Riney Family commits $16.5 million to improve outcomes for multiple myeloma patients

With a visionary gift of $16.5 million, Paula and Rodger Riney of St. Louis have established the Riney Family Multiple Myeloma Initiative at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. The couple's first gift to Dana-Farber provides an infusion of resources to dramatically accelerate scientific understanding of the most challenging myelomas, cancers that form in a type of white blood cell called a plasma cell.

The gift from the Paula and Rodger Riney Foundation is the largest single gift from a family to support multiple myeloma research in Dana-Farber’s history. The Riney Family Multiple Myeloma Initiative builds on the family’s legacy of multiple myeloma support across the U.S. and will improve outcomes for patients everywhere.

Rodger Riney was diagnosed with multiple myeloma in 2015 and treated in St. Louis. In 2018, Kenneth Anderson, MD, program director at Dana-Farber’s Jerome Lipper Multiple Myeloma Center and LeBow Institute for Myeloma Therapeutics and Kraft Family Professor of Medicine, joined as an advisor to Riney’s care team.

“As a myeloma patient, you are very aware of the groundbreaking work being done at Dana-Farber in multiple myeloma,” said Riney. “Dana-Farber is an institution we want to invest in given its impressive track record in improving myeloma treatment. Our hope is that this gift will inspire others to support Dana-Farber’s researchers and clinicians to extend survivorship, and ultimately find a cure.”

“We are deeply grateful to the Riney Family for their visionary support,” said Laurie H. Glimcher, MD, Dana-Farber president and CEO and the Richard and Susan Smith Professor of Medicine. “As scientists like Dr. Anderson and his team, who have dedicated their lives to finding a cure for multiple myeloma, the Riney Family’s generosity provides an unprecedented opportunity to accelerate the most promising strategies over a focused period of time and meaningfully extend remissions.”

“Finding a cure 10 or 15 years from now will be too late for thousands of people currently living with multiple myeloma,” said Riney. “We want to support Ken and his capable team in speeding up the process for patients everywhere.”

Over the next two years, the Riney Family Multiple Myeloma Initiative will help Dana-Farber identify and target genomic and epigenomic abnormalities, unraveling the biological determinants of disease behavior in general as well as in certain high-risk multiple myeloma sub-groups. It will also enable the development of novel therapeutics to target both tumor cells and the host immune microenvironment, bringing more durable, immune-based combination therapies to patients in the near-term. Additionally, the initiative will create infrastructure for big data management and open access myeloma research resources, catalyzing new collaborations and providing access to novel technologies to improve the way multiple myeloma research is conducted in the future.

“We send our heartfelt thanks to Paula and Rodger for their confidence in our team,” said Anderson. “With their tremendous gift, we can fast-track our efforts to develop highly personalized, novel targeted and immune treatments for patients facing the most challenging forms of this disease. Their extraordinary support will foster collaborative efforts to benefit patients and their families worldwide.”
Dear Friends,

Although the past few months have brought unforeseen challenges and difficulties to many, I have been heartened by the compassion, hope, creativity, and resilience demonstrated throughout the Dana-Farber and Jimmy Fund community. We are so grateful to our frontline heroes at the Institute, who are selflessly ensuring our patients can continue to receive their lifesaving treatments in the safest possible environment. And we are grateful to our donors and participants who have stepped up their support during this crisis, with gifts to our Emergency Response Fund, gifts of personal protective equipment, participation in virtual fundraising events, and so much more.

Even amid such tough times, we can still have good days, meaningful moments, positive interactions, and togetherness—albeit in new ways. Although our Jimmy Fund events season looks different this year, with many popular events postponed or cancelled, we have fun, new offerings for everyone. We held our first-ever Dana-Farber and Jimmy Fund Giving Day on May 27, inspiring thousands of gifts totaling more than $540,000 from across the country. And our Boston-area friends saw the recent launch of our new advertising campaign, themed “I Am Jimmy/We’re All Jimmy,” designed to raise awareness and strengthen our connection to our grassroots fundraising community. You can see the campaign at iamsjimmy.org.

Each day, we work in service to a community of patients and families, clinicians and researchers, donors and participants who are resilient beyond measure. When I think about our Dana-Farber and Jimmy Fund community, it gives me confidence that we will emerge from this experience stronger than ever before.

Thank you for your steadfast partnership, and please stay safe and well.

Sincerely,

Melany N. Duval
Senior Vice President, Chief Philanthropy Officer

An outpouring of emergency resources from the Dana-Farber and Jimmy Fund community

Spring and summer normally mark the high season for Dana-Farber and Jimmy Fund events, but this year has been anything but normal. More than 700 events and programs across the U.S. raise millions of dollars for our lifesaving mission each year, and many have been delayed or cancelled due to the precautions required to keep us all safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. Educational events and other gatherings we host for our donors and supporters are similarly affected. To continue to raise increasingly critical funds and connect with our donor community in a socially distanced world, we quickly pivoted to virtual platforms and social channels, and created resources to help our dedicated supporters do the same (see the sidebar, page 15).

For example, just a few weeks after Massachusetts and other states began issuing stay-at-home guidelines, we debuted Jimmy Fund Bingo Night. This family-friendly event livestreamed on Facebook to enthusiastic audiences on Friday nights from April to June, raising funds and spirits with the help of celebrity hosts including Boston Red Sox first baseman and Jimmy Fund Captain Mitch Moreland and his wife, Susannah; Tom Leyden of Boston 25 News; Dale Arnold of WEEI and NESN; and Ben & Jerry’s Co-Founder Jerry Greenfield. Jimmy Fund Let’s GameSM, which allows gamers to fundraise while livestreaming their favorite video games, held its first online tournament on May 30. And Jimmy Fund’s April themed “I Am Jimmy/We’re All Jimmy,” designed to raise awareness and strengthen our connection to our grassroots fundraising community. You can see the campaign at iamsjimmy.org.

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A cancer diagnosis already comes with incredible challenges, and the new pressures and vulnerabilities brought forth by COVID-19 have made navigating cancer even more difficult. Likewise, the costs of delivering comprehensive, compassionate care in the face of this pandemic mounted rapidly. Our generous supporters have shown an outpouring of kindness during this time of uncertainty, providing critical assistance in important ways.

Emergency Response Fund

The Emergency Response Fund, established in March, had raised more than $8.4 million before the end of May, thanks in part to significant commitments from Dana-Farber Trustees and to an extraordinary $4 million gift from Pan-Mass Challenge (PMC) riders that includes a $1 million match from a passionate PMC rider/donor. An additional $1.5 million has been committed by members of the Life Science Alliance, which is comprised of our closest partners in the biotechnology and pharmaceutical industries.

The Emergency Response Fund has helped to defray unanticipated and significant costs including: increased supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE) and other resources to keep our patients safe and prevent the spread of infection; immediate implementation of telemedicine technology to allow patients and families to visit with their Dana-Farber care team virtually, from the safety of their homes; press financial strains felt by patients, their partners, and caregivers who have lost employment or experienced disruptions in dependent care; and a strong community and support system for our patients and families while in-person Jimmy Fund events are postponed.

PPE and other resources

While PPE is used every day by our clinicians to protect themselves and our patients and families from the risk of infection during treatment, the rapid spread of COVID-19 resulted in shortages through our normal purchasing channels. Both longtime and newfound supporters continue to come forward to donate hundreds of thousands of items, including masks, gloves, protective gowns, face shields, hand sanitizer, and more. In addition, loyal corporate partners are donating coffee, water, snacks, gift cards, and other amenities to support our patients, families, and frontline heroes delivering care at the Institute.

As always, our loyal community of support shines through even in the darkest of times.
Novel venture philanthropy collaboration raises $26.8 million for basic science

I
novation is in Dana-Farber’s DNA—it is what attracts the world’s best physician-researchers to our faculty, brings collaborative partners to the table, and gives philanthropists the confidence that their contributions will lead to tomorrow’s cancer cures. This innovative spirit, combined with Dana-Farber’s unparalleled track record of success in commercializing early stage discoveries, has led to a unique, first-of-its-kind “impact investing” collaboration between Dana-Farber and MPM Capital, a Cambridge, Mass.-based health care investment firm.

The venture, launched in 2017, has successfully raised money from more than 30 investor-donors for two funds: the MPM Oncology Innovations Fund (INV), a for-profit fund with $100 million in capital for creating and investing in early-stage biotech companies developing oncology therapeutic technologies; and the Dana-Farber Innovations Research Fund (IRF), a nonprofit fund with more than $26.8 million in philanthropic gifts to support early stage oncology research at Dana-Farber. For the investor-donors, a gift to the IRF was required to be able to participate in the INV.

“Dana-Farber is the only academic institution to partner with a venture capital firm to propel progress against cancer,” said Laurie H. Glinscher, MD, Dana-Farber president and CEO and the Richard and Susan Smith Professor of Medicine. “That we were the first to do so, and that we were able to attract so many others to the project, is a testament to our focus on forging new paths—innovating in philanthropy as we do in basic and translational research.”

Dana-Farber Trustees Marc Cohen and Malcolm Salter conceived of the idea behind the collaborative venture more than 10 years ago. “Our driving force has always been finding ways to attract new donors to Dana-Farber,” said Salter. “The Institute’s terrific donor community has historically been largely drawn from the Northeast. We saw an opportunity to move beyond the standard methodologies in philanthropy to raise more money from more people across a much broader geography.”

“In any entrepreneurial venture there’s risk and uncertainty,” said Cohen. “Having now brought together new partners from around the globe we have a proof of concept. The ‘doing well by doing good’ model is a natural fit for both Dana-Farber and MPM and is something we can scale up.”

The IRF will further strengthen Dana-Farber’s discovery pipeline, which is exceptionally prolific: researchers within the Dana-Farber/Harvard Cancer Center have contributed to the development of 41 of 100 cancer drugs recently approved by the FDA for use in cancer patients. Similarly, MPM has one of the best track records among venture capital firms in investing in early-stage discoveries, has led to a unique, first-of-its-kind “impact investing” collaboration between Dana-Farber and MPM Capital, a Cambridge, Mass.-based health care investment firm.

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Rus Agrusa is a risk-taker. It was that motivation to take risks that set him and his beloved wife, Paula, up for success when running their technology company ICONICS together for over 30 years. It is also what guided them to take action when Paula was diagnosed with stage IV colorectal cancer. Recognizing the potential of immunotherapies—successfully implemented for other forms of cancer—the couple established the Project P Fund at Dana-Farber in 2014 to support innovative research into immunotherapies for colorectal cancer.

“Paula and I were always very entrepreneurial and motivated to take risks on people,” said Russ. “We bet that anyone could find something that would help Paula and others with colon cancer; it would be the team at Dana-Farber.”

“Advancing this research means a great deal to our family,” said Paula in 2014. “We are very proud to support this incredible work, which we hope will accelerate the discovery of new treatments to benefit colorectal cancer patients for years to come.” When Paula passed away in February of 2016, Russ vowed to honor her legacy by continuing to support the Project P Fund. He recently pledged an additional $4 million to fund a multidisciplinary team led by Kimmie Ng, MD, MPH, director of the Young-Onset Colorectal Cancer Center and director of translational research in the Gastrointestinal Cancer Center (GCC); Jeffrey Meyerhardt, MD, MPH, FASCO, the Douglas Woodruff Chair in Colorectal Cancer Research; and Marinos Giannakis, MD, PhD, a laboratory investigator in the GCC. Meyerhardt and Ng also serve as co-directors of the Colon and Rectal Cancer Center. The gift provides powerful momentum toward the Institute’s comprehensive campaign, currently in the quiet phase.

With this generous funding, the team will expand their research efforts by studying the microbiome of colorectal cancer patients and its effect on a patient’s response to therapy—particularly immunotherapy; exploring how CAR T-cell therapies and other personalized vaccine approaches can be made effective for patients with colorectal cancer; and conducting immunogenomic and single-cell sequencing studies to develop methods of overcoming drug resistance.

“I’m extremely grateful for Russ’s continued partnership with the GCC,” said Brian Wolpin, MD, MPH, director of the GCC and the Robert T. and Judith B. Hale Chair in Pancreatic Cancer at Dana-Farber. “I am particularly excited for the innovative and impactful work that Kimmie, Jeff, and Marinos will conduct with this generous new gift.”

“Russ and Paula’s visionary investment in colorectal cancer research has already had a tremendous impact on treatment options,” said Laurie H. Glimcher, MD, Dana-Farber president and CEO and the Richard and Susan Smith Professor of Medicine. “As an immunologist, I am excited by the opportunities this new gift offers to make immunotherapies more effective for colorectal cancer patients.”

For Russ, this is all for Paula. To further honor her legacy, he established a Giving Page on the Jimmy Fund website and named an elevator lobby at the Institute in tribute to her.

“After Paula’s diagnosis, we were inspired by the dedication and talent at work to help others with colon cancer,” said Russ. “I believe that the research dollar goes farther at Dana-Farber than at any other institution in the world, and I can’t wait to see the new discoveries that are made by the distinguished team.”

Gift empowers collaborative cancer care and research in Middle East and North Africa

By 2035, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) will experience the world’s largest increase in the incidence of cancer, according to the World Health Organization. Each year, more than 250,000 people die from the disease in this region where industrial and agricultural carcinogens, and chemical weapons used in warfare, are contributing factors.

Driven to improve outcomes, Bita Daryabari has contributed $100,000 to the Science Health Education (SHE) Center at Dana-Farber. Its mission is to empower MENA-based health care practitioners and researchers to enact and sustain best practices through education and implementation, with a focus on women’s health. Daryabari, an Iranian-born computer scientist, entrepreneur, and philanthropist believes this ensures success. “When you educate a woman,” Daryabari says, “you educate her family, you educate her whole village.”

The multidisciplinary SHE Center, directed by Navid Madani, PhD, takes a unique approach to changing the paradigm. “The ripple effect of training the trainers is the core element of what SHE will accomplish,” says Madani, who was also born in Iran. She has been conducting workshops in MENA for the past decade. “We will rapidly create a pipeline of leading physicians, nurses, and scientists who will share their knowledge across the region. These collaborations will form the infrastructure for two-way training and research efforts that will have a profound positive impact on patients and healthcare providers in MENA as well as at Dana-Farber.”

Cookies for Kids’ Cancer fast-tracks pediatric immunotherapy research

Cookies for Kids’ Cancer, a national nonprofit, was inspired by a bake sale and a boy named Liam. Diagnosed with neuroblastoma at age 2, Liam motivated his parents, Larry and Gretchen Witt, to raise funds for research that could bring new treatments to children with cancer. In 2007, the same year as her son’s diagnosis, Gretchen gathered volunteers to bake and sell 96,000 cookies, raising more than $400,000 for the cause.

The Witts have since launched Cookies for Kids’ Cancer to generate financial support for pediatric cancer research. The foundation recently awarded $200,000 to Birgit Knoechel, MD, PhD, to study the potential power of immunotherapy against T-cell acute lymphoblastic lymphoma (T-ALL), an aggressive blood cancer in children and young adults.

“I would like to express my immense gratitude to Cookies for Kids’ Cancer,” said Knoechel. “Their gift could catalyze the development of novel immunotherapies for high-risk pediatric patients.”

In previous studies, Knoechel and her team used advanced sequencing technology to study the T-ALL microenvironment, which can shine light on how the immune system interacts with the tumor. Their findings suggested that T-ALL may be sensitive to immunotherapy when combined with other treatments.

“We are thrilled to be funding investigator Birgit Knoechel and her research into immunotherapies for children who desperately need more treatment options,” said Gretchen Holt-Witt, co-founder, Cookies for Kids’ Cancer. “Immunotherapy research gives us hope that children can not only be treated more effectively, but in ways that prevent the damaging side effects linked to treatments developed for adults and not for a child’s unique needs.”
Winston Chen and Phyllis Huang’s $5 million gift creates Center for EGFR Mutant Lung Cancers at Dana-Farber

Dana-Farber Cancer Institute is renowned for its world-class scientists and physicians who work closely together to better understand and treat complex cancers. A magnanimous $5 million gift from Winston Chen and Phyllis Huang of Silicon Valley, will help further the Institute’s groundbreaking research in EGFR-driven lung cancers. Their generosity creates the Chen-Huang Center for EGFR Mutant Lung Cancers to stimulate research, promote clinical trials, and strengthen Dana-Farber’s capabilities for studying and treating lung cancers with mutations in the epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR).

For many years, Winston Chen and his wife, Phyllis Huang, focused on supporting higher education with the help of their family foundation, the Paramitas Foundation. The couple’s recent funding shifted to health care projects, specifically lung cancer research led by Pasi Jänne, MD, PhD, director of the Carole M. and Philip L. Lowe Center for Thoracic Oncology and director of the Robert and Renée Belfer Center for Applied Cancer Science at Dana-Farber.

“Phyllis and I hope our gift will bring much needed attention to lung cancer and illustrate how vital financial support is for making discoveries,” said Chen. “We support Dr. Jänne and Dana-Farber because of their impressive centers, research facilities, and the discoveries they are making every day.”

The Chen-Huang Center will advance care and research through the seamless integration of preclinical, translational, and clinical research, including new trials and studies for patients with EGFR-mutant lung cancers to ultimately help refine therapeutic approaches in cancer care. In addition to the center, the $5 million gift will also support educational opportunities to share discoveries and best practices.

When Chen and Huang began looking into the extensive work the Institute is doing to treat patients with lung cancer, they were struck by the discoveries Jänne and his colleagues had made. In 2004, Jänne and other investigators at Dana-Farber discovered that a subset of lung cancers exhibited mutations in the EGFR gene, helping to catalyze the entire field of precision medicine for patients with lung cancer and leading Dana-Farber to become the first center in the United States to begin routine clinical testing for EGFR mutations. EGFR inhibitors are now used instead of chemotherapy as the first-line therapy for newly diagnosed patients with advanced EGFR-mutant lung cancers. Encouraged by this work, the couple decided to help further Jänne’s research by creating the Chen-Huang Center for EGFR Mutant Lung Cancers.

“Even with significant advances forged by physician-scientists at Dana-Farber and elsewhere, new and novel treatment approaches for patients with EGFR-mutant lung cancers are needed,” said Jänne. “This gift will help us continue to be a leader in cancer care and research.”

With their gift, Winston and Phyllis also hope to advance the care and research of EGFR-mutant lung cancers through education. An annual Chen-Huang seminar in EGFR-mutant lung cancers will facilitate the exchange of information between clinicians and researchers within the Dana-Farber community, ultimately attracting trainees and inspiring collaborative work projects with EGFR-mutant lung cancer experts around the world.

A groundbreaking discovery

In 2004, Pasi Jänne, MD, PhD, Bruce Johnson, MD, Matthew Meyerson, MD, PhD, and their colleagues found that a subset of patients with non-small cell lung cancer responded well to a drug designed to inhibit a growth-promoting protein known as EGFR. Genetic analysis revealed that the responders’ lung tumors had mutations in the gene that gives rise to EGFR, whereas non-responders lacked such mutations.

This seminal discovery demonstrated the importance of tailoring lung cancer treatment to the specific mutations driving tumor growth in each patient—the birth of precision medicine for lung cancer.

A multidisciplinary approach

The Chen-Huang Center for EGFR Mutant Lung Cancers will advance the research and care of patients through the seamless integration of preclinical, translational, and clinical research. A multidisciplinary clinical care team will include experts in:

- Medical oncology
- Radiation oncology
- Thoracic surgery
- Pulmonary medicine
- Molecular pathology
- Radiology
- Social work

Phyllis and I hope our gift will bring much needed attention to lung cancer and illustrate how vital financial support is for making discoveries. We support Dr. Jänne and Dana-Farber because of their impressive centers, research facilities, and the discoveries they are making every day.”

— WINSTON CHEN

EGFR MUTATIONS DRIVE LUNG CANCER IN ▶ 15% OF PATIENTS IN U.S. & EUROPE ▶ 50% OF PATIENTS IN ASIA

Bruce Johnson, MD, (left) and Matthew Meyerson, MD, PhD.
Since 1993, the Prostate Cancer Foundation (PCF) has held true to its mission, funding the world’s most promising research to improve the prevention, detection, and treatment of prostate cancer.

The efforts of PCF over the past quarter century have enabled tremendous progress. In this time, the number of prostate cancer–specific drugs approved by the FDA has increased from seven to 30, with more in the pipeline.

Today, as one of the world’s leading philanthropic organizations dedicated to the research and eradication of the disease, PCF continues to catalyze progress through their funding, including steadfast support of research at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. Recently, PCF surpassed $25 million in cumulative giving to Dana-Farber. Members of both communities gathered to celebrate this milestone and to recognize PCF’s exceptional partnership.

“For more than 25 years, PCF has been at the forefront of bringing together great minds to collaborate,” said Howard Soule, PhD, executive vice president and chief science officer at PCF. “We take pride in partnering with global institutions, like Dana-Farber, giving scientists the flexibility to fail in order to succeed boldly, and to unlock the mysteries of prostate cancer that will ultimately bring new treatments to patients.”

PCF remains focused on a cancer-free future, extending their legacy of partnership and research. In 2019, PCF awarded $1.225 million to Dana-Farber’s Elezer Van Allen, MD, and Xiao Xiao Wei, MD, MAS.

Van Allen was granted the Challenge Award, which aims to support transformational prostate cancer research that will accelerate progress toward the reduction of death and suffering due to recurrent or advanced disease. Van Allen is part of a cross-disciplinary team of investigators using computational methods to create new algorithms that will help scientists use electronic medical records to find the best ways to treat patients.

PCF also offers support for young investigators who are committing their lives to the field of prostate cancer, including Wei, who received a Young Investigator Award.

Wei is conducting a phase 2 trial that will help determine the activity of immune checkpoint immunotherapy combined with hormonal therapy and chemotherapy in patients with newly diagnosed prostate cancer that has metastasized at initial diagnosis. In contrast to other largely disappointing immunotherapy trials in advanced hormone resistant prostate cancer, patients in this clinical trial have not received prior treatment, and upfront hormonal therapy and chemotherapy may make their tumors more susceptible to immunotherapy.

“The Young Investigator Award gives me the resources needed to examine novel biomarkers in blood and tumor tissues collected in this clinical trial, which may help to define which patients most benefit from this three-pronged treatment approach,” said Wei. “I am extremely appreciative of the PCF’s support, which is critical to my early career focused on developing successful immunotherapy strategies to help patients and families.”

Bells support innovative patient-centered research and care

As a retired doctor, Douglas Bell sees the value in supporting the cutting-edge research and patient care at Dana-Farber. As a former stem cell transplant patient of Dana-Farber’s Robert Soiffer, MD, he also knows the value of it firsthand.

“I’m indebted to Dr. Soiffer and the people at Dana-Farber,” said Bell. “As doctors, we talk about the importance of patient-centered care, and Dana-Farber does it better than anywhere.”

Building upon their previous support of Soiffer’s research into graft-versus-host disease (GVHD), Bell and his wife recently established the Michelle D. and Douglas W. Bell Fund for Engineered Adoptive Immunotherapy with a gift of $500,000. The funding allows Soiffer, who is chief of the Division of Hematologic Malignancies and co-chief of Stem Cell Transplantation and Cellular Therapies, to explore new patient-centered projects in hematologic oncology.

One of these projects is led by Rozwan Romee, MD, director of the Haploidentical Donor Transplantation Program, who is studying avenues to harness natural killer (NK) cells for cancer treatment. NK cells are aggressive immune cells that can attack disease cells at a moment’s notice—an ideal quality for eliminating cancer. However, because NK cells do not possess a memory function, they are less likely to remember and recognize cancer cells, and attack again. Romee’s team is working to change that.

“We have discovered how to create ‘memory-like’ NK cells, enhancing them with an ability to gain memory function, proliferate inside the body, and persist longer than standard NK cells,” said Romee. “With the Bells’ generous funding, we can continue identifying ways to use these cells to our advantage, creating another avenue of treatment, especially in patients who have relapsed after stem cell transplant.”

“We wanted to make an impact now, on the most promising research,” said Bell. “Based on the progress made from our previous gift to GVHD, we’re excited about this new direction that will give hope to many more patients.”

Prostate Cancer Foundation celebrates $25 million milestone and catalyzes continued partnership

Prostate Cancer Foundation Curing Together.

Above (from left), Dana-Farber’s Toni Choueiri, MD, director of the Lank Center for Genitourinary Oncology and the Jerome and Nancy Kohlberg Professor of Medicine, and Himisha Beltran, MD, present a commemorative Dana-Farber lab coat to Jonathan Simons, MD, president and chief executive officer of Prostate Cancer Foundation. Below, PCF also offers support for young investigators who are committing their lives to the field of prostate cancer, including Wei, who received a Young Investigator Award.

Wei is conducting a phase 2 trial that will help determine the activity of immune checkpoint immunotherapy combined with hormonal therapy and chemotherapy in patients with newly diagnosed prostate cancer that has metastasized at initial diagnosis. In contrast to other largely disappointing immunotherapy trials in advanced hormone resistant prostate cancer, patients in this clinical trial have not received prior treatment, and upfront hormonal therapy and chemotherapy may make their tumors more susceptible to immunotherapy.

“The Young Investigator Award gives me the resources needed to examine novel biomarkers in blood and tumor tissues collected in this clinical trial, which may help to define which patients most benefit from this three-pronged treatment approach,” said Wei. “I am extremely appreciative of the PCF’s support, which is critical to my early career focused on developing successful immunotherapy strategies to help patients and families.”

Do you have a Donor-Advised Fund?

Recommend a grant from your donor-advised fund to Dana-Farber and the Jimmy Fund, and support our shared mission to conquer cancer.

Please visit Dana-Farber.org/DAF or contact Dana-Farber’s Philanthropy Office at 617-632-6099.
Paul and Susan Sugarman are longstanding members of the Dana-Farber community. Susan is a three-time cancer survivor and has been treated for both breast and endometrial cancers at the Institute over the past 30 years. The Sugarmans were initially referred to Dana-Farber by their close friend and neighbor Jay Harris, MD, former chair of the Department of Radiation Oncology at Dana-Farber, and their “superb experiences” with faculty and staff further inspired them to become benefactors of the Institute.

“Susan has always felt that everyone at Dana-Farber—oncologists, radiologists, nurses, and more—has her back,” said Paul. “The staff listened to our concerns and explained everything, so there were no surprises. We are immensely grateful for the care Susan received, and choose to give back to the Institute in hope that many others can be cured.”

Recently, the Sugarmans committed $6.25 million to women’s cancers research at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. A $250,000 gift established the Susan J. and Paul R. Sugarman Breast Cancer Radiation Oncology Research Fund to support the research of Jennifer Bellon, MD, director of Breast Radiation Oncology. An additional $6 million bequest will create the Susan and Paul Sugarman Endowed Fund for Women’s Cancers under the leadership of Eric P. Winer, MD, chief of the Division of Breast Oncology, director of the Breast Oncology Center in the Susan F. Smith Center for Women’s Cancers, and the Thompson Chair in Breast Cancer Research. The Susan J. and Paul R. Sugarman Breast Cancer Radiation Oncology Research Fund will support Bellon in leading a phase 2 clinical trial investigating whether it is safe to omit radiation treatment for women with low-risk breast cancer.

“The generosity of the Sugarmans will allow us to determine if radiation therapy is truly needed to treat all types of breast cancer,” said Bellon. “The side effects of radiation are often unpleasant, and if women with low-risk breast cancer are able to achieve favorable results without radiation, it would improve the quality of life for many patients undergoing treatment.”

The Susan and Paul Sugarman Endowed Fund for Women’s Cancers will support the faculty within the Division of Women’s Cancers as well as the Institute’s research endeavors to advance the understanding, diagnosis, treatment, cure, and prevention of women’s cancers and related diseases.

“With the support of the Sugarmans, we will be able to prioritize research for the most pressing areas of women’s cancers for years to come,” said Winer, who is also Dana-Farber’s chief clinical strategy officer and senior vice president for medical affairs and faculty advancement. “Faculty at the Susan F. Smith Center for Women’s Cancers continue to work tirelessly to address the needs of our patients and provide more personalized treatment options for complex and genetic diseases. I am confident that this magnanimous gift will play a pivotal role in the advancement of Institute priorities, including immunotherapy and the management of metastatic breast cancer, and allow our patients to live longer, fuller lives.”

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With visionary support from Paul and Susan Sugarman, Jennifer Bellon, MD, (left) and Eric P. Winer, MD, (right) are leading innovative initiatives to improve treatment for breast cancer patients.

Dana-Farber’s pioneering approach to women’s cancers

The Susan F. Smith Center for Women’s Cancers at Dana-Farber was formed more than 20 years ago to bridge patient care facilities with corresponding research labs so that studying and treating all women’s cancers could take place under one roof, with seamless integration. This comprehensive bench-to-bedside approach enables physician-scientists to rapidly exchange laboratory and clinical findings with the goal of developing more effective, better tolerated treatments.

EMBRACE CURRENTLY TREATS 2,300 MBC PATIENTS

A special focus on MBC

Metastatic breast cancer (MBC)—cancer that has spread to distant parts of the body—currently has no cure. Dana-Farber’s metastatic breast cancer program, Ending Metastatic Breast Cancer for Everyone (EMBRACE), is spearheading clinical trials to ensure that patients with every subtype of metastatic breast cancer can receive the tailored care and support they need. One of these trials led to accelerated FDA approval in 2019 of a new treatment for HER2-positive metastatic disease.
O ne of the most admirable things a person can do is to give what they have to something greater than themselves. For Linda R. Sassaman, a lifelong teacher in the Boston Public Schools system, that guiding purpose was to reach young children, spread joy, and create community for everyone she encountered. Before Linda passed away in 2018, she made her ultimate intentions clear: she wanted to continue building community by helping people and families. Knowing that Dana-Farber mirrors this cause, and grateful for the compassionate care she received there, Linda chose to leave her legacy in the capable hands of the Institute’s dedicated researchers, clinicians, and caregivers.

Thus inspired, and enabled by a simple and meaningful lifestyle along with sound investments, Sassaman made a $1 million gift to the Institute through her estate, specifically by naming Dana-Farber as primary beneficiary of her retirement and investment accounts. Per her wishes, this generous gift was allocated evenly to support multiple myeloma research, leukemia research, and unrestricted funding. These specific allocations were rooted in Linda’s personal experiences as a patient with monoclonal gammopathy of unknown significance, or MGUS, a precursor condition to multiple myeloma; as a young daughter who watched her mother pass away from leukemia; and finally as an advocate who provided flexible resources as she was able to nonprofit organizations like Dana-Farber.

Jacob Laubach, MD, her physician and clinical director of Dana-Farber’s Jerome Lipper Multiple Myeloma Center, remembers Linda as someone who exuded care and concern for others. He noted that her thoughtful contribution—the first posthumous gift he has received in his 12 years of practice—was consistent with her altruistic character. “This gift is so reflective of the type of person Linda was,” Laubach said. “She chose to share this with the intention of improving the lives of patients with blood cancer who followed her. It’s an extraordinary act of generosity and a wonderful legacy.” To that end, Laubach is utilizing his team’s portion of Linda’s legacy as seed funding for a novel clinical initiative that supports patient wellness. Like fellow members of the Dana-Farber Society, a special group of forward-thinking donors who have invested in the Institute’s future by making a planned or deferred gift, Linda Sassaman leaves a lasting legacy that inspires the Dana-Farber community and benefits patients for years to come.

Dick Morin recently made a $150,000 gift to bolster these efforts. The Morins have supported Dana-Farber for more than two decades, with this gift marking their largest investment in pediatric cancer research to date.

It was a visit to the Institute that inspired their tremendous generosity. The Morins saw the exposed steel beams where ironworkers painted the names of Jimmy Fund Clinic patients, as well as the space honoring the partnership between the Red Sox and Jimmy Fund, and were greatly moved. “We have been very lucky in that our children and grandchildren are healthy,” said Dick Morin. “That day, we decided that we wanted to help other children so that they would have an opportunity to live a full life.”

With the Morins’ funding, Kamihara is building a patient registry and biobank of specimens, performing sequencing for families with a long family history of cancer, and searching for new hereditary genes causing childhood cancer.

“If it is such a privilege to partner with the Morins,” said Kamihara, “Armed with the knowledge of why a child develops cancer, we can implement early screenings and provide personalized treatment plans for those who have inheritable cancer.”

Through Dana-Farber’s Pediatric Cancer Genetic Risk Program led by Junne Kamihara, MD, PhD, families are becoming empowered by learning about their child’s cancer risk, as well as how best to manage that risk. Acknowledging the importance of preventive medicine, Dick and Pat Morin recently made a $150,000 gift to bolster these efforts. The Morins have supported Dana-Farber for more than two decades, with this gift marking their largest investment in pediatric cancer research to date.

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Dick and Pat Morin are supporting the Pediatric Cancer Genetic Risk Program, one of the largest programs of its kind in the world.
Anonymous donor drives lung cancer research with $2 million gift

An anonymous donor has given $2 million through the Antidote Health Foundation for Cure of Cancer to support lung cancer research by Pasi Janne, MD, PhD, director of Dana-Farber’s Carole M. and Philip L. Lowe Center for Thoracic Oncology.

The donor established the foundation to enable cancer drug discovery by encouraging scientists to take greater risks in pursuing innovative research. After a family member was diagnosed with lung cancer, the donor directed funds from the foundation to sponsor Dana-Farber research aimed at helping patients facing similar challenges.

“The possibility of treating lung cancer as a chronic condition is agonizingly close yet painfully remote for millions of patients,” said Yibing Shan, PhD, president of the foundation. “It is the donor’s sincere hope that this gift will bring us closer to transforming lung cancer from a deadly disease to a persistent yet manageable condition.”

The gift will support Janne’s efforts to develop new medicines that target EGFR—a protein mutated in 10 to 15 percent of non-small cell lung cancers. Janne and his colleagues played a key role in demonstrating that drugs designed to inhibit mutant EGFR are highly effective against such tumors. However, over time, the tumors inevitably become resistant to these medicines due to the accumulation of additional mutations in EGFR and other cancer-promoting proteins, leading to disease relapse.

In collaboration with Nathanael Gray, PhD, director of the Linde Family Program in Cancer Chemical Biology and the Nancy Lurie Marks Professor of Biological Chemistry and Molecular Pharmacology in the Field of Medical Oncology, Janne will use funds from the Antidote Health Foundation to design novel chemicals that inhibit drug-resistant forms of EGFR.

One drug design strategy will focus on agents known as EGFR allosteric inhibitors. Unlike standard EGFR inhibitors, which directly interfere with EGFR’s enzymatic activities, allosteric inhibitors change EGFR’s overall shape in a way that impedes the protein’s activity. Another approach exploits the fact that EGFR molecules must form pairs in order to switch on their enzymatic activities. Janne, Gray, and their colleagues are developing chemicals that interfere with this pairing process to block mutant EGFR. Yet another project will aim to eliminate mutant EGFR altogether with degraders—compounds that hijack a cell’s protein disposal machinery to destroy cancer-driving proteins. Because all of these agents target EGFR in ways that differ markedly from standard EGFR inhibitors, they have the potential to overcome drug-resistant forms of EGFR-driven lung cancer.

“I am extremely grateful for the donor’s support of this important work,” said Janne who is also the director of the Robert and Renée Belfer Center for Applied Cancer Science and the director of the Chen-Huang Center for EGFR Mutant Lung Cancers. “The research made possible by this gift could lead to new treatments for patients with EGFR-driven lung cancer who have run out of other therapeutic options.”

“Is it the donor’s sincere hope that this gift will bring us closer to transforming lung cancer from a deadly disease to a persistent yet manageable condition.”

— YIBING SHAN, PHD, president of Antidote Health Foundation for Cure of Cancer

Board of Trustees Elects New Members

Dana-Farber Cancer Institute’s Board of Trustees recently announced the election of seven new members to the Board. Tim Cohen is co-head of the Equity Division at Fidelity Investments, a leading provider of investment management, retirement planning, and other services to individuals and institutions. Nancy Lotane is managing director and chief human resources officer at Bain Capital, one of the world’s leading private investment firms. Fatima Penrose is senior managing director and director of human capital, one of the world’s leading private investment firms. One of the key roles of the Board is to ensure that the Institute is well-managed and that the Board members provide strategic advice to the leadership team.

Jodi Walker is a former assistant district attorney in Middlesex County, Mass., and a former pension fund as well as the assets of participating municipal and county retirement systems. Jennifer Daniels is a former employee at Bain Capital, one of the world’s leading private investment firms. She is managing director and chief human resources officer at Bain Capital, one of the world’s leading private investment firms.

Pictured from left: Lotane, Cohen, Svanberg, Penrose, Trotsky, Board Chairman Josh Bekenstein, and Walker.

Family Honors Loved One through Fundraising

Amy DiAdamo Foster is remembered best for her warm, engaging demeanor, her empathy and compassion, and her love for bringing people together, especially through sports and outdoor activities. These qualities are celebrated each year at the Run for Amy Memorial Trail Race, which raises money for lifesaving research and care at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, where Amy was treated for a rare form of adrenal cancer.

“We were so impressed by Amy’s care team and the quality of the care she received. We knew we were in good hands at Dana-Farber,” said Franklin Foster, Amy’s husband. “Amy was very warm and community-oriented, and loved a fun party, so we wanted to create this special event to bring friends and community together to raise money for this cause.”

The Run for Amy team recently pledged $100,000 to establish the Amy DiAdamo Foster Fund, which will provide unrestricted support for the Institute. Unrestricted gifts provide flexible support for research and care initiatives throughout Dana-Farber, from innovative basic research, to the purchase of state-of-the-art equipment, to programs that enhance our signature “total patient care” for patients at Dana-Farber’s main campus and at outpatient facilities close to where they live and work.

“A gift like this supports a broad range of areas in need of funding, something we felt would be important to Amy,” said Jennifer Daniels, friend and co-organizer. “She was so involved in her community, always thinking of how to impact the broadest possible universe.”

Pasi Jänne, MD, PhD, will use funds from the Antidote Health Foundation for Cure of Cancer to develop new compounds that counter drug resistance in EGFR-driven lung cancer.

“Total patient care” for patients at Dana-Farber’s main campus and at outpatient facilities close to where they live and work.

“A gift like this supports a broad range of areas in need of funding, something we felt would be important to Amy,” said Jennifer Daniels, friend and co-organizer. “She was so involved in her community, always thinking of how to impact the broadest possible universe.”

Jack Foster runs in honor of his mother, Amy DiAdamo Foster, every year at the Run for Amy Memorial Trail Race to raise money for Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.
Hirsches support innovative clinical trials research

Before a new drug makes it to pharmacy shelves, physician-scientists test the therapy for safety and effectiveness through clinical trials. Dana-Farber’s Office of Clinical Research facilitates the creation of clinical trials at the Institute, ensuring the trials are safe for participating patients and will yield meaningful data to propel experimental therapies toward FDA approval. Additionally, Chief Clinical Research Officer Bruce Johnson, MD, trains young investigators in effective trial design and supports promising investigator-led studies.

To advance this critically important work, Micki and Steven Hirsch made a gift of $100,000 to establish the Hirsch Family Fund for the Office of Clinical Research, under Johnson’s direction. “We are grateful to the Hirsches for their forward-thinking gift that is fostering innovation and accelerating the delivery of better therapies to patients everywhere,” said Johnson. “In fact, this generous support is helping one of our physician-scientists launch a trial aimed at lessening treatment side effects for patients on a particular drug.”

A 26-year member of the Friends of Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, Micki Hirsch has a deep appreciation for the work of Dana-Farber physician-scientists and the need for funding. “Dana-Farber’s doctors are all doing such wonderful research,” said Hirsch. “We hope that our gift will give these doctors the opportunity to explore new ideas, bring new therapies to patients, and improve patient outcomes.”

Compassionate care inspires gift to sarcoma research

During seven years of treatment for retroperitoneal liposarcoma, Iris Rogers found great compassion in her Dana-Farber care team led by Suzanne George, MD. To remember Iris, who passed away in 2011, and express gratitude for her care, her family recently made a $250,000 gift through the Ernst and Paula Deutsch Foundation in support of sarcoma research at Dana-Farber. The gift also supports the Presidential Initiatives Fund, and named an exam room in the Yawkey Center for Cancer Care for Iris. “Dana-Farber was wonderful to Iris. There was such a connection between her and her caregivers,” said Larry, Iris’s husband. “This gift is a way not only to fund Dana-Farber’s research, but also to honor Iris’s entire care team.”

“My mom was always thinking of others,” said Iris’s son, Matt. “She’d be happy to know we’re supporting research that will bring hope to more people.”

George, the director of clinical research in the Sarcoma Center, remembers and thinks of Iris’s thoughtfulness fondly and frequently—she still wears a scarf Iris gave to her during treatment. “I’m so grateful to receive this funding from Iris’s family,” said George. “Their generosity will help us advance clinical trials to bring urgently needed therapies to sarcoma patients.”

“Dana-Farber clinical trials gave my mom the chance to see many family milestones—my high school and college graduations, going to law school,” said Iris’s daughter, Heather. “We’re happy to give, with the hope that other families may have opportunities to share their own moments like these.”

Tina’s Wish drives research to detect ovarian cancer early

Almost 80% of women with ovarian cancer are diagnosed at an advanced stage, when there is a diminished chance for a cure, according to the American Cancer Society. A test to detect ovarian cancer early could transform the outlook for this disease in the same way the Pap smear test has made cervical cancer almost completely preventable and treatable.

“Pap smears reveal proteins and biomarkers that are being produced by precancerous and cancerous cells in the cervix,” said Sarah Hill, MD, PhD, a researcher in Dana-Farber’s Susan F. Smith Center for Women’s Cancers. “Our goal is to identify biomarkers generated by cells in the ovaries or the fallopian tube to achieve the same level of prevention in ovarian cancer.”

To that end, Hill is creating organoids—three-dimensional structures derived from human tissue—to study the genesis of ovarian cancer and identify tell-tale biomarkers that signal the transition to malignancy.

Tina’s Wish, a foundation solely dedicated to the prevention and early detection of ovarian cancer, is supporting Hill’s innovative research with a grant of $150,000.

“We are excited to invest in Dr. Hill’s novel research using organoids, which can greatly accelerate the pace of discovery,” said Amy Kyle, Esq., board chair of Tina’s Wish, Dana-Farber Trustee, and partner at Morgan, Lewis & Bockius. “It is our hope that in the near future, any woman will be able to receive a routine test in her doctor’s office that can detect ovarian cancer at its earliest stage or before it ever develops, allowing her to live a long, productive life.”

Tina’s Wish was founded in 2008 in memory of the Honorable Tina Brozman, a former chief judge of the SDNY U.S. Bankruptcy Court, who died two years after she was diagnosed with ovarian cancer.

Extra Mile Award presented at Golf Appreciation Night

Jimmy Fund Golf Appreciation Night, held on March 6 at the Boston Marriott Newton, brought together volunteer golf tournament directors and committee members to celebrate another tremendous golf season, with more than 160 tournaments and events raising a record $8.2 million in 2019. Siblings Carla and Tommy Cosenza (above), organizers of the Tom Cosenza “Driving for the Cure” Charity Golf Tournament, were honored with the Ken Coleman Extra Mile Award, which is given to longtime volunteers who go above and beyond in support of Dana-Farber’s lifesaving mission.

The tournament celebrated surpassing the $1 million cumulative fundraising mark in 2019. Now in its 12th year, Carla and Tommy continue to bring together family, friends, and colleagues for this special day in memory of their father, Tom, who passed away from brain cancer in 2009. Tom was the founder of TommyCar Auto Group, a business Carla and Tommy run today in Western Massachusetts. Throughout treatment, Tom’s wish was for his loved ones to continue to raise money for neuro-oncology research so the burden of cancer can be eliminated for patients and families. Tom’s vision was realized through this annual sell-out event which supports the work of Patrick Wen, MD, director of Dana-Farber’s Center for Neuro-Oncology.
Damon Runyon Cancer Research Foundation supports the best and brightest in cancer research

Since 1946, the Damon Runyon Cancer Research Foundation has provided critical seed funding to early career scientists conducting powerful, innovative research across cancer types aimed at bringing an end to these devastating diseases. The foundation was created to honor the iconic sportswriter and journalist Damon Runyon, who tragically passed away from throat cancer—but whose legacy still reverberates throughout the world today as a direct result of the foundation’s tremendous work.

Building on this legacy, the Damon Runyon Cancer Research Foundation recently made grants totaling $2.2 million to five Dana-Farber investigators: Edmond Chan, MD; Eric Fischer, PhD; Jasper Neggers, PhD; Matthew Oser, MD, PhD; and Geoffrey Oxnard, MD. These awards span a number of the foundation’s grantmaking programs—demonstrating the enormous scope of Dana-Farber’s scientific expertise, as well as the depth and breadth of Damon Runyon’s commitment to supporting the world’s most groundbreaking cancer researchers at every stage of their careers.

Yung S. Lie, PhD, Damon Runyon’s president and CEO, noted, “We’re very pleased to give five new Damon Runyon awards to scientists at Dana-Farber. The members of our selection committees felt confident their proposed projects would lead to significant contributions to the field of cancer research, and we’re proud to support their work.”

Chan received the Physician-Scientist Training Award to drive translational studies aimed at targeting vulnerabilities in a subtype of colon, stomach, uterine, and ovarian cancers defined by a phenomenon known as microsatellite instability (MSI). Fischer received the Damon Runyon-Rachleff Innovation Award to support his efforts to develop small molecules known as degraders that, unlike other targeted cancer therapies, work by disposing of cancer-driving proteins instead of blocking their activity. With his Postdoctoral Fellowship Award, Oser is studying whether disabling a specific gene required for more than 50% of pancreatic cancers could represent a new potential drug target for this lethal disease. Oser and Oxnard each received Clinical Investigator Awards to encourage the translation of laboratory discoveries into more effective treatments for patients with small cell lung cancer and non-small cell lung cancer, respectively.

These awards represent a continuation of Damon Runyon’s long funding history, which has resulted in grants totaling nearly $375 million to more than 3,750 exceptional scientists since its founding. By providing such essential support—and filling in the gaps left by traditional funding sources—the foundation ensures that the next generation of investigators have the backing they need to make game-changing breakthroughs in cancer science.

“I am honored to have received a Damon Runyon Clinical Investigator Award,” said Oser. “This prestigious award will enable me to conduct important studies in small cell lung cancer, which almost always develops resistance to chemotheraphy, and see if we can find new therapeutic strategies to treat this disease. I am grateful for the foundation’s support, which frees up my time to focus where it’s needed most—on research.”

“We’re very pleased to give five new Damon Runyon awards to scientists at Dana-Farber. The members of our selection committees felt confident their proposed projects would lead to significant contributions to the field of cancer research, and we’re proud to support their work.”

— YUNG S. LIE, PhD, Damon Runyon’s president and CEO

Do Good. Feel Good.

SAVE 6% on your Arbella auto policy when you donate $50 or more to Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and the Jimmy Fund.

C elebrating its sixth year, the 2019 Fall Formal presented by Senné brought together young professionals in Boston to enjoy a black-tie evening with friends while giving back. Inspired by his family’s experience with Dana-Farber, Jonathan Kazarian partnered with his longtime friend Zach Hagopian to create an event that raises funds to support the Institute’s mission. The 2019 Fall Formal was a great success, raising an impressive $114,000.

Beginning in 2014 at the New England Aquarium, Fall Formal has been hosted at unique locations spanning the City of Boston, including Boston Children’s Museum and The Castle at Park Plaza. The 2019 event was held at Black Falcon Terminal in the Seaport and offered cocktails, hors d’oeuvres, a silent auction, and plenty of photo opportunities. Thanks to Big Party Orchestra, a high-energy 11-piece band featuring multiple horns, the dance floor was full the entire night.

With the help of an event committee, Jonathan and Zach have successfully grown Fall Formal and cumulatively raised more than $530,000 to benefit Dana-Farber’s cancer-fighting mission. Jonathan and Zach have big plans for continuing this very popular event.

“Our connection to Dana-Farber is strong, and engaging young professionals for a cause great means so much to us,” said Jonathan. “The enthusiasm of our guests, sponsors, and the committee make it all happen, and keep us motivated and excited to host this event year after year.”

Nearly 1,000 guests attended the 2019 Fall Formal, including founders Zach Hagopian and Jonathan Kazarian (front row, center), and the event planning committee.

*As a benefit to our donors, when eligible Massachusetts residents donate $50 or more to Dana-Farber and the Jimmy Fund, they may receive 6% off their Arbella auto policy.
Susan G. Komen celebrates 25 years of catalyzing careers in breast cancer research at Dana-Farber

For a quarter of a century, Susan G. Komen® has helped advance groundbreaking breast cancer research led by world-class investigators at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and its Susan F. Smith Center for Women’s Cancers. This steadfast partnership, which supports researchers at every stage of their career, continues to accelerate progress in treating, and one day curing, breast cancer.

“At Susan G. Komen, we are focused on doing everything we can to save lives and end breast cancer, including funding innovative research to discover breakthroughs for the most aggressive and deadly breast cancers,” said Paula Schneider, president and CEO.

“We are thrilled to celebrate our 25th year of partnering with Dana-Farber to advance our mission.”

In the past year, Susan G. Komen awarded grants to more than 10 Dana-Farber investigators, totaling $2.8 million in support. Among the recipients this year, three investigators received Career Catalyst Research Grants (CCR), which provide critical support to early career breast cancer investigators who are launching their own independent research programs. Judith Agudo, PhD, a CCR recipient, is using her Susan G. Komen funding to study how to harness the immune system to eliminate dormant breast cancer cells. “These ‘hibernating’ cancer cells, which can travel to new locations in the body and are at risk of forming metastatic tumors, are resistant to chemotherapy. Immunotherapy has significant potential to become an alternative treatment option to combat breast cancer,” says Agudo. “I am grateful to Susan G. Komen for their support of this promising research avenue.”

Ana Garrido-Castro, MD, is leveraging her CCR grant to study triple-negative breast cancer, a form of the disease lacking the typical targets for therapy. Her research seeks to improve our understanding of what drives triple-negative breast cancer to become metastatic, as well as identify factors that may put certain patients at higher risk of disease recurrence.

Another CCR recipient, Jose Pablo Leone, MD, is exploring new treatment strategies for breast cancer brain metastases. He is conducting two clinical trials testing novel drug combinations that target the cellular communication networks that metastatic cancer cells hijack to grow and survive.

Other Dana-Farber investigators receiving grants include Myles Brown, MD, director of the Center for Functional Cancer Epigenetics and the Emil Frei III, MD, Professor of Medicine; Rachel Freedman, MD, MPH, medical director of the Dana-Farber Cancer Care Collaborative; Ian Knop, MD, PhD, associate chief of the Division of Breast Oncology and clinical research director of the Breast Oncology Center; Jennifer Ligibel, MD, director of the Leonard P. Zakim Center for Integrative Therapies and Healthy Living; Ann Partridge, MD, MPH, founder and director of the Program for Young Women with Breast Cancer and director of the Adult Survivorship Program; Kornelia Polyak, MD, PhD; and Eric P. Winer, MD, chief of the Division of Breast Oncology, senior vice president for medical affairs and faculty advancement, and the Thompson Chair in Breast Cancer Research.

Bensonoff Family establishes fund to cure pediatric leukemia

When Kirill and Hanna Bensonoff first learned of their youngest child’s acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) diagnosis while on a family trip to Italy, they immediately knew they had to go for a second opinion, Kirill brought his family back home to Boston. The Bensonoff family wanted to help fund the research and development of modern medicine. Kirill and Hanna, along with Kirill’s father, Mark, set up the Bensonoff Family Fund to Cure Pediatric Leukemia with a gift of $100,000.

“From left: Judith Agudo, PhD; Ana Garrido-Castro, MD; and Jose Pablo Leone, MD, garnered generous Career Catalyst Research Grants from Susan G. Komen.

“If giving to Dana-Farber was something that would move us towards a cure, I was all in,” said Kirill. “I believe Dana-Farber will give us the best chance for a lasting solution to childhood and adult cancers, ending suffering for many families.”

This funding will allow Silverman and his team to analyze the results of past treatments and better predict outcomes based on the genomic characteristics of each cancer.

“In the last few years, our ability of research labs to genetically characterize leukemia has transformed the field,” said Silverman. “With support like the Bensonoff Family’s fund, we can use the research results to improve the next generation of therapies and trials for children with leukemia.”

Susan G. Komen celebrates 25 years of catalyzing careers in breast cancer research at Dana-Farber

Extra Mile Brunch celebrates participants of the Jimmy Fund Walk

In March, the Extra Mile Brunch celebrated participants of the 2019 Boston Marathon® Jimmy Fund Walk presented by Hyundai who raised more than $8.8 million for Dana-Farber. The 800 attendees included Pacesetters, captains and co-captains of teams that raised $10,000 or more, volunteer Site Captains, sponsors, and Jimmy Fund Walk Heroes. The event served as a kickoff for the 2020 Jimmy Fund Walk. Receiving the Extra Mile and Lifetime Achievement awards for team and individuals raising $250,000 or more are (from left): Janice Busco, Amy Killeen, Brian Wittlinsky, Ellen Caliendo, Janis Moriarty, Tara Shuman, Arnie Freedman, MD, Pelly Chang, Tim Samway (on behalf of his brother, Terry Samway), Elizabeth Kornold (on behalf of her father, Arnold Kraft), Paige Hauke (on behalf of her grandmother, Carole Hauke) and Chris Carlin. These award winners represent teams Tracks for Zachary M. Crawford, Team Tara, Ovarian Cancer Brigade, The Hema Team, Miles and Smiles, Powered by Pam, In Memory of Will Kraft, Team Samway/Team Bayside, and Jolly Good Fellows.

When Kirill and Hanna Bensonoff first learned of their youngest child’s acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) diagnosis while on a family trip to Italy, they immediately knew they wanted a second opinion for Sam. More than 4,000 miles away, Lewis Silverman, MD, was working on the latest advancements in ALL treatments at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. After a remote consult with Silverman for a second opinion, Kirill brought his family back home to Boston. The Bensonoff family wanted to help fund the research and development of modern medicine.

The Bensonoff family wanted to help fund the research and development of modern medicine. Kirill and Hanna, along with Kirill’s father, Mark, set up the Bensonoff Family Fund to Cure Pediatric Leukemia with a gift of $100,000.

“If giving to Dana-Farber was something that would move us towards a cure, I was all in,” said Kirill. “I believe Dana-Farber will give us the best chance for a lasting solution to childhood and adult cancers, ending suffering for many families.”

This funding will allow Silverman and his team to analyze the results of past treatments and better predict outcomes based on the genomic characteristics of each cancer.

“In the last few years, our ability of research labs to genetically characterize leukemia has transformed the field,” said Silverman. “With support like the Bensonoff Family’s fund, we can use the research results to improve the next generation of therapies and trials for children with leukemia.”

Susan G. Komen celebrates 25 years of catalyzing careers in breast cancer research at Dana-Farber

For a quarter of a century, Susan G. Komen® has helped advance groundbreaking breast cancer research led by world-class investigators at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and its Susan F. Smith Center for Women’s Cancers. This steadfast partnership, which supports researchers at every stage of their career, continues to accelerate progress in treating, and one day curing, breast cancer.

“At Susan G. Komen, we are focused on doing everything we can to save lives and end breast cancer, including funding innovative research to discover breakthroughs for the most aggressive and deadly breast cancers,” said Paula Schneider, president and CEO.

“We are thrilled to celebrate our 25th year of partnering with Dana-Farber to advance our mission.”

In the past year, Susan G. Komen awarded grants to more than 10 Dana-Farber investigators, totaling $2.8 million in support. Among the recipients this year, three investigators received Career Catalyst Research Grants (CCR), which provide critical support to early career breast cancer investigators who are launching their own independent research programs. Judith Agudo, PhD, a CCR recipient, is using her Susan G. Komen funding to study how to harness the immune system to eliminate dormant breast cancer cells. “These ‘hibernating’ cancer cells, which can travel to new locations in the body and are at risk of forming metastatic tumors, are resistant to chemotherapy. Immunotherapy has significant potential to become an alternative treatment option to combat breast cancer,” says Agudo. “I am grateful to Susan G. Komen for their support of this promising research avenue.”

Ana Garrido-Castro, MD, is leveraging her CCR grant to study triple-negative breast cancer, a form of the disease lacking the typical targets for therapy. Her research seeks to improve our understanding of what drives triple-negative breast cancer to become metastatic, as well as identify factors that may put certain patients at higher risk of disease recurrence.

Another CCR recipient, Jose Pablo Leone, MD, is exploring new treatment strategies for breast cancer brain metastases. He is conducting two clinical trials testing novel drug combinations that target the cellular communication networks that metastatic cancer cells hijack to grow and survive.

Other Dana-Farber investigators receiving grants include Myles Brown, MD, director of the Center for Functional Cancer Epigenetics and the Emil Frei III, MD, Professor of Medicine; Rachel Freedman, MD, MPH, medical director of the Dana-Farber Cancer Care Collaborative; Ian Knop, MD, PhD, associate chief of the Division of Breast Oncology and clinical research director of the Breast Oncology Center; Jennifer Ligibel, MD, director of the Leonard P. Zakim Center for Integrative Therapies and Healthy Living; Ann Partridge, MD, MPH, founder and director of the Program for Young Women with Breast Cancer and director of the Adult Survivorship Program; Kornelia Polyak, MD, PhD; and Eric P. Winer, MD, chief of the Division of Breast Oncology, senior vice president for medical affairs and faculty advancement, and the Thompson Chair in Breast Cancer Research.
Edward P. Evans Foundation grants support advancement of research for MDS

The Edward P. Evans Foundation recently committed over $1.9 million in the form of five grants to investigators at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute to continue researching the genetic mutations that cause myelodysplastic syndromes (MDS). This funding expands a longstanding relationship between Dana-Farber and the Edward P. Evans Foundation, which includes a remarkable $5 million gift in September 2019 to create the Edward P. Evans Center for Myelodysplastic Syndromes at Dana-Farber.

MDS are a group of diseases in which the bone marrow makes too few healthy blood cells. Patients with MDS often suffer from debilitating fatigue and may require regular blood transfusions. Some patients with MDS are also at risk for infection or bleeding due to low white blood cell count or platelet count, and at least 20% of patients with MDS will develop acute myeloid leukemia (AML). This funding expands a longstanding relationship between the Edward P. Evans Foundation and the support it provides our investigators,” said Glimcher. “Our partnership is imperative for the advancement of MDS research and care. These generous grants will fund the necessary exploration of genetic predispositions for MDS, which is research that might inform new treatment opportunities for the diseases.”

The research in Glimcher’s lab has uncovered a direct relationship between the immune system and the shortage of blood-forming cells that in part characterizes MDS. With this most recent grant from the Edward P. Evans Foundation, Glimcher can continue this work by exploring how a protein called RIK2 might impact different cell types in the immune system and how it affects blood-forming cells. This understanding could provide new immune-targeted therapies, eventually improving the quality of life for patients with MDS.

“By funding the research taking place at Dana-Farber, we are confident that the grant recipients will pioneer a new wave of discoveries that will advance the diagnosis and treatment of MDS and improve the lives of patients.”

— MICHAEL LEWIS, PHD, president of the Edward P. Evans Foundation

Golden Sneaker Awards recognize Dana-Farber employees

Last fall, Dana-Farber held its sixth annual Golden Sneaker Awards to recognize employees for their participation in the 2019 Boston Marathon® Jimmy Fund Walk presented by Hyundai. Nearly 550 employees participated and helped the Jimmy Fund Walk raise more than $8.8 million for the Institute. The Pacesetter Power Award was presented to Team Head and Neck, led by Jason Glass, ACNP-BC. The Rookie of the Year award was presented to Team Amyloidosis, captained by Giada Bianchi, MD. The Excellence in Fundraising award was presented to Team Neuro captained by Deb LaFrankie, RN, OCN. And, the Staff Spotlight award was presented to Marion Case of the Division of Philanthropy for her efforts in promoting the Jimmy Fund Walk for more than 23 years.

From left: Marion Case; Dennis Hamilton of Team Amyloidosis; Jason Glass, ACNP-BC; and Deb LaFrankie, RN, OCN.

Kaplans commit new gift to lung cancer research

Building on their longtime support, Robert Kaplan and Debra Stokes Kaplan recently renewed their commitment to lung cancer research at Dana-Farber through a $125,000 gift to the Carole M. and Philip L. Lowe Center for Thoracic Oncology. The couple has been deeply involved with Dana-Farber for years, through philanthropic giving as well as serving on the Presidential Visiting Committee for the Lowe Center for Thoracic Oncology, an advisory committee that provides counsel to the president and helps secure resources that support the Institute’s mission.

“Dana-Farber has a personal touch. They make you feel like you’re part of a family,” said Robert. “Through events like Visiting Committee, we’re able to stay involved and informed about the research and care.”

Thanks to previous support from the Kaplans, the Lowe Center has made significant strides in research and care for lung cancers, and this new gift will build on that momentum by supporting research led by Matthew Oser, MD, PhD. Oser is using gene-editing technology to identify novel targeted therapies for small cell lung cancer, which makes up 15–20% of all lung cancer diagnoses.

“Robert and Debra’s new commitment provides necessary resources to expand my work,” said Oser. “I am grateful for their confidence in my research as we seek to discover new treatment options for small cell lung cancer patients.”

“We have a desire to help,” said Debra. “I would like to see more people saved, and we’re hopeful that contributing to this research will accomplish that.”

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Building on its previous gift of $1 million, the de Gunzburg Myeloma Research Foundation (DGMRF) strengthened its commitment to early stage fundamental research for multiple myeloma with an additional $150,000. This will support Paul Richardson, MD, and Constantine Mitsiades, MD, PhD, to further develop novel therapeutics and enhance the recruitment of early career scientists and physicians.

Baron Vivien de Gunzburg founded DGMRF in 2012 to find a cure to myeloma, the second most common hematologic malignancy. Myeloma remains an ancient and incurable form of blood cancer, despite important advances over the last 20 years. “I wanted to fight myeloma and sought to help patients like me who may also navigate the long and challenging path of this rare cancer. There is hope,” said de Gunzburg, a myeloma survivor himself for 17 years.

“Together with amazing friends and family who care about this overlooked and intellectually challenging disease—while foreseeing its increasing prevalence—we are helping research move quicker than myeloma itself.” de Gunzburg continued, “DGMRF reaffirms its steadfast confidence in the utmost experienced, skilled, and creative specialists in the world. Their dedication is second to none.”

Richardson and Mitsiades, in close partnership with their colleagues and team members at the Jerome Lipper Multiple Myeloma Center, and with vital support from DGMRF, are among the largest contributors of myeloma therapies developed to date, and have been involved in more than 20 of 26 FDA approvals over the last 17 years, including 11 new drugs. Moreover, as a world-class and dedicated cancer research institution, Dana-Farber has contributed to numerous other new therapies for many types of cancer beyond multiple myeloma. “Myeloma is the battle between David and Goliath. Real breakthroughs take perseverance. We are so grateful for Vivien and his foundation’s continued partnership, which is highly engaged and deeply personal with a bond of true friendship,” said Richardson. “This funding allows us to expand our research significantly and accelerate personalized treatment, advance novel therapeutics, and improve care for patients worldwide.”

Dana-Farber – Merrimack Valley expands care north of Boston

In January, Dana-Farber launched a new site in the Merrimack Valley that offers expanded cancer and blood disorder care and outpatient services for adult patients in the region. Located in Methuen, Mass., Dana-Farber – Merrimack Valley unites the Institute’s physician practices in Lawrence and Methuen and will serve nearly 10,000 new patients this year. In addition to exam and infusion services, the new location provides access to clinical trials, genetic testing and genetic counseling, registered dieticians, and oncology clinical social workers, all in an environment emphasizing comfort and convenience.

Dana-Farber – Merrimack Valley also offers many opportunities for donors to name space in the facility. Donor-named spaces create a lasting link to the Institute’s mission, support the most promising areas of cutting-edge research, and enhance Dana-Farber’s total patient care.
there are more new events and old favorites going virtual this summer and fall (see the Calendar, page 160).

Among our efforts to help keep our community apprised of how donor support is advancing Dana-Farber’s important work despite the pandemic is the newly launched Breakthroughs webinar series, hosted by our expert doctors and researchers. The inaugural episode, on April 8, featured a conversation with William Hahn, MD, PhD, Dana-Farber’s chief scientific officer and the William Rosenberg Professor of Medicine; and William G. Kaelin Jr., MD, 2019 Nobel Laureate and the Sidney Farber, MD, Professor of Medicine. The ongoing series includes more than a dozen webinars on topics ranging from precision prevention and early detection to leveraging technology and AI to improve patient outcomes, and is available online at dana-farber. org/how-you-can-help/get-involved/behind-the-breakthroughs/.

And just for fun—because everybody needs some fun these days—social media initiatives like #ScopesofJimmy helped our supporters stay connected to us and each other. Ice cream lovers were invited to hold at-home or virtual ice cream parties and post pictures on social media with the hashtag for the chance to win prizes.

CALENDAR CONTINUED FROM BACK PAGE

SEPTEMBER 1–30
Stop & Shop “Help Care Childhood Cancer” Campaign

Stop & Shop celebrates our longstanding partnership by offering customers at stores across New England the opportunity to donate at the register to Dana-Farber and the Jimmy Fund. Contact Josh Currier at JoshCurrier@dfci.harvard.edu.

NOW–SEPTEMBER
Dana-Farber Marathon Challenge

The 2020 Boston Marathon® is now virtual, and the Dana-Farber Marathon Challenge is still running and raising funds for the Dana-Farber Barrow Program in Innovative Cancer Research. To support a runner, contact Kelly Wicks at DFMC@dfci.harvard.edu.

New events are being added all the time! For the latest updates on Dana-Farber and Jimmy Fund events, visit JimmyFund.org/VirtualEvents.

SEPTMBER 25
Susan F. Smith Center Executive Council Fall Event

Please join us for our new Virtual Event Fundraiser to connect with a panel of world-renowned Dana-Farber experts who will report on revolutionary developments in the treatments of breast and gynecologic cancers. Contact Maryann Zschau at Maryann_zschau@dfci.harvard.edu.

OCTOBER 4
NEW! Boston Marathon® Jimmy Fund Walk: Your Way

Presented by: Hyundai

This year, the Jimmy Fund Walk is in your way! In order to keep our community safe, the Walk will not follow routes along the Boston Marathon® course. Instead, participants can choose their own location to walk: around the neighborhood, a local walking trail, or on a treadmill. In your backyard—the options are endless! Register now and join the Jimmy Fund Walk on October 4 at dana-farber.org/2020/04/were-here-to-help-you-fundraise-in-new-ways/

You can find information on how to:

• Share a video message: We created a video you can send to friends via email or social media to help you ask for support or thank them for donations.

• Create a Facebook Fundraiser: A Facebook Fundraiser is an easy way to ask Facebook friends for donations.

• Start an Event Giving Page: Make a fundraising page for your virtual event and spread the word to your network.

• Utilize online platforms: Our guide to online auction tools, streaming services, and other resources can help you reach your goals.

• Livestream: Learn how to livestream your event on Facebook Live, Instagram Live, Twitch, or YouTube.

• Organize a game night: Host bingo, trivia, or other games via livestream while collecting donations for the Jimmy Fund.

• Find more virtual event ideas: Host a fitness challenge, virtual yard sale, or other events with our how-to guide.

We gathered the top tips to help you go virtual with your event, and we’re here to help! Please contact the Jimmy Fund team at JimmyFundEvents@dfci.harvard.edu or 617-632-3190 for help and additional ideas. Thank you for your support!

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Atop is a newsletter of Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and the Jimmy Fund published by the Division of Philanthropy. For questions, or to be removed from our mailing list, please contact:

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617-632-3190 or info@dfci.harvard.org or visit JimmyFund.org.

Dana-Farber Cancer Institute provides expert, compassionate care to children and adults in and out of hospital to prevent, treat, and conquer breaking cancer discoveries. Since its founding in 1948, the Jimmy Fund has raised billions of dollars through thousands of community efforts to advance Dana-Farber’s breaking mission.

Dana-Farber and the Jimmy Fund store stops produce stations which may include descriptions of actual medical results. Dana-Farber provides personal care for each patient based on their unique needs; their experiences and results will vary.

We’re here to help you go virtual!

As a dedicated supporter of our mission to conquer cancer, you know that funds need to be raised now more than ever, because a cancer diagnosis cannot be put on hold—even during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Although your golf tournament, restaurant night, yard sale, or karaoke fundraiser may now be postponed because of social distancing, the Jimmy Fund team is here to help you take your fundraising online and make your event virtual!

We posted resources and how-to guides on the Jimmy Fund Blog to help you bring your event fundraising online and continue supporting our patients and physician-scientists: blog.jimmyfund.org/2020/04/were-here-to-help-you-fundraise-in-new-ways/

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We are thrilled that Boston Red Sox first baseman Mitch Moreland has signed on as Jimmy Fund Captain for 2020! As an ambassador for the Jimmy Fund, Moreland will attend fundraising events and visit patients—virtually, to keep everyone safe—and build support for cancer care and research at Dana-Farber. “I am honored and excited,” Moreland said. “Over the past few seasons I have experienced the special relationship between the Boston Red Sox and the Jimmy Fund in the fight against cancer, and can’t wait to play a larger role.”

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

YEAR ROUND
NEW! Jimmy Fund Let’s Game
Fundraise by livestreaming your favorite video games! No matter your game, no matter your location, the gaming community can help fuel Dana-Farber’s lifesaving advances. Visit JimmyFundLetsGame.org or contact Kenneth Chanbriel at JimmyFundLetsGame@dfci.harvard.edu.

SUMMER
NEW! Jimmy Fund Summer Wellness Series
Stay fit from home by joining the Jimmy Fund’s first-ever Summer Wellness Series. Sign up for a variety of classes—including workouts, fitness education sessions, wellness webinars, and community events—and support the Jimmy Fund’s mission while staying safe! Contact Emily Falconer at DFRunners@dfci.harvard.edu or visit JimmyFund.org/VirtualEvents.

SUMMER
NEW! Virtual Event to Benefit the Leonard P. Zakim Center
Learn how Dana-Farber’s Leonard P. Zakim Center for Integrative Therapies and Healthy Living is changing the lives of cancer patients and providing critical online programming to patients near and far during this time. Your support is crucial in maintaining virtual and in-person therapies and resources for Dana-Farber patients. Contact Raquel Morales at RMorales2@dfci.harvard.edu or visit JimmyFund.org/VirtualEvents.

AUGUST 1
PMC 2020 Reimagined
Presented by the Red Sox Foundation
The 2020 Pan-Mass Challenge may be reimagined, but the need to raise funds for lifesaving cancer research and treatment at Dana-Farber is very real. PMC 2020 Reimagined will bring together thousands of riders, volunteers, donors, and supporters from around the globe for an interactive experience cultivating the spirit of PMC while making an unparalleled impact on the fight against cancer. The PMC community is, and will always be, committed no matter where or when they ride. To register or support a rider, visit PMC.org.

AUGUST 15–29
New Balance Falmouth Road Race: At-Home Edition
Keep the New Balance Falmouth Road Race spirit alive by running 7 miles in the safety of your neighborhood to raise funds for Dana-Farber. To join the team or support a runner, contact Kelly Yardley at Kelly_Yardley@dfci.harvard.edu or visit RunDanaFarber.org or JimmyFund.org/VirtualEvents.

SUMMER
NEW! Jimmy Fund Culinary Experience
Enjoy a fun night out from the comfort of your own kitchen through this virtual culinary experience, featuring cooking and conversations with local Boston chefs, restauranteurs, brewers, and others. Contact Raquel Morales at RMorales2@dfci.harvard.edu or visit JimmyFund.org/VirtualEvents.

SUMMER
NEW! Jimmy Fund Golf Challenge
Support Dana-Farber from the fairways! Complete a golf challenge for the Jimmy Fund and raise money for cancer research and care this golf season. Contact Victoria Fox at JimmyFund_Golf@dfci.harvard.edu or visit JimmyFund.org/VirtualEvents.

FIND MORE GREAT EVENTS ON PAGE 15!