and eventually a cure.”

“Uveal melanoma, especially when it spreads, is a disease with few effective treatment options,” said Haq, who serves as director of the Ocular Melanoma Center at Dana-Farber.

“But with greater understanding of the biology of this disease, I am hopeful we will continue making progress in developing new treatments over the coming years.”

Melanoma patient encourages progress in immunotherapy

John Morgan never thought of himself as “battling cancer.” But after facing melanoma seven times since 1989, he can point to the scars and marks on his skin as proof of what he has overcome.

Now, routine screenings at his dermatologist and appointments with Dana-Farber’s Patrick Ott, MD, PhD, are a consistent part of his life. After completing his most recent round of treatment, Morgan even agreed to participate in a clinical trial testing a new immunotherapy for melanoma, which he hopes will help other patients facing this disease.

Grateful for his care and enthusiastic for the progress being made, Morgan recently gave $100,000 to establish the Morgan Family Fund for Melanoma Research at Dana-Farber, which is overseen by Ott.

“We are continuing our work in developing effective immunotherapies and personalized vaccines for melanoma and other cancers,” said Ott, who serves as the clinical director of Dana-Farber’s Melanoma Center. “I’m so grateful for John’s enthusiastic, and generous, support for this research.”

Morgan drives up to Boston every month from his home in Rhode Island to participate in the clinical trial. For him, the commute is well worth it.

“The care you get at Dana-Farber is the best. That’s why you drive an hour away,” said Morgan. “I’m more than happy to donate what I can. I mean, what do you do for the guy who saved your life? I’m extremely grateful for Dr. Ott.”

A grateful mother gives back to the place that saved her son

In 2017, five years after first undergoing surgical treatment for melanoma, Brian Smith-Fisher received news that his cancer had returned and metastasized. The Fisher Family decided the best chance of continuing to combat this disease would be at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, where he was seen by a team of experts led by Patrick Ott, MD, clinical director of Dana-Farber’s Melanoma Center.

Since 2017 Brian has had to undergo numerous surgeries and different immunotherapy combinations, but has finally responded well to his current treatment plan. His family was so inspired by the expert care he received that his mother, Karen, decided to donate in support of Ott’s research, which includes clinical trials testing the personalized cancer vaccine NeoVax.

“Dana-Farber saved Brian’s life, and I know they can save many more,” said Karen. “Seeing the level of care that they give to their patients, how you don’t feel like you’re just a number, that you feel like you’re a part of the family and the team—it’s such a blessing.”

The Fisher Family thanks Brian’s entire team across Dana-Farber Brigham Cancer Center, especially the infusion nurses onYawkey 6 for making all those years of infusions as pleasant as possible. The family has supported Ott’s research since 2018 and continues to make donations every year, due to the progress that has been made.

“I’m so grateful to the Fishers for their continuous support of my research,” said Ott. “Their generosity enables us to move forward with clinical trials testing NeoVax in combination with other therapies, a crucial next step in uncovering more treatment options for patients like Brian.”

Pew grant empowers promising drug research and development

For nearly four decades, The Pew Charitable Trusts’ Pew Scholars Program in the Biomedical Sciences has supported groundbreaking biomedical research by funding young scientific investigators and encouraging informed risk-taking and collaboration among researchers.

Dana-Farber’s Edward Chouchani, PhD, is the recipient of a $300,000 Pew Biomedical Scholars grant, which will support his research into how proteins involved in inflammation and metabolism regulate the activity of proteins involved in inflammation and obesity. By utilizing cutting-edge techniques in chemical biology, physiology, pharmacology, and protein chemistry, Chouchani and his team will identify compounds that target vulnerable sites in two major classes of protein: those that generate inflammatory signaling molecules, and those that control energy expenditure and play a role in obesity and diabetes.

As part of his research, Chouchani will engineer first-in-class pharmacological manipulators for protein regulators of metabolic and inflammatory diseases. His investigations could ultimately lead to favorable new drugs to treat disorders in those areas.

“As the biomedical world rapidly evolves, it’s become increasingly important to understand and overcome new obstacles,” said Molly Irwin, vice president, research and science, The Pew Charitable Trusts. “We’re thrilled to award Edward Chouchani’s research to advance treatment in metabolic and inflammatory disorders.

Founded in 1948, The Pew Charitable Trusts, which supports scientific research on a wide range of issues, is a global, non-governmental organization that seeks to improve public policy, inform the public, and invigorate civic life.
Grassroots supporters are on the move, and online, to help Dana-Farber and the Jimmy Fund defy cancer

Aniketh’s Fun Run

Whenever Ramalakshmi Chivukula and Soujanya Mallapragada asked their son Aniketh how his day at school was, the answer was always an enthusiastic “FUN!” Despite being in treatment for a pediatric brain tumor’s side effects and treatment complications for seven years, Aniketh remained the fun-loving, outgoing, and happy child he had been when he was first diagnosed just before his third birthday. When he passed away suddenly in February 2021 at age 10, his family wanted to do something to honor his spirit while giving back to the Jimmy Fund Cancer Institute and the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, which kept him alive and happy for so many years.

On September 18, 2021, the family was joined by more than 200 friends, classmates, and community members at a state park near their home in Sharon, Mass., for the 5K Aniketh’s Fun Run. Volunteers and neighborhood friends helped the family set up and participants donated to support research and care at Dana-Farber, raising $8,000 in their first event to honor Aniketh.

Cross Check Cancer Women’s Hockey Tournament

The Cross Check Cancer Women’s Hockey Tournament is an annual event that, since 2016, has raised funds for the Adult Survivorship Program in the Perini Family Survivor’s Center at Dana-Farber. After having to cancel the 2020 event due to COVID, 32 teams and 443 participants from 200 cities and towns across 11 states returned in August 2021 and raised $31,755. This is the most the event has raised in a single year for Dana-Farber and brings the event’s five-year total to more than $70,000.

“Our tournament has been honored to have women play who are cancer survivors,” said tournament organizer Keri Capobianco. “The Dana-Farber Adult Cancer Survivorship Program is particularly aligned with the support that is needed by cancer survivors to regain the physical and emotional strength to pursue their passions both on and off the ice. The physicians, nurses, researchers, and psychologists in the program are experts in survivorship, and we’re proud that 100% of the proceeds from our event go to support their work.”

Feeding Ralph the Dino

Jim Fanning is a lifelong grassroots fundraiser. When he first started raising money for charity, Jim’s wife said to him, “We all need to give something back,” and over the course of many years, he has raised more than $100,000 for various organizations. Then Jim was diagnosed with cancer, and on a visit to Dana-Farber he met a pediatric patient being treated in the Jimmy Fund Clinic, and knew “praying was not enough.”

Jim’s fundraising for Dana-Farber started as a coin collection with a Jimmy Fund canister, but the success of his efforts soon outgrew its capacity and he upgraded to a larger bank which he calls “Ralph the Dino.” Jim takes Ralph to locations around the Rhode Island area and asks people to “feed” Ralph by putting donations in the dinosaur’s belly. The funds they raise support the Jimmy Fund Clinic and its Pediatric Activity Program Fund, which helps to provide an enriching and supportive treatment environment that “lets kids be kids.” Since he began in 2019, Jim has raised $13,000 for the Jimmy Fund.

Quest 2 Defy Cancer

Throughout October 2021, streamers from across the U.S. and beyond took part in Quest 2 Defy Cancer, the first month-long fundraising event hosted by Jimmy Fund Let’s Game®. Twenty-three streamers promoted Dana-Farber’s lifesaving mission while playing popular games such as “Stardew Valley” and “Sea of Thieves” on Twitch, attracting contributions from viewers around the world including 92 donors who are new to the Jimmy Fund. Among the top fundraisers was Oxygen Esports, now the largest esports organization in New England, with team members LaXinG and FoxA returning from Let’s Game’s 2020 Streamer Weekend. The money raised by Quest 2 Defy Cancer provides flexible funding that makes a powerful difference across Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, providing bedrock funds that advance innovative research, speed new drugs into clinical trials, meet unanticipated needs such as those posed by COVID-19, and ensure that all patients have access to the full measure of our signature Total Patient Care.

The annual Cross Check Cancer Women’s Hockey Tournament supports the Adult Survivorship Program at Dana-Farber.

Jim Fanning, pictured above with his children, James and Sophia, invites supporters to give to the Jimmy Fund by “feeding” Ralph the Dino.

Thank you to the successful efforts of Jimmy Fund Let’s Game streamers, Quest 2 Defy Cancer is now a year-round event.
Melanoma is less common than other types of skin cancer, but it is much more difficult to treat as it grows and spreads to other parts of the body. The Melanoma Research Alliance (MRA), the largest nonprofit funder of melanoma research, has awarded three Dana-Farber scientists grants totaling $700,000 to delve deeper into the biology and genetics of melanoma, which may spur novel treatments for the disease.

“We made incredible progress in the fight against melanoma, but that progress is still not benefiting all patients,” said MRA Chief Science Officer Marc Hurlbert. “The research being done by Drs. Haq, Liu, and Van Allen will give us new insight and understanding that will lead to improvements for patients facing melanoma.”

Previously, Rizwan Haq, MD, PhD, discovered a pathway that is lost in melanoma tumors that are resistant to anti-PD-1 immunotherapy, but not in PD-1 sensitive tumors. With an MRA Established Investigator Award, Haq is using gene-editing technology to re create these mutations in melanoma research models to evaluate if drugs can sufficiently reactivate this pathway to restore anti-PD-1 responses.

“I am grateful for the Melanoma Research Alliance believing in this research, which may bring the promise of immunotherapy to more patients with melanoma,” said Haq.

David Liu, MD, MPH, MS, is using an MRA Young Investigator Award to study in-transit melanoma, which grows away from the primary tumor but does not reach the nearest lymph node. Liu is using next-generation sequencing of patient samples to study why some of these in-transit melanomas progress to lethal metastatic disease and others do not, which may lead to the development of novel therapies to prevent progression to distant disease.

With an MRA Pilot Award, Eliezer Van Allen, MD, is studying melanoma’s “dark genome,” the 99% of the genome that does not produce proteins. With a large cohort of whole genome data, he is developing computational algorithms to discover changes in the genetic architecture of melanoma that may drive disease origins and progression, which may enable the translation of novel drug therapies.

Support from MRA is advancing studies led by (from left) Rizwan Haq, MD, PhD; David Liu, MD, MPH, MS; and Eliezer Van Allen, MD.

Cancer Research Institute advances immunotherapy studies

The Cancer Research Institute (CRI) has awarded grants totaling more than $526,000 to three Dana-Farber postdoctoral fellows who are working to leverage the disease-fighting power of the immune system to eliminate cancer.

Samuel Hobbs, PhD; Marc Schwartz, MD, PhD; and Jared Rowe, MD, PhD, are 2021 recipients of the CRI Irvington Postdoctoral Fellowship, which provides crucial financial support and career training for promising young investigators studying fundamental and tumor immunology.

Rowe’s research focuses on the metabolism of aspartagine—an amino acid required for the growth and survival of many cancer cells—and its impact on therapies that are designed to boost anti-cancer immune responses. Schwartz is developing strategies to help cancer-fighting immune cells persist in the body for long-term tumor control.

Hobbs is studying a molecular messenger called cGAMP, which plays an important role in triggering an ancient cellular defense mechanism called the innate immune response. “This award will allow me to learn how cancer cells manipulate immune signaling pathways and explore the consequences on the anti-tumor immune response,” said Hobbs. “I am extremely grateful to the CRI for supporting me in this work.”

Since 1953, the CRI has driven immunotherapy research and clinical trials aimed at achieving complete, long-lasting remissions and cures for all types of cancer. The CRI Irvington Postdoctoral Fellowship Program, established in 1971, has supported more than 1,400 young cancer immunologists at top universities and research centers around the world. Alumni of the program have gone on to lead major research programs and centers and have won some of the most prestigious awards in biomedical science, including the Nobel Prize. Their groundbreaking discoveries have led to the development of lifesaving treatments for infectious diseases, autoimmune disorders, and cancer.

“Young year after year, Dana-Farber Cancer Institute immunologists and tumor immunologists are among the most competitive candidates for Cancer Research Institute funding,” said Jill O’Donnell-Tormey, PhD, CEO and director of scientific affairs at CRI. “Dana-Farber is a proven training ground for young scientists and doctors at the vanguard of cancer immunotherapy research and patient care.”

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SPRING 2022 | Impact 15

10% of all designated gifts supports our Faculty Research Fund to advance Dana-Farber’s research mission
Dana-Farber’s Christopher Lathan, MD, MS, MPH (above, right), was honored to be an invited guest at The White House on Feb. 2, as President Joe Biden reignited the Cancer Moonshot Program. Among its goals is to ensure that everyone in the U.S. equitably benefits from the tools we have to prevent, detect, and diagnose cancer, a goal that Lathan shares in his roles as Chief Clinical Access and Equity Officer, Founding Director of the Cancer Care Equity Program, and the Hadley Family Chair at Dana-Farber.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

For more information on all Jimmy Fund and Dana-Farber events and programs, go to JimmyFund.org or Dana-Farber.org

BASEBALL SEASON

NEW! Strike Out Cancer with the Jimmy Fund

You can make each win for the Red Sox a win for the Jimmy Fund! Pledge a donation for each Red Sox win to help the Jimmy Fund strike out cancer and be eligible for exciting incentives like exclusive T-shirts, hats, and Red Sox experiences. Sign up by Opening Day for a chance to win a pair of Red Sox tickets. Visit PledgeIt.org/JimmyFund or contact Teresa Kane at StrikeOutCancer@dfci.harvard.edu.

APRIL 9

PMC Winter Cycle

Register for the PMC Winter Cycle at Fenway Park, a vital “spoke in the wheel” of PMC fundraising. Join or donate to this outdoor spin event that sends 100% of all rider-raised dollars directly to Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. Visit WinterCycle.org.

APRIL 18

Dana-Farber Marathon Challenge

Support the Dana-Farber Marathon Challenge team running in the 2022 Boston Marathon® to raise funds for the Claudia Adams Barr Program in Innovative Basic Cancer Research. To support a DFMC runner, visit RunDFMC.org or contact Kelly Wicks at DFMC@dfci.harvard.edu.

MAY 25

Giving Day

Join us on our Giving Day, a special opportunity to come together as a community around one goal: our mission to defy cancer. Your gift provides flexible funding to advance research and care and help patients everywhere. Visit Dana-Farber.org/GivingDay or contact Tracy Joseph at Annual_Giving@dfci.harvard.edu.

JUNE 18

Jimmy Fund Scooper Bowl®

Presented by Valvoline Instant Oil Change™

The nation’s largest all-you-can-eat ice cream festival is coming to Patriot Place in Foxborough this summer. Defy cancer with every scoop while enjoying bottomless sweet treats from America’s leading ice cream brands and a day of family fun. Visit ScooperBowl.org or contact Raquel Morales at Scooper_Bowl@dfci.harvard.edu.

JUNE

John Hancock Fenway Fantasy Day

Help a Dana-Farber patient live out their baseball dreams. Make a donation to John Hancock Fenway Fantasy Day to sponsor a patient to participate on-field at Fenway Park and help support our mission to strike out cancer. Visit JimmyFundFantasyDay.org or contact Amber Fonseca at Amber_Fonseca@dfci.harvard.edu.

ALL SUMMER

Jimmy Fund Little League

Presented by Franklin Sports

Jimmy Fund Little League gives Little League players throughout New England the chance to continue playing after their regular season ends, while raising vital funds for Dana-Farber. Visit JimmyFundLittleLeague.org or contact Teresa Kane at JimmyFundLittleLeague@dfci.harvard.edu.

APRIL 16

B.A.A. 5K®

Run for Dana-Farber

Defy cancer by joining the Dana-Farber team to run the B.A.A. 5K or by supporting a runner. To apply or learn more visit RunDanaFarber.org or contact Kelly Yardley at Kelly_Yardley@dfci.harvard.edu.

JUNE

HomeGoods Helps Families Fight Cancer

Purchase limited-edition, reusable shopping bags designed by a patient in Dana-Farber’s Jimmy Fund Clinic or make a contribution at checkout at standalone HomeGoods and Homesense stores nationwide, and help Dana-Farber fight cancer for families everywhere. Find a store near you at HomeGoods.com.