April 16 marked the 122nd running of the Boston Marathon®, the world’s oldest annual marathon and a rite of spring in New England. Of nearly 27,000 runners who started the race, more than 500 ran through challenging wind and rain as proud members of the Dana-Farber Marathon Challenge (DFMC). Through months of strenuous training and dedicated fundraising, DFMC raised more than $5.5 million for the Claudia Adams Barr Program in Innovative Basic Cancer Research.

Team members represented 32 states and five countries, unified by the DFMC mission. Runners wore DFMC’s hallmark Boston cityscape singlets in navy and neon yellow as they raced the 26.2-mile route from Hopkinton, Mass., to Boston’s Copley Square. One hundred percent of every dollar raised by DFMC team members supports the Claudia Adams Barr Program in Innovative Basic Cancer Research.

The Claudia Adams Barr Program was established in 1987 by Dana-Farber Trustees Delores Barr Weaver and her husband, Wayne, in memory of her mother. Since its inception, the program has been a cornerstone of innovative, early stage cancer research at Dana-Farber, and continues to accelerate major scientific advances. In 29 seasons, DFMC has raised more than $90 million to support the Claudia Adams Barr Program.

Whether it be for a friend, family member, colleague, or themselves, DFMC team members run to honor those affected by the disease. For Rich Horgan, running DFMC isn’t just a hobby—the program has become a central part of his life. Matt Bergin, a friend of Horgan’s, recruited him to run the Boston Marathon with the team in 1994. Horgan, an active rugby player and occasional short-distance runner, agreed to join the team with the expectation of running that one year.

Having lost his 52-year-old father to colon cancer, the cause was close to Horgan’s heart, but any aspirations of being a lifelong marathoner were far from his mind. However, Horgan says as he crossed the finish line in 1994, he realized his time with DFMC was far from over. In his 25 seasons, Horgan has raised more than $220,000 and become a member of DFMC’s Board, helping lead the program over the past two decades.

Horgan says that he is often in awe of the commitment and dedication of those around him. The opportunity to meet many Dana-Farber doctors and researchers has been meaningful, especially when those doctors and researchers are his teammates.

“Meeting researchers and physicians who work at Dana-Farber and who have also run the marathon as DFMC team members has been especially rewarding,” said Horgan.

“These folks do cutting-edge work in cancer research and care, yet they find time to train, raise money, and run the race.”

He says while every season has been different, much of the enjoyment over the years has come from getting to know his teammates and connecting over their shared commitment to ending cancer.

“I have been fortunate to meet runners from all walks of life, each one with a connection to cancer,” said Horgan. “Most have lost close family members to cancer, and they commit to DFMC as a way to make a difference by raising incredible amounts of money to fund innovative cancer research.”

The 2018 Dana-Farber Marathon Challenge team raised more than $5.5 million for the Claudia Adams Barr Program in Innovative Basic Cancer Research.

Dana-Farber Marathon Challenge raises $5.5 million for innovative basic research

Rich Horgan has run with DFMC for 25 years, and raised more than $220,000 for Dana-Farber.
Dear Friends,

Dana-Farber represents the very best in the world of cancer medicine, but we are not content to rest on our laurels. Through a new Strategic Plan, we seek to reinvent, reimagine, and redefine the field of cancer research and patient care, and our loyal supporters will make this possible. You, our generous friends, help the Institute to achieve groundbreaking scientific advances while providing the highest quality care to our patients.

The late Susan F. Smith and her husband, Richard, both longtime Institute Trustees, made possible many seminal initiatives over the years through their generosity and vision, including the Susan F. Smith Center for Women’s Cancers. Now, the Richard and Susan Smith Family Foundation and family member Nancy Lurie Marks honor Mrs. Smith’s legacy with gifts totaling more than $2.5 million to establish the Susan F. Smith Center Living Biobank, a vital resource in which cell cultures derived from patients’ tumors will enable more rapid testing of novel therapies.

A Dana-Farber Chair is the highest honor the Institute can confer upon a faculty member, and Gretchen Woodruff and her family have established Dana-Farber’s first chair in colorectal cancer with a generous gift of $2.5 million in honor of her late husband, Douglas Gray Woodruff, and the care he received.

Dana-Farber Marathon Challenge (DFMC) runners always work hard at training and fundraising, but this year’s race required exceptional dedication! Frigid winds and drenching rain created a challenging day for runners and volunteers, but the more than 500 DFMC team members prevailed, raising more than $5.5 million for the Claudia Adams Barr Program in Innovative Basic Cancer Research.

The Prostate Cancer Foundation (PCF) supports research that will accelerate progress and save lives. We are honored that PCF regularly chooses to fund the work of Dana-Farber researchers, most recently with grants totaling $2.1 million to fund studies ranging from basic biology to novel treatments for metastatic disease.

Trustee Judy Hale and her son, Rob, engage their employees and community every year in the fight against pancreatic cancer through their Savoring by Shaving event. This year, Patriots quarterback Tom Brady and Mass. Governor Charlie Baker joined the fun, helping to raise an extraordinary $6.5 million and bringing the five-year total for this amazing event to $21 million. The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, our longtime partner, awarded more than $3.2 million in highly competitive grants to Dana-Farber researchers, to fuel innovative research that will accelerate bench-to-bedside treatment and cures across the spectrum of blood cancers.

Such generous and dedicated support is essential to helping our researchers to garner federal grants, as you will see in the quarterly update at the right. Our donors provide millions of dollars in crucial funds that drive the pace of discovery for the benefit of cancer patients everywhere. On behalf of them, we thank you.

Sincerely,

Susan S. Paresky
Senior Vice President for Development

UPDATE ON FEDERAL FUNDING AT DANA-FARBER

Study sheds new light on treatment resistance and metastasis in breast cancer

Fueled by grants from the National Institutes of Health as well as private philanthropic support, researchers at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute have illuminated a specific mechanism by which estrogen receptor (ER)—positive breast cancers can become resistant to standard therapies and metastasize. The scientists say the mechanism explains why breast cancers with mutations in the ER gene itself—the target of drugs such as aromatase inhibitors and tamoxifen—become resistant to these therapies and are prone to become metastatic.

Resistance to therapy for ER-positive breast cancer is a common cause of mortality and a major unmet need. Myles Brown, MD, director of the Center for Functional Cancer Epigenetics and the Emil Frei III, MD, Professor of Medicine, and Rinath Jeselsohn, MD, of Dana-Farber’s Susan F. Smith Center for Women’s Cancers, led the research team. A majority of women with breast cancer have tumors that are fueled by the hormone estrogen. Most are treated with therapies that prevent estrogen production or block the estrogen receptor in cancer cells, with the goal of interrupting cancer growth.

Such endocrine therapies, including tamoxifen and aromatase inhibitors, can prevent recurrence of early breast cancer, and can slow progression of metastatic disease. However, in about one-third of patients with metastatic ER-positive breast cancer, treatment with endocrine therapies leads to tumor cells that grow even in the absence of estrogen, resulting in treatment-resistance that is often incurable.

In prior studies, scientists found DNA mutations in the estrogen receptor gene in a substantial number of patients with ER-positive breast cancer, including metastatic disease, and further found the mutations caused resistance to endocrine therapies.

In the new study, the Dana-Farber scientists revealed another previously unknown effect of three of the mutations in the ER gene. The mutations not only cause resistance to estrogen blockade, but also turn on genes that drive the breast tumors to metastasize to other organs.

The researchers then used the CRI/SKP-Cas9 gene editing tool to identify which genes are essential in cells with the ER mutations. Among the essential genes they found, CDK7 was of particular interest because it is already a potential drug target.

The researchers said that clinical CDK7 inhibition is being developed, in the hope of launching a clinical trial for patients with ER-positive metastatic breast cancer.

The research was supported by National Institutes of Health grants K08CA191058-03 and P01CA080111, the Claudia Adams Barr Program for Innovative Cancer Research, an NIH Breast Cancer SPORE Career Development Award, and a Susan Komen Leadership Grant.

Young, athletic, and seemingly the picture of health, Davey Hovey received a devastating diagnosis of glioblastoma at age 25. He resolved to fight, for himself and for others with the same disease. During 16 months of grueling treatment, he found the strength to raise funds for brain cancer research at Dana-Farber.

Since Davey’s death in 2017, those who loved him have continued his fundraising through several initiatives, including a Giving Page on the Jimmy Fund website. They established two funds, one for current use by the Institute, and one to exist in perpetuity, naming them CRUS11TOUR—combining “crush tour,” Davey’s nickname for his cancer battle, with his college lacrosse number, 11.

Davey was a graduate of Westminster School and St. Lawrence University. These communities as well as family and friends from Simsbury, Conn., and Chatham, Mass., have raised more than $440,000 for the research of David Reardon, MD, clinical director of Dana-Farber’s Center for Neuro-Oncology, and are still going strong.

“Davey was an amazing young man who wanted to make a difference for others and fought to do so with the goal of ‘crushing’ this disease,” said Reardon. “Thanks to him and his incredible family and friends, laboratory efforts to identify new strategies that stimulate the immune system to successfully attack brain cancer tumors are being actively investigated and are already helping patients. Davey is an inspiration for us all to make a difference.”

Friends and family honor Davey Hovey by supporting research

Myles Brown, MD, led research that revealed a mechanism of resistance and metastasis in breast cancer.
Gretchen Woodruff, longtime supporter of Dana-Farber, recently made a gift of $2.5 million to establish the Douglas Gray Woodruff Chair in Colorectal Cancer Research, the first chair in this area at Dana-Farber. The first incumbent is Jeffrey Meyerhardt, MD, MPH, clinical director of the Gastrointestinal Cancer Center and co-director of the Center for Colon and Rectal Cancer, whose work is bolstering the Institute’s leadership in colorectal cancer research and care. Gretchen and her family made this generous contribution in memory of her late husband, Douglas Woodruff, who was treated for colon cancer at Dana-Farber in 1998. “Our first day at Dana-Farber, I was struck by how happy, upbeat, and positive everybody was,” Gretchen recalled. “We just had an amazing experience.”

For nearly 20 years, Gretchen and her family have honored her late husband’s battle by cultivating a tradition of giving back. Her parents, Marje and Bill Congleton, started the Douglas Gray Woodruff Fund at Dana-Farber in 1998, and Gretchen’s family continues to build on this legacy through charitable giving and community engagement. Gretchen is a member of Dana-Farber’s Visiting Committee for Gastrointestinal Oncology and has participated in the Boston Marathon® Jimmy Fund Walk presented by Hyundai for the past 10 years. Her son, Ben, recently rode in the Pan-Mass Challenge (PMC), starting a team in his father’s memory. “Ben has always looked for a way to make a difference and he’s found it,” said Gretchen. Her daughter, Meggie, recently accepted a position as a nurse practitioner on Penn Medicine’s oncology floor. She will be riding alongside her brother in the PMC this year.

The Woodruff Family’s most recent gift will enable extraordinary investigators such as Meyerhardt to build upon their landmark advances in colon and rectal cancer research. Throughout his career, Meyerhardt has led critical investigations that propelled national clinical trials and novel treatment approaches. His research assesses how factors such as diet, physical activity, vitamin D levels, and weight change influence patient outcomes and survival. He also assisted in the development of Dana-Farber’s gastrointestinal tumor bank and clinical repository, which have been invaluable resources for the entire gastrointestinal cancer team. Support from this Dana-Farber chair will enable Meyerhardt to further his clinical practice and research.

“I am so grateful for Gretchen’s support, which comes at an opportune time in colorectal cancer research,” said Meyerhardt. “It will permit us to gain a richer understanding of this complex disease, to explore new treatment approaches and, ultimately, to pinpoint prevention strategies that could forestall the disease altogether.”

Most of all, Gretchen’s contribution is an effort to save future generations from the hardships of gastrointestinal cancers. As she put it, “We hope that helping to fund this research will prevent others from going through what we did.”

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Chefs for Jimmy surpasses $1.5 million milestone

The 28th annual Chefs for Jimmy presented by the Winer Levsky Group of UBS Financial Services Inc. took place January 19 with nearly 1,200 supporters in attendance. Donning 1920s-inspired attire, guests embraced the event’s Great Gatsby theme, and bumbled with excitement as they sampled the epicurean wonders generously provided by dozens of local restaurants and caterers. The event, which also included an opportunity drawing and silent auction, was held at Chez Josef in Agawam, Mass. Since 1990, Chefs for Jimmy has been held each year in honor of Neal Webber, a longtime supporter of the Jimmy Fund. This year, the event also celebrated the memory of Stan Winer, a valued member of the Chefs for Jimmy family and Jimmy Fund community who passed away in 2017. The 2018 event raised a record $115,000 to benefit Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, and has cumulatively raised more than $1.5 million in unrestricted funding.

“This year’s Chefs for Jimmy was our most successful ever, due largely to the fantastic food and decorations provided by 30 of the area’s top restaurants who served their finest signature dishes,” said Mike Katz, co-chair and founder of Chefs for Jimmy. “My co-chairs, Institute Trustee Barbara Sadowsky and Andy Cohen, and I remain extremely proud of this event. Our Great Gatsby theme was enjoyed by all, and the spectacular food, music, auction, decor, photo booth, and other activities all contributed to our impressive results.”

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Brock Holt returns as Jimmy Fund Captain

One of the most important attributes of the best baseball players is that intangible quality called “heart,” and since 2015, Boston Red Sox utilityman Brock Holt (far right) has brought tremendous heart to his role as a Jimmy Fund Captain. Named to this position for the fourth consecutive year in 2018, Holt is continuing to serve as an ambassador, helping to raise awareness about cancer and the critical need for funding, and supporting Jimmy Fund events and programs. Perhaps most of all, Holt enjoys visiting with patients like James, age 6, below with Holt and catcher Blake Swihart (far left) and Wally the Green Monster in Dana-Farber’s Jimmy Fund Clinic. In recognition of Holt’s dedication to the Jimmy Fund, the Red Sox have twice nominated him for Major League Baseball’s Roberto Clemente Award.
Smith Family Foundation and Nancy Lurie Marks advance living biobank

Mrs. Susan F. Smith was a Dana-Farber Trustee, a founding member of the Friends of Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, and the driving force behind the creation of the Susan F. Smith Center for Women’s Cancers. In honor of Mrs. Smith’s indelible legacy as a philanthropist and advocate for women’s cancers, the Richard and Susan Smith Family Foundation has awarded more than $2.5 million in support of Alan D’Andrea, MD, director of the Susan F. Smith Center, to establish the Susan F. Smith Center Living Biobank. This gift is bolstered by an additional generous gift from Nancy Lurie Marks, who is a member of Mrs. Smith’s family.

The living biobank consists of three-dimensional cell cultures called “organoids.” Each organoid is derived from a patient’s tumor and anatomically and functionally reflects that tumor. Organoids are created by obtaining a biopsy, separating the cells into a single-cell suspension, and growing the cells to produce micro-tumors that are biologically identical to the primary tumor.

“Sue Smith believed Dana-Farber could work miracles for women’s cancers. Her many efforts championing Dana-Farber’s vital work were among her proudest accomplishments,” said Richard A. Smith, chair of the Smith Family Foundation and a Dana-Farber Trustee. “She’d be very pleased to know this exciting research venture had been established in her honor, and our family is hopeful that the biobank yields lifesaving solutions for women everywhere.”

Organoids make it possible to streamline testing of novel therapies and quickly evaluate whether experimental drugs or combinations of therapies reach their genetic target, while serving as an engine for basic science and discovery. While clinical trials are an essential step on the path to new drug development, the deliberate nature of clinical trials requires enrolling hundreds of patients — whose tumors possess various genetic characteristics — and testing drugs for months or even years to see if they are effective. Organoids help accelerate research into how specific tumors respond to different treatments, providing information about efficacy and resistance that can be used to guide ongoing clinical trials, while also informing the next generation of studies. Ovarian cancer is often diagnosed at a late stage and women treated for ovarian cancer may be at an increased risk of developing resistance to therapy or having their disease recur, underscoring the need for organoids that reflect these tumors.

“By supporting our work to expand a living biobank at the Susan F Smith Center, the Smith Family Foundation and Nancy Lurie Marks are carving a path toward a future where potential therapies are rapidly tested and brought to patients who need them most,” said D’Andrea, who is also director of the Center for DNA Damage and Repair at Dana-Farber. “We are extremely grateful for the opportunity to create a resource that will have a ripple effect on ovarian cancer research for years to come.”

Howe and Disney bolster multiple myeloma research

Every week, Peter Howe and Anthea Disney drive 136 miles from their home in Connecticut for Howe’s treatment at Dana-Farber. To them, the care he receives from Paul Richardson, MD, clinical program leader and director of clinical research at the Jerome Lipper Multiple Myeloma Center is worth the trip. But they are quick to point out that there is more to Dana-Farber’s patient care than the doctors alone. “Everyone at Dana-Farber has been incredibly helpful and pleasant, since the first time we came here,” remarked Disney.

Excited about the rapid progress in multiple myeloma treatment, Howe and Disney made a generous $125,000 gift to support Richardson’s clinical research. While Howe’s diagnosis of multiple myeloma in 2015 was frightening, “10 years ago they would have given me two or three years to live,” he marveled. “Now they are expecting me to die of something else.”

“Peter and Anthea’s remarkable generosity is especially impactful to our clinical research program, and essential in providing resources to our work,” said Richardson, who is also the R.J. Corman Professor of Medicine. “Peter’s courage and determination in fighting his disease, as well as Anthea’s steadfast support, are inspirational to our team, and their confidence in us is deeply appreciated.”

“Our hope is that in the time that Peter has this disease, Dr. Richardson and his amazing researchers find a cure,” said Disney. “But if not for this generation, it will be for another generation. That’s why we’re doing anything we can to support the research.”

Accelerating translational research for youngest patients

Diagnosed with neuroblastoma at age two, Liam Witt fought a four-year battle that inspired his parents, Gretchen and Larry, to make a difference for Liam and all children with cancer by raising funds to underwrite promising research. The Witts, who lost Liam in 2011, launched the Cookies for Kids’ Cancer foundation, which inspires people everywhere to “Be a Good Cookie®” by hosting grassroots events, sending cookies, or sponsoring a major event. Funds raised become research grants awarded to seven partner centers nationwide.

Recently, Cookies for Kids’ Cancer made a $200,000 grant to support the research of Kimberly Stegmaier, MD, vice chair of Pediatric Oncology Research and Ted Williams Chair at Dana-Farber, who is testing drug combinations to determine which therapies work best together to treat Ewing sarcoma and neuroblastoma. “We hope to reveal novel therapeutic approaches that will reduce treatment resistance and improve outcomes for pediatric patients with these very challenging diseases,” said Stegmaier. “We are grateful to Cookies for Kids’ Cancer for supporting our research, and could not do this work without them.”

“At Cookies for Kids’ Cancer, we have one funding focus: to bring promising research for new, less toxic therapies from clinic to bedside as quickly as possible,” said Gretchen Witt. “The exemplary work at Dana-Farber brings that mission to life, giving children battling cancer the chance to survive and thrive.”

Peter Howe and Anthea Disney hope that their support of multiple myeloma research at Dana-Farber will someday result in a cure.

Cookies for Kids’ Cancer supports the research of Kimberly Stegmaier, MD.
Herb Chambers returns as official partner

The Herb Chambers Automotive Family continues to be a leading driver of innovative cancer research and compassionate patient care, returning for the fourth consecutive year as an Official Partner of Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and the Jimmy Fund. The company is contributing $150,000 in flexible funding throughout 2018, supporting the areas of greatest need at the Institute and allowing scientists to pursue innovative new avenues in cancer research. Herb Chambers will also continue as presenting sponsor of the fifth annual Dana-Farber UnMask Cancer fundraising gala in October.

“Dana-Farber is leading the effort to conquer cancer—a goal we both share—and we are proud to support its physicians, researchers, and patients,” said Herb Chambers, president of The Herb Chambers Automotive Family. “Many of our team members and clients have experienced cancer themselves or supported a loved one. Involving them in fundraising makes this partnership even more meaningful, and gives us all great hope.”

In addition to sponsoring Dana-Farber UnMask Cancer, the Boston-based automotive company hosts month-long, in-store fundraising drives across its locations, increasing both awareness of and funding for Dana-Farber. Massachusetts dealerships also help promote the Boston Red Sox/Jimmy Fund License Plate as part of new and pre-owned vehicle sales, and team members have the opportunity to contribute to fundraising throughout the year via the Herb Chambers Giving Page on the Jimmy Fund website.

Dana-Farber makes gifts to Dana-Farber to World Economic Forum

When Institute Trustee and venture capitalist Howard Cox makes gifts to Dana-Farber, he takes care to support innovative, forward-thinking projects. With two recent gifts totaling $400,000, Cox broke new ground for the Institute.

Cox sponsored Dana-Farber President and CEO Laurie H. Glimcher, MD, to participate in the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland, an annual gathering of business leaders, political figures, economists, and journalists. Glimcher spoke on a panel, “The New Health Paradigm,” calling for more funding of the basic research that can lead to major discoveries, and was appointed to the WEF’s Global Health and Healthcare Governors Community.

In Davos, Glimcher spoke about gender inequities in health care leadership. Cox sought to address this problem with a gift of $200,000—divided among four Dana-Farber female assistant professors, to support their research at a critical stage in their careers. “Junior women faculty are often concurrently building careers and family,” explained Glimcher. “Dana-Farber is at risk of losing these talented faculty who, if better supported, have the potential to make important clinical and scientific contributions.” After a competitive application process, the funds were awarded to Judith Agudo, PhD, Sharon Bober, PhD, Khanh Do, MD, and Allison O’Neill, MD.

“My goal is to jumpstart innovative research, and that should help young scientists attract additional funding,” said Cox. “I want Dana-Farber researchers to have the support needed to make breakthroughs that will help patients more quickly.”

Charles A. King Trust advances innovative diabetes research

In accordance with its commitment to advancing biomedical research and to understanding and improving the treatment of human disease, the Charles A. King Postdoctoral Fellowship Program in basic science has awarded a $106,400 grant to Dana-Farber research fellow Kfir Sharabi, PhD, in support of his research in the molecular pathways underlying glucose regulation.

Sharabi’s research focuses on a compound that has been shown to improve insulin sensitivity through selective targeting of critical metabolic pathways. This approach to glucose regulation has enormous therapeutic potential. “Type 2 diabetes is currently a worldwide epidemic with an urgent medical need for novel anti-diabetic drugs,” said Sharabi. “A better understanding of how nutritional and hormonal cues control metabolic pathways can lay the groundwork for new and improved drugs to treat diabetes, cancer, and other metabolic diseases.”

The King Trust fellowship, administered by The Medical Foundation at Health Resources in Action, has helped launch the careers of more than 650 promising young investigators in Massachusetts, with more than 55 of them at Dana-Farber.

“Dana-Farber provides an incredible working environment for postdoctoral fellows like Dr. Sharabi to develop their research,” said John Kanki, PhD, managing director of The Medical Foundation. “While his scientific career is just starting, being awarded a King fellowship demonstrates Dr. Sharabi’s strength as an innovative, independent investigator, and foretells a productive and successful research career ahead.”

PMC Winter Cycle kicks off 2018 Pan-Mass Challenge

The Pan-Mass Challenge kicked off its $52 million fundraising in January with the PMC Winter Cycle, an indoor cycling event held for the first time at Fenway Park. Now in its third year, the Winter Cycle attracted more than 1,000 riders for six hour-long sessions with top trainers from Cyc Fitness, Cycle Bar, Equinox, Everybody Fights, Flywheel, The Handle Bar, Lifetime, and Ride North End, followed by an after party at Lansdowne Pub. “Our riders bring unparalleled enthusiasm and dedication to every ride, and PMC Winter Cycle is no exception,” said Billy Starr, PMC founder and executive director, and a Dana-Farber Trustee. “I can’t imagine a better way to kick off fundraising each year than by hopping in the saddle in January and pedaling towards a cure.”
Firsts’ gift early detection of ovarian cancers

Longtime Dana-Farber Cancer Institute supporters Debbie and Bob First have made philanthropy a family affair. They serve as Trustees; participate in chair events, as does their daughter, Pam; and make significant gifts to advance research. Their most recent commitment directs $500,000 to the Robert and Deborah First Family Fund to support collaboration led by Dana-Farber researcher Dipanjan Chowdhury, PhD, and Kevin Elias, MD, of Brigham and Women’s Hospital, which could provide ovarian cancer screening where none currently exists. This gift also provides early momentum for the Institute’s planned comprehensive capital campaign.

Chowdhury, chief of the Division of Radiation and Genome Stability, and Elias, a physician in Brigham’s Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, have developed a technique to detect ovarian cancer early and accurately with a simple blood test. Dhana-Farber and Brigham and Women’s attract the best minds in the world, said Bob First. “Dipanjan and Kevin are brilliant, committed researchers and we are impressed by their collaborative thinking and out-of-the-box ideas. The collaborative nature of the project brings together expertise of two researchers and involves the broader scientific community. The pair is receiving blood samples from physicians around the world to refine their test and start trials.

“We are confident that with steadfast investigation and along with the support of donors like the Firsts, we will make a breakthrough in ovarian cancer,” said Chowdhury.

Debbie echoes that sentiment and confidence in the researchers. “We know there are many hurdles to jump but this is an opportunity to give back to Dana-Farber and the Brigham and Women’s Hospital, and we feel privileged to be able to help through philanthropy,” Debbe said.

Gov. Baker and Tom Brady help Saving by Shaving raise a record $6.5 million

Ever since Robert T. Hale Sr. was treated for pancreatic cancer at Dana-Farber, his wife, Institute Trustee Judy Hale, and son, Rob Hale, have been unfailing in their generous support of cancer research. In addition to visionary gifts totaling more than $25 million, the Hales have engaged their company, Granite Telecommunications, and their local community to join in their fight against pancreatic cancer.

At their annual “Saving by Shaving” event, the Hales make a gift to Dana-Farber for each employee or participant who gets a shave or a haircut. This year’s event enjoyed a celebrity assist from New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady and Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker, who each received a buzzcut before cheering crowds. They were among more than 1,100 Granite employees and others from around New England who helped to raise a record $6.5 million. “We are proud of our teammates for supporting the mission of Dana-Farber,” said Rob Hale. “We’re working as a team toward the same goal—eradicating pancreatic cancer.”

Funds raised through Saving by Shaving support the Hale Family Research Center at Dana-Farber, which is managed under the direction of Brian Wolpin, MD, MPH, director of the Gastrointestinal Cancer Center and the Robert T. and Judith B. Hale Chair in Pancreatic Cancer. Judy and Rob’s deep commitment to improving outcomes for patients with pancreatic cancer, and their amazing ability to inspire employee and community involvement, have significantly changed the landscape of research for this challenging disease,” said Wolpin.

“Ther their exceptional support has led to multiple new initiatives at Dana-Farber that are already directly affecting patient care, and provide great hope for future advances. Saving by Shaving is an inspiring day, and it was a true pleasure to participate.”

Alan and Lisa Dynner look to the future, support transplant research

When Alan Dynner talks about life after cancer, the word he uses most is “lucky.” He feels lucky he came to Dana-Farber after blood tests showed a problem. Diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia (AML), he feels lucky to be under the care of Robert Soiffer, MD, chief of Dana-Farber’s Division of Hematologic Malignancies and co-chief of Stem Cell Transplantation. Dynner says, “I got ready to die, because the only possible cure for AML is a stem cell transplant, which most hospitals won’t consider for older patients. At age 76, I was so happy when Rob Soiffer decided that I could have a transplant.”

Lisa Dynner, Alan’s wife, is impressed with the doctors, nurses, and staff at Dana-Farber. “Dealing with cancer is difficult, but it helps a lot when everyone explains in detail, kindly and patiently, what is happening and what needs to be done,” she says. “We were never rushed and always had their full attention.”

After his successful transplant in 2017, Dynner wrote a memoir for his grandchildren and soon resumed his vigorous lifestyle, bicycling and playing in regular tennis games. “Having cancer makes you appreciate every day and every person in your life,” he explains. “You want to have fun but also be productive and helpful to others.”

One way the Dynners have chosen to look ahead is by supporting cancer research at Dana-Farber. Thrilled with the care Alan received and excited about recent scientific discoveries, they made a generous gift of $500,000 to support Soiffer and his team as they seek to advance stem cell transplantation strategies for patients with hematological cancers.

“The support Alan and Lisa are providing will help us discover new ways to reduce relapse rates after transplantation and reduce long-term complications,” said Soiffer. “These projects will translate discoveries from our laboratories to directly impact patients at risk.”

“We understand that miracle breakthroughs are uncommon,” says Alan Dynner. “Advances in science are the result of accumulation, building on past findings, hoping for incremental progress. We hope our gift helps with some new knowledge and insights that will help future transplant patients.”
SU2C Convergence grant provides $1.5 million for novel, collaborative research on resistance to immunotherapy

Continuing its longtime support of Dana-Farber, Stand Up To Cancer (SU2C) has awarded Constantine Mitsiades, MD, PhD, a $1.5 million SU2C Convergence Team Translational Research Grant to study how tumor cells develop resistance to a type of immune cell that the body uses to stop the development of cancers.

The grant is part of SU2C’s Convergence 2.0 research initiative that awarded a total of $11 million to seven multidisciplinary research teams to investigate the role of the immune system against cancers. The grant was announced at SU2C’s recent annual Scientific Summit.

Each Convergence team includes experts in life sciences, physical sciences, mathematics, and engineering. They will have the opportunity to work collaboratively with machine learning experts from MIT and Harvard and the University of Maastricht, Netherlands.

Extending her work on the Convergence grant, SU2C awarded Sheffer a $250,000 Phillip A. Sharp Innovation in Collaboration Award, which she will share with collaborators from the Hubrecht Institute in the Netherlands. They will study colon cancer organoids—tumor samples grown in a dish, which preserve the tumor characteristics that are predicted to show sensitivity or resistance to NK cells in colorectal cancer, and which may serve as a model for successful NK cell immunotherapy.

The Phillip A. Sharp Award supports additional collaboration among SU2C researchers from different teams.

Jimmy Fund Golf Appreciation Night celebrates record season

On March 1, Jimmy Fund Golf presented by Mohegan Sun welcomed tournament organizers to theYawkey Center for Cancer Care to celebrate a phenomenal 35th golf season. With 168 tournaments held in 2017, organizers and participants raised a record-breaking $7.68 million for research and patient care at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.

In tribute to the late Boston Red Sox sportscaster and past Chairman of the Jimmy Fund, the Ken Coleman Extra Mile Award is presented each year to a longtime volunteer who goes above and beyond in their giving of time and energy to support Dana-Farber’s lifesaving mission. This year’s recipient was Jim Phaneuf (below), founder of the Bell & Hudson Putt-a-Thon for the Jimmy Fund, Jimmy Fund Golf’s largest and longest running mini golf tournament. Under Jim’s leadership, the Bell & Hudson Putt-a-Thon has raised more than $640,000 over the past 14 years and set the stage for the Jimmy Fund’s own mini golf program.

Meghan was the kindest person I’ve ever known,” recalls Christopher Abell, the father of Meghan O’Callaghan Abell. “She saw the best in everyone.” Openness and a rare gift for compassion were the hallmarks of Meghan’s life. “After her funeral, we were amazed at the number of friends—and people we’d never met—who told us about Meghan’s kindness and how she helped them in hard times,” says her mother, Patricia.

At 36 Meghan was diagnosed with an aggressive form of stage IV breast cancer, and knew her prognosis was poor. On a friend’s recommendation, the family came from Maryland to Dana-Farber to see Eric Winer, MD, director of the Breast Cancer Program, Thompson Chair in Breast Cancer Research, and Senior Vice President for Medical Affairs. Though Meghan’s cancer was intractable, she remained positive throughout treatment, with Winer and his staff beside her every step of the way.

To honor the expert, humane care that Meghan received and to support Winer’s research, the Abell family and their many friends raised more than $100,000 through the Meghan O’Callaghan Abell Fund for Metastatic Breast Cancer Research.

“Despite our best efforts and the progress we’ve made over 20 years, there are still too many cases of breast cancer that don’t respond to treatment,” Abell says. “We are so grateful for Meghan’s fund, which will help us find new treatments for women in the future. The outpouring of contributions from so many people who loved Meghan is a real testament to her deep concern for others.”

Friends and family honor a young woman’s kindness and compassion

Meghan O’Callaghan Abell.
Bill and Maureen Goldfarb have been gratified to see exciting scientific advances made possible by their longtime support of Dana-Farber. In 2010 they created the Goldfarb and Rudkin Family Fellowship in breast oncology, which provided funding for talented cancer researchers from all over the world to train and conduct research here. The couple recently made a generous gift to continue the program and add a new research area: stem cell transplantaion.

“The program has been a tremendous success, and we want it to carry on,” said Bill Goldfarb. Eric Winer, MD, director of the Breast Cancer Program, Thompson Chair in Breast Cancer Research, and senior vice president for medical affairs, agrees. “Bill and Maureen’s gift has been truly transformative,” he said. “It has allowed immensely talented physician-scientists from other parts of the world to spend time with us. Invariably they have flourished, and we, in turn, have learned from them. We are so grateful for this opportunity.”

Now called The Goldfarb and Rudkin Family International Fellowship, the program will provide salary support for five fellows in women’s cancers, and two in stem cell transplant research. The women’s cancers fellows will work under Winer’s direction, while those working in transplant research will be directed by Edwin Alyea III, MD, director of Hematologic Malignancy Clinical Strategy. Maureen Goldfarb acted as a stem cell donor for her brother, Greg Rudkin, a patient of Alyea’s who passed away in 2016. Devastated by Greg’s death, but impressed with the care he received at Dana-Farber, the couple decided to support Alyea’s research through the fellowship program, hoping that scientific discoveries will lead to new treatment options for future transplant patients.

This new gift also provides early momentum for the institute’s planned comprehensive capital campaign. The Goldfarbs are pleased that past fellows have thrived—some, like Shom Goel, MD, PhD, have become faculty members at Dana-Farber. Goel’s research has recently led to two significant discoveries. “We have found a new type of cancer therapy that may be effective for treatment of HER2-positive breast cancer, reversing drug resistance to the currently available treatments,” Goel said. “We’ve also found that the same agents enhance the immune system’s attack against certain cancers, potentially leading to new treatment options with immunotherapy. It’s gratifying to see our findings move from the lab into clinical trials.”

Goldfarb and Rudkin Family International Fellow Otto Metzger, MD, originally from Brazil, has also joined the Institute’s faculty, and his work is advancing new treatment options for specific breast cancer subtypes like HER2-positive disease and invasive lobular carcinoma. The research is a promising vehicle to bring the latest therapeutic advances to patients.

Maureen Goldfarb says she and Bill are thrilled to see the impact of their giving: “We are so impressed with the talented people doing this work.”

Investing in palliative care innovation and research

Saj-nicole Joni, PhD, is on a mission: to raise funds to drive innovation in palliative care and research. To jumpstart this effort, Saj-nicole made a generous $100,000 commitment establishing a fund at Dana-Farber in honor of Janet Abraham, MD, a leading pioneer in the field. Saj-nicole learned the importance of palliative care when her best friend, renowned physician Patricia Zander, was being treated at Dana-Farber and Abraham was part of Patricia’s care team. Palliative care clinicians can provide support throughout the course of treatment, helping patients manage physical symptoms, address psychological, emotional, and spiritual concerns, and make decisions about the next steps of treatment.

“Patricia was an inspiration to all who met her,” said Abraham. “Despite her advanced cancer, she had much left to do. We were able to bring her pain to a tolerable level without impairing her vitality, intelligence, or drive. Patricia met with her students and shared her last lessons with them. That time was priceless for her and for all who loved her.”

As a renowned business strategist and advisor to global CEOs, Saj-nicole knows the kind of impact that is possible when talented people come together with focus, passion, and the necessary resources. Under the direction of James Tulsky, MD, chair of Psychosocial Oncology and Palliative Care, Saj-nicole’s investment will fuel the expansion of innovative research and, she hopes, will inspire others to give.

“If we enable our best researchers to use the newest capabilities of science and technology, we have it within our reach to stop the needless suffering of millions of people,” said Saj-nicole. “Working with James to support Janet and the entire palliative care team, I hope to be part of bringing together committed donors and interdisciplinary researchers for this purpose.”

Brown Performance Group bolsters bioinformatics research

Dedicated to helping individuals and organizations maximize the impact of their philanthropic support, Brown Performance Group (BPG) offers strategic planning and consulting while also administering grants through The Fund for Innovation in Cancer Informatics (ICI). Recently, BPG awarded two ICI grants totaling $336,000 to Dana-Farber investigators to propel bioinformatics research.

Leveraging his BPG grant, Rameen Beroukhim, MD, PhD, is uncovering the mechanisms underlying genomic alterations that result in the fusion of distant DNA regions.

“These alterations are very difficult to study due to their complicated structures,” said Beroukhim. “Thanks to this funding, we are learning more about how they link to cancer and how to intervene with therapy.”

Additionally, Ethan Cerami, PhD, and Michael Hassett, MD, MPH, are using their grant to expand the use of Dana-Farber’s MatchMiner platform, which matches patients’ genomic profiles with promising clinical trials.

“This support will further accelerate the development of MatchMiner and make it easier for physicians to use,” said Cerami. “Our ultimate goal is to bring precision medicine to more patients by connecting them with the best available clinical trials.”

Chris Sander, PhD, ICI advisor and director of Dana-Farber’s cBio Center, noted, “These grants expedite innovation by providing investigators with funding during critical early stages in the research process. The computational tools and data analyses resulting from these grants could lead to additional funding and important discoveries that benefit patients.”

“Brown Performance Group makes a difference in the lives of people who need help most. It’s a real honor to support their work.”

—CHRIS SANDER, PhD, advisor, The Fund for Innovation in Cancer Informatics
Prostate Cancer Foundation invests $2.1 million in pioneering research projects

A pioneering organization that has fueled prostate cancer research for more than two decades, the Prostate Cancer Foundation (PCF) is driving progress in the treatment, early detection, and ultimate prevention of this difficult disease. Their philanthropy helps to jumpstart the early careers of promising investigators and accelerate the ambitious research of established ones. A powerful supporter of Dana-Farber, PCF continues to provide crucial funding for the Institute’s brilliant researchers.

PCF has awarded more than $20 million to Dana-Farber investigators which includes grants totaling $2.1 million in 2017. Among these were two prestigious Young Investigator Awards presented to Leigh Ellis, PhD, recipient of the Stewart Rahr PCF Young Investigator Award, and Srinivas Viswanathan, MD, PhD, recipient of the J. Eastace Wolfington PCF Young Investigator Award. Ellis’ grant supports his pre-clinical studies evaluating the therapeutic potential of Myc, a regulatory gene that has been implicated in prostate cancer development.

“Support from the Prostate Cancer Foundation will significantly impact fundamental gaps in knowledge in prostate cancer research,” said Ellis. “I’m grateful to be given this platform to identify novel therapeutic strategies for this formidable disease.”

Viswanathan is working to define the tumor genetics and biology of castration-resistant prostate cancer, for which there is currently no curative treatment. He aims to identify novel mutations that may contribute to castration-resistant prostate cancer and to study the molecular pathways that maintain persistent activation of the androgen receptor in this advanced stage of prostate cancer.

“There are still many unanswered questions about the tumor genetics and biology of metastatic castration-resistant prostate cancer,” said Viswanathan. “PCF is making a major difference in helping to establish a preclinical basis for new and effective therapies for our patients.”

Also in 2017, PCF awarded grants to several other Dana-Farber investigators, including Nathanael Gray, PhD, the Nancy Lurie Marks Professor of Biological Chemistry and Molecular Pharmacology; Christopher Sweeney, MBBS, Mary-Ellen Taplin, MD, chair of the Executive Committee for Clinical Research; and David Weinstock, MD.

With funding from PCF, Sweeney is working to advance clinical therapies for patients with prostate cancer. Taplin is leading clinical trials testing the efficacy of androgen deprivation therapy prior to prostatectomy. Gray and Weinstock, along with their colleague Loretta Li, MD, are testing JAK2 inhibitors in cell and animal models to move them toward clinical trial.

“PCF has provided continuous support to talented investigators at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute who have made significant contributions to improved treatment and understanding of the biology of prostate cancer, bringing us closer than ever to a cure,” said Howard Soule, PhD, chief science officer and executive vice president of PCF. “We are confident that these programs will accelerate breakthrough discoveries needed to ultimately defeat prostate cancer for all patients.”

--- HOWARD SOULE, PhD, chief science officer and executive vice president, Prostate Cancer Foundation

Running the race against cancer®

Every year, runners raise crucial funds for cancer research and patient care by running in their favorite races through Dana-Farber’s Run Any Race program. Run Any Race allows runners of all levels to register for any race, of any distance, anywhere in the world. Popular among many longtime participants, Run Any Race gives runners complete control over their fundraising goals by having no minimum commitment.

In 2017, athletes participated in races as varied as the Tufts 10K, Race to the Top of Vermont, San Diego Half Marathon, Marine Corps Marathon, and Helsinki City Run. Collectively, 207 runners raised more than $284,000 to further Dana-Farber’s lifesaving mission.

One of those athletes was Andrea Tassinari, who ran a different race every month of 2017 in honor of her daughter, Olivia, who had a cancerous brain tumor removed at Dana-Farber in 2016.

“Throughout Olivia’s journey, we have had the privilege to meet incredible doctors, nurses, and staff at the Jimmy Fund Clinic who go above and beyond each and every day when it comes to caring for their patients,” said Andrea. “I decided to run a race every month in dedication to all the heroes at Dana-Farber! No matter how bad I felt, how hot or cold it was, I kept Olivia, and all the many staff and patients, in my thoughts and that helped me to get through anything.”

In honor of her daughter, Olivia (left), Andrea Tassinari ran 12 races in 2017 through Dana-Farber’s Run Any Race program.

--- Andrea Tassinari

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1. 3.1-mile 5K or 0.5-mile Fun Run
2. JimmyFund5K.org
Susan G. Komen fuels advances in breast cancer research

Susan G. Komen provides support for innovative research in all areas of breast cancer, including biology, prevention, treatment, and survivorship. Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and Susan G. Komen’s longstanding relationship empowers the physician-scientists at Dana-Farber’s Susan F. Smith Center for Women’s Cancers to make important inroads against this disease.

In the past year, Susan G. Komen has awarded grants exceeding $1.7 million to Dana-Farber investigators. This includes a grant of $180,000 to Heather Parsons, MD, MPH, to use blood-based biopsies to study resistance in metastatic HER2-positive breast cancer. These biopsies use sequencing technology to detect abnormalities in a blood sample that historically could only be studied using traditional tissue biopsies.

“Susan G. Komen’s dedication to advancing breast cancer research helps make it possible to lead studies that push the boundaries of what is known about this disease,” said Parsons. “I’m grateful for the opportunity to investigate blood-based biopsies as we find new ways to circumvent treatment resistance.”

Susan G. Komen has also awarded Leadership Grants to Dana-Farber investigators including Myles Brown, MD, director of the Center for Cancer Epigenetics and Emil Frei III, MD, Professor of Medicine; Ian Krop, MD, PhD, chief and clinical research director of Breast Oncology; David Livingston, MD, deputy director of Dana-Farber/Harvard Cancer Center and Charles A. Dana Chair in Human Cancer Genetics; Ann Partridge, MD, MPH, founder and director of the Program for Young Women with Breast Cancer; and Eric Winer, MD, director of the Breast Cancer Program, Thompson Chair in Breast Cancer Research, and senior vice president for medical affairs.

With support from Susan G. Komen, Brown is identifying novel targets in hormone resistant breast cancer. Krop is studying resistance to HER2 targeted therapy. Livingston is investigating mechanisms by which BRCA1 mutations elicit control over mammary epithelial differentiation. Partridge is studying and improving care for the medical and psychosocial issues facing young women with breast cancer.

Winer, who served as Komen’s first chief scientific advisor and led the Scientific Advisory Board from 2007 until 2016, is working with Sara Tolaney, MD, and Adrienne Gropper Waks, MD, to investigate immune-related biomarkers in hormone receptor positive breast cancer.

“Susan G. Komen has championed research at Dana-Farber for many years, proving to be an essential partner in advancing breast cancer research,” said Winer. “This recent support is helping to advance cutting-edge science, which will ultimately help us to better care for patients with all types of breast cancer.”

“We are thrilled to support these world-class investigators at Dana-Farber, whose breakthrough research is helping shape our understanding of breast cancer and how to treat it,” said Paula Schneider, CEO, Susan G. Komen. “Investments in research like this are critical to our efforts to reduce mortality from this disease.”

Walkers honored at Extra Mile Brunch

The Extra Mile Brunch, held March 11 at the Boston Marriott Copley Place, welcomed more than 700 participants and guests from the 2017 Boston Marathon® Jimmy Fund Walk presented by Hyundai to celebrate their hard work and dedication in raising more than $8.7 million. The annual brunch thanks Pacesetters, who raised at least $1,500 each ($500 or more for children under 12); Team Captains and Co-Captains of teams that raised $10,000 or more; sponsors; volunteer site captains; and Walk heroes.

Seven walkers received special recognition at the brunch (from left): Extra Mile Award winner Zach Galvin, a 20-year cancer survivor in 2017, who with his team, Zach’s Pack, has raised more than $675,000 since 1998; Volunteer of the Year Colleen Cannon; Alumni Team Captain of the Year Janie Moriarty; First-Time Team Captains of the Year Jake and Halle Silver; Alumni Walker of the Year Frank Berger; and First-Time Walker of the Year Katie Meinelt.

Precision medicine for pediatric cancers

Sally and Steve Lamb have experienced cancer many times, on both sides of their family, and suffered the premature loss of beloved family members. Fortunately, the couple has also seen many of their loved ones become cancer survivors, underscoring the importance of Dana-Farber’s groundbreaking cancer research.

“Af ter meeting many of Dana- Farber’s dedicated faculty members and seeing their commitment to finding a cure for this terrible disease, we are committed to doing all we can to support Dana-Farber’s incredible research efforts,” said the Lambs.

The Lambs recently made a new $150,000 contribution to their Lamb Family Fund to support Katherine Janeway, MD, and her work leading Individualized Cancer Therapy 2 (iCAT2), a pioneering pediatric precision medicine trial. This remarkable gift is furthering Janeway’s innovative research to uncover the specific genetic alterations of a child’s tumor and determine whether there are specific drugs that can be used to target those genetic mutations.

“We can’t imagine any child having to go through cancer, and we hope that our support will help lead to scientific developments that will eliminate cancer in children,” said the Lambs.

“Through this generous gift, the Lambs are supporting a critical initiative to expand our understanding of the key genetic drivers of pediatric cancers and advance precision therapy treatments to benefit our youngest patients and their families,” said Janeway.
Support for young investigators drives innovative research

**DAMON RUNYON CANCER RESEARCH FOUNDATION**

The Damon Runyon Cancer Research Foundation is dedicated to accelerating breakthroughs by providing today's brightest young investigators with the funding they need to pursue groundbreaking research. Damon Runyon recently awarded three grants totaling $922,000, to Phillip Dumesic, MD, PhD; Christopher Gibson, MD; and Vikhla Hayes, PhD, ensuring that these researchers can pursue promising avenues of study during a vital junction in their careers. Under the mentorship of Bruce Spiegelman, PhD, the Stanley J. Korsmeyer, MD, Professor of Cell Biology and Medicine, Dumesic is studying how exercise can improve health. During exercise, muscles are thought to secrete certain biological signaling factors that help protect the body against some metabolic disorders and diseases such as cancer, but little is known about how these signals work. If researchers can identify and figure out how to modify these signals, then these findings could be used to help cancer patients with cachexia and many other conditions.

Under the mentorship of Benjamin Ebert, MD, PhD, chair of Medical Oncology and the Nicola David-Pinedo Professor of Medicine, Gibson is tracing the origins of lymphoma development to determine whether the disease can arise from clonal hematopoiesis of indeterminate potential (CHIP), a condition caused by abnormalities in hematopoietic stem cells (young cells that eventually evolve into blood cells). By understanding how normal cells evolve into lymphoma, his studies could enable researchers to create drugs to target this disease.

Under the mentorship of Matthew Meyerson, MD, PhD, director of Cancer Genomics and director of the Center for Cancer Genome Discovery, Hayes is exploring why some patients with small cell lung cancer eventually stop responding to chemotherapy. This knowledge could help researchers develop therapies to overcome these resistance mechanisms. Outcomes for patients with small cell lung cancer are poor, so Hayes’ work could lead to important new therapeutic options.

“The research of these incredible young scientists will lead to important new discoveries that have the potential to impact diagnosis and treatment of cancers,” said Yung Lie, PhD, Damon Runyon’s deputy director and chief scientific officer. “We are proud to have supported over $16 million in grants to outstanding scientists at Dana-Farber.”

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Philanthropic efforts carry on legacy of Vera and Joseph Dresner

In 2000, Joseph Dresner was diagnosed with myelodysplasia, a blood disorder characterized by the inefficient production of normal blood cells. Throughout his long struggle with the disease, Dresner gained an awareness of and appreciation for the crucial funding needed to provide the best possible care for others affected by the same type of illness.

Dresner and his wife, Vera, created the Vera and Joseph Dresner Foundation to encourage the best in health research and enhance health care access. Through the foundation, they were committed to ensuring financial resources for dedicated physicians who focused on realizing more effective treatments, and ultimately, cures for myelodysplastic syndromes (MDS).

The Vera and Joseph Dresner Foundation later established the MDS Research Fund (MDSRF), which enabled the foundation to expand its investments in support of cutting-edge MDS research and related programs. In 2017, Dresner investigators were honored as recipients of two of the MDSRF’s inaugural grants totaling nearly $800,000. Gregory Abel, MD, MPH, director of Dana-Farber’s Older Adult Hematologic Malignancy Program, received the Established Investigator Award. Abel’s work aims to provide the data necessary to design a large, randomized controlled trial of quality-of-life-driven transfusions for patients with MDS. His research suggests a novel approach and focuses on tailoring transfusion decisions to individual patients.

“We are very grateful to the Dresner Foundation for funding this highly patient-centered work,” said Abel. “We are confident that it will result in an innovative way of determining which patients with MDS truly benefit from transfusions.”

The MDSRF Early Career Award was granted to R. Coleman Lindsley, MD, PhD. He is helping to create a more reliable method to identify youth most at risk for developing MDS.

“We are passionate about working with organizations to create opportunity, have community impact, and promote well-being,” said Lori Dresner, board president, Vera and Joseph Dresner Foundation

We are passionate about working with organizations to create opportunity, have community impact, and promote well-being.”

— Lori Dresner, board president, Vera and Joseph Dresner Foundation
The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society is powering innovative blood cancer research with $3.2 million in new grants

LEUKEMIA & LYMPHOMA SOCIETY*
fighting blood cancers

For more than four decades, the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS) has partnered with Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in pursuit of eradicating blood cancers and ensuring access to treatments, including $3.2 million in new, highly competitive grant awards to six Dana-Farber researchers.

“The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society has supported proudly many of the world’s most renowned cancer researchers at Dana-Farber for more than 40 years,” said Louis DeGennaro, PhD, LLS president and CEO. “Curing cancer will require exceptional scientific minds, bold ideas, forward-looking investors and philanthropists, all coming together to unlock the mysteries of cancer and accelerate the pace of discovery. Our continued partnership with Dana-Farber and its outstanding scientists will help us achieve our mutual goal of finding lifesaving cancer treatments and cures.”

Five Dana-Farber investigators received awards from LLS’s Translational Research Program (TRP), which funds new research to accelerate bench-to-bedside treatment and cures for leukemia, lymphoma, myeloma, and other blood cancers. Among the TRP awardees are two researchers focused on leukemia, Benjamin Ebert, MD, PhD, chair of Medical Oncology, and the Nicola David-Pinedo Professor of Medicine, and Jacqueline Garcia, MD. Ebert is studying the RUNX1 and STAG2 genes, mutations of which can predispose patients to acute myeloid leukemia (AML). A better understanding of these genes may inform the design of new treatments. Garcia is investigating new combination approaches for patients with relapsed or refractory AML/malignant lymphoplastic syndromes. She is correlating laboratory findings with clinical activity to help improve the design of future immunotherapy-based regimens.

TRP grants were also made to investigators researching multiple myeloma. Constantine Mitsiades, MD, PhD, will use CRISPR technology to help identify which genes are essential for multiple myeloma cells to survive and grow within the bone marrow, and to guide the translation of inhibitors for these targets. Jun Qi, PhD, is evaluating the therapeutic potential of inhibiting KDM6A, a protein coding gene, for multiple myeloma. Qi’s lab will develop potent and selective small molecule inhibitors of KDM6A to validate this strategy as a therapeutic opportunity. The lead molecules developed can potentially be used in novel drug development.

Additionally, a TRP grant is supporting Steven Treon, MD, PhD, director of the Bing Center for Waldenstrom’s Macroglobulinemia Research, who is researching ways to boost treatment response for Waldenstrom’s patients with MYD88 and CXCR4 mutations. Treon will determine how cells behave when inhibiting, the active drug for the treatment of this disease, is combined with a CXCR4 blocker. A clinical trial evaluating this strategy has been initiated based on the study’s preliminary findings.

Finally, LLS’s Career Development Program selected Elisa ten Hacken, PhD, as a Special Fellow. Through the generation of novel models of chronic lymphocytic leukemia (CLL), she aims to identify tumor-specific targetable vulnerabilities, which may facilitate optimization of treatment strategies tailored to the genetic makeup of CLL patients.

“"Our continued partnership with Dana-Farber and its outstanding scientists will help us achieve our mutual goal of finding lifesaving cancer treatments and cures.”” — LOUIS DEGENNARO, PhD, president and chief executive officer, LLS

Sisters bolster research in NET with gift and giving page

In 2015, when Sara Butturini received a frightening diagnosis of pancreatic neuroendocrine tumor (NET) that had metastasized to her liver, she knew immediately that she would seek treatment at Dana-Farber. “I wanted to take advantage of the great research going on in Boston,” she explained. “It’s invaluable to receive your care in a place where the latest research is actually being conducted on-site.”

Sara’s treatment was successful, and although she has experienced some complications along the way, she now remains on the normalcy of her daily life, adding, “I often forget that I have cancer!”

Grateful for the care that Sara received, her sister, Laurie Corkey, made a generous gift to the Institute and established Sara’s Fund: Immunotherapy for Neuroendocrine Tumors. Family and friends wanted to help, so the sisters set up a Giving Page on the Jimmy Fund website, which allows others to contribute.

Excited about recent discoveries in immunotherapy, Laurie and Sara chose to support research led by Jennifer Chan, MD, MPH, clinical director of Dana-Farber’s Neuroendocrine and Carcinoid Tumors Program. Chan and her team have developed a study to characterize the immune microenvironment in NETs, the findings of which may translate into novel immune therapies for NETs. “We are grateful to Sara, Laurie, and their family and friends for supporting this important research,” said Chan. “Philanthropic support will be vital in enabling us to achieve our goal of bringing immunotherapy to NET patients.”

Seeking the next phase of discovery in DIPG research

When Keith and Brooke Desscher lost their beloved 3-year-old daughter, Elena, to diffuse intrinsic pontine glioma (DIPG), an aggressive brain cancer, they vowed in the last entry of their blog about her cancer journey, “The cure starts now.” They have devoted themselves to the mission of fighting pediatric cancer ever since.

The Cure Starts Now foundation has funded several important research projects at Dana-Farber. “We only fund the best of the best, and Dana-Farber obviously meets that standard,” said Public Relations and Marketing Director Jennifer Gault. “In our grants, we don’t look to duplicate work that has already been done, but rather to fund projects that could build on existing findings to speed discovery.”

The Cure Starts Now recently made a $100,000 grant to support DIPG research by Dana-Farber’s Mariella Filbin, MD, PhD, who is applying single-cell genomic technologies to patient-derived tumor samples. “Genomic profiling is revolutionizing our understanding of tumor biology,” explained Filbin. “Applying single-cell genomic technologies to tumor samples, we are gaining insights into tumor cells and their micro-environment that would have been unthinkable even a few years ago. Receiving the DIPG grant from The Cure Starts Now enabled me to not only extend and validate my previous findings, but also to do more functional experiments and thereby get closer to establishing novel treatments for this disease.”

Through grants like this one, The Cure Starts Now continues to fight for children like Elena Desscher.
The first time James “Jamey” Mock visited Boston, it wasn’t a happy occasion. It was 1993, when his mother, Kristina, received an esophageal cancer diagnosis and the family traveled from New York to Boston for care at Dana-Farber. She lived another four years before passing away on Christmas Day, 1997.

Work brought Mock and his wife, Jennifer, back to Boston two years ago, and, inspired by his mother’s memory, they reconnected with the Institute through a $100,000 gift to establish the Mock Family Fund for Lung Cancer Research.

“My mother passed away on Christmas Day, and the next summer my brother got married,” Mock says. “An extra year—even an extra day—would have made a huge difference for our family. What Dana-Farber is doing to extend lives is truly amazing.”

The Mocks’ gift will support research led by Pasi Jänne, MD, PhD, director of the Carole M. and Jamey Mock and his wife, Jennifer, above with their children, were inspired to give in memory of his late mother Kristina.

The Cancer Couch Foundation fights metastatic breast cancer

As a practicing neuro-psychologist, Rebecca Timlin-Scalera, PhD, was often impressed by the resiliency of her patients when facing the most difficult challenges. Now a patient with stage IV triple-negative metastatic breast cancer (MBC), she too responded with determination by establishing The Cancer Couch Foundation, a volunteer-run, privately funded organization that directs 100 percent of proceeds from grassroots fundraising events to support cutting-edge MBC research.

Recently, Cancer Couch and the Scalera Family Fund awarded grants totaling $200,000 to propel investigations led by Dana-Farber’s Nikhil Wagle, MD.

Fueled by this generous funding, Wagle and his team are analyzing the role of HER2 mutations and the immune system in estrogen receptor-positive MBC, research that is yielding key insights for the advancement of precision therapies. According to Wagle, Cancer Couch’s singular focus on fighting MBC is critical to driving this important work. “Cancer Couch’s commitment to our MBC research has been instrumental in accelerating the pace of discoveries within my lab,” said Wagle. “We are so thankful to count the foundation as a steadfast partner in efforts to identify more personalized treatments for patients.”

Noting the dire need for funding of MBC research, Timlin-Scalera was pleased that Cancer Couch could increase its contribution to Wagle’s lab this year. She said: “The Cancer Couch is so honored to have Dr. Wagle on board and to support his team in their relentless pursuit of better treatments, and ultimately a cure, for metastatic breast cancer.”

Fall Formal shines in fourth year

In 2014, Jonathan Kazarian went through a family experience that highlighted the importance of Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. Inspired by this development, Jonathan and longtime friend Zach Hagopian created an event called Fall Formal to raise funds for the Institute’s work. Now in its fourth year, the 2017 Fall Formal was held Nov. 11, and raised an impressive $157,000.

Fall Formal is geared toward young professionals in the Boston area, and Jonathan and Zach select interesting venues to keep the crowd engaged and intrigued. In years past, the event was held at the Boston Children’s Museum and the Boston Aquarium. This year’s event was held at The Castle at Park Plaza in Boston’s Back Bay, and drew nearly 1,000 guests. The event featured cocktails, a live band, an opportunity drawing, and a silent auction.

With the help of a committee, Jonathan and Zach have successfully grown Fall Formal, and cumulatively raised more than $310,000 to benefit Dana-Farber’s cancer-fighting mission. Jonathan and Zach have big plans for continuing this very popular event. “We’re proud to be able to engage young professionals to rally around a great cause each year,” said Jonathan.

“None of this would be possible without the support of our guests, sponsors, and the committee. After four successful years, we can’t wait to get started for next year!”

Mock's give $100,000 to support lung cancer research

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10% of all designated gifts supports our Faculty Research Fund to advance Dana-Farber’s research mission.

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Mathers Charitable Foundation awards $1.45 million to promote research on immune-based cancer therapies

Recent years have witnessed remarkable advances in cancer care thanks to new treatments that encourage the patient’s own immune system to eliminate cancer cells. These immunotherapies induce long-term remissions in some patients, but not everyone responds to them. Understanding how immunotherapies work on a molecular level will help researchers extend their benefits to more patients with a broader range of malignancies.

Recognizing the Institute’s position as a pioneer in this cancer therapeutic frontier, The G. Harold and Leila Y. Mathers Charitable Foundation has awarded $1.45 million to fund immunotherapy research led by F. Stephen Hodi Jr., MD, director of Dana-Farber’s Center for Immuno-Oncology and the Sharon Crowley Martin Chair in Melanoma, W. Nicholas Haining, BM, BCh; and Catherine Wu, MD. Hodi was the first to show that blocking the immune-inhibiting protein CTLA-4 prolongs survival in patients with melanoma, and he is a leader in testing the clinical impact of treatment regimens that combine immunotherapies with one another. He will perform cellular and molecular studies of samples from patients receiving immunotherapies to identify biological indicators that predict how individual patients will respond to these treatments.

Haining studies the molecular mechanisms controlling immune cell functions. He will conduct single-cell analyses of immune cell populations surrounding tumors to gain insights into the genetic and molecular factors that govern how each immune cell responds to cancer when exposed to immunotherapies. Wu has developed algorithms for discovering cancer-associated proteins with characteristics predicted to elicit powerful immune responses. She will assess various categories of these proteins in melanomas to determine how they shape anti-tumor immune responses over time in the context of immunotherapeutic interventions. Results from these interrelated projects will help researchers learn how to use current immunotherapies more effectively, uncover mechanisms of therapeutic resistance, and identify novel targets for the next generation of cancer immunotherapies. Such advances promise to expand the therapeutic reach of immune-based therapies to many more patients with cancer.

The G. Harold and Leila Y. Mathers Charitable Foundation aims to advance knowledge in life sciences by sponsoring cutting-edge research and leveraging insights gleaned from those studies to benefit mankind. “This bold, collaborative project is cutting-edge and consistent with the mission of the Mathers Foundation,” said the foundation’s executive director, Howard Chester, MD. “I have no doubt that these investigations will provide us with a more comprehensive understanding of immunotherapy and facilitate development of future therapies for multiple cancer types.”

“As a former Mathers Foundation grantee, I understand the organization’s interest in funding investigators who conduct bold, creative research,” said Dana-Farber President and CEO Laurie H. Glimcher, MD. “These investigators represent the very best that Dana-Farber and the field of immunotherapy have to offer, and their combined efforts have the potential to change the landscape of cancer medicine.”

Jimmy Fund Little League surpasses $5 million milestone

Key supporters of Jimmy Fund Little League presented by Extra Innings and Franklin Sports came together at the Yawkey Center for Cancer Care in February to celebrate an historic milestone: Over three decades from 1987 to 2017, the program has raised more than $5 million for Dana-Farber. Each year, Jimmy Fund Little League gives thousands of kids throughout New England the opportunity to extend their baseball and softball seasons while learning the value of philanthropy by fundraising for the Jimmy Fund. Above, visiting the Jimmy Fund Display in the Charles A. Dana Building, are (from left) Jimmy Fund Little League Program Coordinator and District Administrator John Berardi and District Administrators Bernie Colbert, Marie Shea, Kim Roy, and Bill Roy.

PSR Inc. funds new fellowship in esophageal cancer research

Barrett’s esophagus (BE) is a condition that increases one’s risk of developing cancer. With no reliable predictors of BE’s progression and no clear symptoms of disease, many patients who develop esophageal cancer are not diagnosed until their cancer is advanced, and often incurable. Dana-Farber’s Adam Bass, MD, hopes to change this with the help of a recent gift to his lab.

Inspired by their mother’s treatment at Dana-Farber for esophageal cancer, Glenn and Walter Baker—along with their wives, Rebecca and Alexandria, and on behalf of their employees—established a fellowship at Dana-Farber through their company, PSR Inc. Their gift of $150,000 helped Bass recruit a new team member, computational biologist Chunyang Bao, PhD.

As Bass and his team churn out volumes of data from the genomic sequencing of BE patient samples, Bao analyzes the data, looking for minute genetic changes that could signal a BE cell’s predisposition to esophageal cancer before physical changes would be detected.

“Dr. Bao’s analyses will help identify potential biomarkers of esophageal cancer that could ultimately help physicians diagnose this cancer earlier, when patients have the greatest chance for survival,” said Bass.

“Our team at PSR is thrilled to help Dr. Bass grow his team and advance their research in this tangible way,” said Glenn Baker, president of PSR. “In a sense, we feel like we have made a new hire, and it is one of the best we will ever make.”

“In a sense, we feel like we have made a new hire, and it is one of the best we will ever make.”

— GLENN BAKER, president, PSR Inc.

“This bold, collaborative project is cutting-edge and consistent with the mission of the Mathers Foundation.”

— HOWARD CHESTER, MD, executive director, The G. Harold and Leila Y. Mathers Charitable Foundation
Generous gifts provide hope for cancer patients

When Ross Mayer began treatment at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute for an especially aggressive case of prostate cancer, he found cutting-edge therapies and something else: hope. “Dana-Farber gave me hope when many doctors thought there wasn’t any,” said Mayer. “My radiation oncologist, Dr. Clair Beard, was the only one who believed I could be cured.”

Mayer, now healthy, generously increased his commitment to Dana-Farber with recent gifts in honor of Beard. His support established the Ross Mayer Fund, advancing the innovative research of oncologist Mary-Ellen Taplin, MD, and named the Ross Mayer Laboratory Services Bay in the Yawkey Center for Cancer Care to enable Dana-Farber to maintain and optimize state-of-the-art space for comprehensive patient care.

“I’m grateful for Ross’ support, which will bolster my team’s research into the genetic drivers of prostate cancer to identify new drug targets and combination therapies,” said Taplin, who is director of clinical research at Dana-Farber’s Lank Center for Genitourinary Oncology.

Mayer had surgery, radiation, and hormone therapy as treatment for his prostate cancer. He was impressed with his Dana-Farber team’s cutting-edge approach. Through his contributions, Mayer seeks to help a large number of patients and their families.

“A cancer diagnosis takes its toll,” said Mayer. “Everyone needs a little hope when facing it. I want patients to know I care, and I hope to prevent others from having to deal with what I went through.”

Preventing secondary cancers in young adult survivors

Christopher Recklitis, PhD, MPH, director of research in Dana-Farber’s Perini Family Survivors’ Center, has received an award of $100,000 from the Perini Family Survivors’ Center, has received an award of $100,000 from the Prevent Cancer Foundation® to study an often-overlooked aspect of young adult cancer care.

After completing cancer therapy, young adult cancer survivors are at very high risk for being diagnosed with a second cancer, more than half of which will be skin cancers. But studies show most young adult survivors do not practice adequate sun protection that could reduce their risk.

There are currently no evidence-based interventions to prevent secondary skin cancers in young adult cancer survivors, and to fill that gap Recklitis will refine and test SunSmart, an engaging new video intervention developed by his team. SunSmart’s messaging is tailored to young adult cancer survivors, and can be delivered via the internet.

The Prevent Cancer Foundation is the only U.S. nonprofit organization solely devoted to cancer prevention and early detection. Since 1985, it has invested in cancer prevention and early detection research, education, outreach, and advocacy.

“We are proud to support Dr. Recklitis and his team in their research on young adult cancer care,” said Carolyn Aldigé, president and founder of the Prevent Cancer Foundation. “Skin cancer is the most common cancer diagnosis, but it is also the most preventable. Practicing sun safety is important for everyone, but especially for young adult cancer survivors. We are hopeful Dr. Recklitis’ work will help this vulnerable population reduce their cancer risk.”

Young and strong women battle breast cancer together

At age 30, Meghan Martin was seven months pregnant with her third child when she received a startling diagnosis: breast cancer. Although fearful for her baby’s life, Meghan safely tolerated four rounds of chemotherapy before giving birth to Gavin, her “miracle baby.” She began a grueling treatment plan which included chemotherapy, mastectomy, and radiation. But one year later, the cancer had metastasized to her lymph nodes and bones.

Meghan’s oncologist, Ann Partridge, MD, MPH, founder and director of the Program for Young Women with Breast Cancer at Dana-Farber’s Susan F. Smith Center for Women’s Cancers, introduced her to the program, where she met Maggie Loucks. Experiencing the benefits of this supportive group firsthand, and seeing a need for additional funding, Meghan, Maggie, Kelley Tuthill, and Carie Capossela created the Celebrating Young and Strong gala.

This past October, the women gathered for the 4th annual Celebrating Young and Strong gala at the Boston Design Center. With nearly 500 guests, the event surpassed previous years and raised nearly $159,000.

As Meghan continues to fight her disease, she finds comfort in this special group and wants to make other women’s breast cancer diagnoses as painless and as positive as possible.

“Dr. Partridge says we are survivors from day one of diagnosis,” said Meghan. “Just because we are in treatment doesn’t mean we can’t celebrate being young and strong.”

Patty and Doug Reid support collaborative research

When Patty Reid was diagnosed with cancer in Atlanta, doctors recommended seeking a second opinion about her rare lymphoma. Reid consulted Eric Jacobsen, MD, clinical director of Dana-Farber’s Adult Lymphoma Program, and began treatment in Boston. “It was lucky I did,” she explains. “My whole course of treatment changed because of research that had just been done at Dana-Farber.”

Reid had a rare blood mutation, and recent findings about it guided her treatment, which included a stem cell transplant under the care of Edwin Alyea, MD, director of Hematologic Malignancy Clinical Strategy. Grateful for the care she received, Reid and her husband, Doug, made a $200,000 gift supporting the collaborative research of Jacobsen and Alyea.

“The Reids’ generous gift will help us immensely in our efforts to better understand the biology and further improve the treatment of this rare group of diseases,” said Jacobsen. Alyea added, “We are grateful for the Reids’ support, which will allow us to look at the recovery of the immune system after transplantation. Using a very sophisticated technique which analyzes T cells as well as other immune effector cells, we will grow in our understanding of how to improve the new immune system after transplantation.”

“I am doing so well because of prior research,” says Reid. “I wouldn’t be here without Dr. Alyea and Dr. Jacobsen, so we are pleased to be able to give back and support new studies.”

To include Dana-Farber in your estate plans, contact us at 800-535-5577

10% of all designated gifts supports our Faculty Research Fund to advance Dana-Farber’s research mission

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iKang Healthcare Group fuels innovative studies and clinical care

When Lee Ligang Zhang met with Laurie H. Glimcher, MD, in Beijing, he was intrigued to hear from Dana-Farber’s president and CEO about the Institute’s innovative research and high-quality clinical care. Zhang is founder, chairman, and CEO of iKang Healthcare Group, Inc., one of the largest providers in China’s fast-growing private preventive healthcare services market. iKang manages more than 100 medical centers in more than 30 cities in China, offering a wide range of medical examination, disease screening, and outpatient services. iKang, which means love and health in Chinese, served more than six million individuals in 2017.

A successful entrepreneur, Zhang is well known in China. He attended graduate school in genetics at Harvard from 1995 to 1998, after which he returned to China to join the internet boom. Zhang founded eLong.com, now one of the largest online travel service companies in China, and was named EY Entrepreneur of the Year in the Life Sciences Category in China in 2014. Zhang attributes much of the success of iKang, the second company he founded, to Harvard and Dana-Farber. In 2003, Thomas Roberts, PhD, co-chair of Cancer Biology at Dana-Farber and, at the time, faculty dean for Graduate Education at Harvard Medical School, met Zhang, then CEO of eLong.com, during a student recruitment trip to China. He suggested that Zhang consider building something in healthcare. Zhang took the advice of Roberts, who has mentored him ever since and serves on iKang’s board of directors. “Without Professor Roberts, there wouldn’t be a company called iKang,” Zhang said.

Zhang was impressed with treatment outcomes at Dana-Farber. “On average, the overall five-year survival rate for cancer patients in China is only about 50 percent of the rate in the United States,” he remarked.

After Zhang learned more about the Institute, iKang Healthcare Group made a gift of $1 million to support research and patient care. The company’s gift will provide Dana-Farber with crucial dollars that can be directed where and when they are needed most. “Gifts of flexible funding allow our physician-scientists to pursue their most creative ideas, accelerate cutting-edge research, and break new ground in both the laboratory and the clinic,” said Glimcher, who is also the Richard and Susan Smith Professor of Medicine. “The generous gift from iKang will provide a catalyst for remarkable advancements, and we are grateful for their partnership.” Such gifts are critical to Dana-Farber’s success. The pace of discovery in cancer research has been stunning in recent years, yet federal funding has remained flat. Gifts from generous supporters like iKang fill that gap, allowing our scientists to pursue promising research, working to develop new treatments that benefit patients all over the world.

Support for research on poverty and childhood cancer

Charles H. Hood saved children’s lives. The 19th-century dairy magnate fought for improved sanitation standards in milk production and distribution, dramatically increasing survival rates for infants. When his son, Harvey P. Hood II, established a foundation in 1942, he chose health and quality of life for children as its top priority, honoring his father’s achievements.

To that end, the Charles H. Hood Foundation has supported pediatric cancer research at Dana-Farber for many years, seeking out innovative projects and striving to cultivate the next generation of physician-scientists. “We want to encourage young researchers early in their careers, and we are proud of the many well-known scientists who got their first grants from the Hood Foundation,” said Executive Director Robert Sege, MD, PhD, FAAP.

The foundation awarded a $150,000 Child Health Research Award to Dana-Farber’s Kira Bona, MD, MPH, who studies the interaction between poverty and childhood cancer outcomes. “One in five children with cancer lives in poverty,” explained Bona, “yet poverty as a contributor to disease outcome has never been targeted in a systemic fashion in childhood cancer care.”

“Dr. Bona had superb data and a rigorous design for her studies,” said Sege. “We look for researchers like her who look at things in a novel way.” Bona hopes that her work will lead to interventions that reduce disparities in childhood cancer outcomes.

Naming space at Dana-Farber leaves a lasting mark

Naming space at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute is a wonderful way to make a lasting statement of your support for our lifesaving mission, and to inspire others to give.

Recent gifts by Lucinda Cardinal and Daniel Tamkin to provide unrestricted support for the Institute’s capital projects and priorities were recognized with a plaque outside a Vitals Bay in Dana-Farber’s Jimmy Fund Clinic. They also made generous contributions to support women’s cancer research.

Dan and Cindy (above) stopped by to visit the space they named on a recent tour of Dana-Farber’s Longwood Campus.
Propelling progress in lymphoma research

Stephen Blyth is a professor of statistics, and when he consulted Dana-Farber's Philippe Armand, MD, PhD, about his cancer diagnosis, he was reassured by Armand's straightforward manner. “Dr. Armand was very well-informed and obviously an expert, but also acknowledged where there was uncertainty.”

After completing grueling chemotherapy, Blyth is now in excellent health, and has given some thought to the progress made in cancer research. “The science has advanced, the outcomes are better, and the technology has progressed dramatically,” he observed. Wanting to help advance the field further, Blyth and his wife, Anita, made a generous $100,000 gift to support Armand’s research.

Armand, who is director of clinical research in Dana-Farber’s Lymphoma Program and the Harold and Virginia Lash Endowed Chair in Lymphoma Research, is working with his team on the development of a blood-based assay that will allow them to dissect the molecular characteristics of a patient’s tumor and potentially facilitate its targeting with specific drugs. “Stephen is a remarkable man who honors our program with his generosity, intelligence, and desire to make a difference,” says Armand. “This project may unlock new strategies for treating this disease that, within a decade or so, could revolutionize our treatment approach. We are deeply indebted to Stephen and his family for this contribution.”

Teaming up to take down ovarian cancer

In September 2017, more than 1,000 people and 30 teams participated in the 8th annual girlygirl P.A.R.T.S. SK Run/Walk for Ovarian Cancer, raising $171,500 in memory of Jill DiTommaso, who passed away from ovarian cancer in December 2015.

The event was started by Jill and her friend Laura Smith to support the work of Jill’s doctor, Ursula Matulonis, MD, director of Gynecologic Oncology and the Brock-Wilson Family Chair at Dana-Farber. P.A.R.T.S. stands for “Pre-Screening Awareness Required To Silence” this disease, and the event has raised more than $392,000 since 2009 in support of Matulonis’ research for a pre-screening tool to assist with early ovarian cancer diagnosis.

Team participation is a driving force for this one-day walk: 98 percent of the money raised at the event is raised by the teams. Long-standing participants like Team Babs, Team Cindy, Jill’s Dream Team, Kyle’s Rays, and Team Southport, make an impact year after year, showing support for those they walk and run to remember and honor. Teams new to the event like Team Kathy Strong help drive the momentum with new donors and supporters.

“Teams can reach people our committee could never reach,” said race director, Trish Cundiff. “They are tentacles that reach further and further each year. This is how we can overcome this brutal disease.”

Amplifying the voice of the melanoma patient

When Diana Ashby was diagnosed with stage IV melanoma, she was dismayed by the limited treatment options, and her compassion for fellow patients grew as she spent three years battling the disease that would eventually overcome her.

During her struggle, Ashby established the Melanoma Research Foundation (MRF) to fund basic cancer research and advocate for the melanoma community. She envisioned making a difference in the lives of others and helping to find a cure.

More than 20 years later, the MRF is the largest independent organization devoted to melanoma, awarding grants to support the study of prevention, diagnosis, and treatment. In 2017, this included a $100,000 Career Development Award to Dana-Farber’s Rizwan Haq, MD, PhD.

Haq is studying the mechanisms that underlie resistance to PD-1 inhibitors, drugs that target proteins which cancer cells use to evade the immune system. Using a unique tool to recreate drug resistance, his work could ultimately inform treatment decisions and identify patients who are most and least likely to respond to immunotherapies.

“The MRF has stayed true to Diana’s vision and remains committed to advancing innovative research for new and better options to treat melanoma, educating people about prevention, and advocating for melanoma patients everywhere,” said Steve Silverstein, chair of the MRF Board of Directors.
Gray Foundation seeds research on non-surgical breast cancer risk reduction

Jon Gray, president and chief operating officer of Blackstone, one of the world’s leading investment firms, and his wife, Mindy, recently awarded $1.5 million to fund an important collaboration between Dana-Farber and Harvard Medical School aimed at developing non-surgical alternatives for reducing breast cancer risk in women who carry BRCA1 mutations.

The gift, made through the Gray Foundation, is part of their ongoing efforts around BRCA-related cancers. In 2012, the Grays established the Basser Center for BRCA at the University of Pennsylvania to serve as a hub for research and education on these inherited genetic anomalies, and they have subsequently funded BRCA research at leading institutions around the country.

While relatively uncommon, BRCA1 is one of the widely recognized genes linked to breast cancer risk. Women who are carriers of BRCA1 have a 55 to 65 percent chance of developing breast cancer by age 70, according to the National Cancer Institute. In comparison, the general population has an 8 percent risk of developing breast cancer by that age.

These mutations, as well as mutations in the BRCA2 gene, also increase the risk of several other cancers, including ovarian, fallopian tube, and peritoneal cancer. Men and women with BRCA1 or BRCA2 mutations are more susceptible to pancreatic cancer, and men are at higher risk of developing aggressive prostate cancer.

Prophylactic mastectomy significantly lowers breast cancer risk in women with BRCA1 mutations; however, it is a radical surgical procedure that carries potential physical and psychosocial ramifications for patients. Likewise, medical options such as FDA-approved tamoxifen and raloxifene can lower breast cancer risk, but these drugs have long-term side effects. Recently, Dana-Farber researchers identified a BRCA1-driven pathway that operates in breast cells and that, when interrupted, leads these cells to acquire aberrant properties. Their findings further suggest that these aberrant cells have taken specific steps toward BRCA1 breast cancer development. By contrast, when this pathway functions normally, it appears to promote normal, cancer-free breast cell development.

Investigators from Dana-Farber will team with scientists at Harvard Medical School in an effort to develop technologies that lead to the detection of aberrant, pre-malignant BRCA1 mutation-bearing breast cells before these cells become fully malignant. The researchers have already applied cutting-edge single-cell technologies to search for these abnormal breast cells in women who carry inherited BRCA1 and BRCA2 mutations and, with Gray Foundation funding, they aim to develop strategies that can eliminate these cells without surgical intervention, thereby lowering BRCA1 and BRCA2 breast cancer risk. Non-interventional BRCA1 and BRCA2 breast cancer prevention has long been a major clinical objective.

“Since founding the Basser Center for BRCA, we have been awed by the advancements made possible through collaborations between talented researchers and institutions. We are proud to support this important work at Dana-Farber, led by Drs. David Livingston and Joan Brugge, and are optimistic about continued progress in understanding, treating, and ultimately preventing BRCA-related cancers,” said Jon and Mindy Gray.

Kraft Family Blood Donor Center honors donors

Cancer treatment can interfere with a patient’s ability to manufacture red blood cells and platelets—essential cells that help to control bleeding—and many cancer patients need regular infusions to survive. Compassionate individuals who donate blood and platelets at the Kraft Family Blood Donor Center at Dana-Farber and Brigham and Women’s Hospital are therefore treasured partners in the lifesaving care we provide. In February, Kraft Center donors were honored at the annual Breakfast of Champions recognition brunch at Gillette Stadium.

Among those celebrated at the brunch were members of Team 20 (above), those who have donated platelets 20 times or more during the year. Featured speakers included Dana-Farber President and CEO Laurie H. Glimcher, MD (front row, 10th from right), Kraft Family Professor of Medicine Kenneth Anderson, MD (front row, eighth from right), and Institute Trustee Daniel Kraft (behind Dr. Glimcher), himself a blood and platelet donor since 1995 and host of the brunch.

Jon and Mindy Gray’s gift to Dana-Farber funds research on BRCA1 genetic mutations and breast cancer risk prevention.
10% of all designated gifts supports our Faculty Research Fund to advance Dana-Farber’s research mission

Not only do we spend a lot of money on creating and storing medical records, but we also need to keep the records secure from unauthorized access. In addition, we need to ensure that the records are accurate and up to date. To achieve this, we have implemented a number of measures, including:

- Regular audits of the medical records system
- Use of encryption to protect the data
- Training of staff on the importance of maintaining accurate records
- Use of digital signatures for important documents

Despite these measures, there have been instances where medical records have been compromised. In one case, a nurse accidentally left a computer with sensitive patient data unattended for several hours. In another case, an employee who was let go accessed the system to retrieve his own records after leaving the company. These incidents highlight the importance of continuous monitoring of the system and employee access levels.

In conclusion, while the implementation of the above measures has helped to improve the security and accuracy of medical records, there is still room for improvement. We need to continue to invest in technology and training to ensure that our records remain protected and accurate.
On a recent visit to Dana-Farber’s Jimmy Fund Clinic, members of the Boston Bruins delivered gifts, friendship, and joy to patients like Jayveon, age 9, above. From left: Riley Nash, Tim Schaller, Paul Postma, and Patrice Bergeron.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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

JULY 13
Swim Across America

Swim Across America

Swim Across America

Swim Across America

Swim Across America

JULY 13
Swim Across America

Dive in with Janel Jorgensen McArdle and other Olympic swimmers for Swim Across America’s 22-mile Boston Harbor Island Swim and support the David B. Perini, Jr. Quality of Life Clinic at Dana-Farber. To register, make a gift, or volunteer, visit SwimAcrossAmerica.org/Boston.

NOW–JULY 17
Strike Out Cancer

Strike Out Cancer

Strike Out Cancer

Strike Out Cancer

JULY 17
Strike Out Cancer

Give $1, $3, or $5 to the Jimmy Fund at participating New England Taco Bell and KFC locations and receive a baseball pin-up you can personalize and display. Contact David Giagrando at 617-632-3804 or David_Giagrando@dfci.harvard.edu.

JULY 22
NEW! Jimmy Fund 5K & Fun Run

NEW! Jimmy Fund 5K & Fun Run

NEW! Jimmy Fund 5K & Fun Run

NEW! Jimmy Fund 5K & Fun Run

JULY 22
NEW! Jimmy Fund 5K & Fun Run

Presented by Bayer

Get the whole family moving this summer while having fun and supporting the Jimmy Fund. Choose the 3.1-mile 5K or the half-mile Fun Run, then celebrate at the post-race party, all at Millennium Park in West Roxbury, Mass. Visit RunDanaFarber.org or contact Emily Falconer at 617-632-1970 or Emily_Falconer@dfci.harvard.edu.

JULY 25–AUGUST 14
Strike Out Cancer

Strike Out Cancer

Strike Out Cancer

Strike Out Cancer

NOW–JULY 17
Strike Out Cancer

JULY 25–AUGUST 14
Strike Out Cancer

Give $1, $3, or $5 to the Jimmy Fund at participating The Paper Store locations and receive a baseball pin-up you can personalize and display. Contact David Giagrando at 617-632-3804 or David_Giagrando@dfci.harvard.edu.

AUGUST 3
Joe Cronin Memorial Jimmy Fund Fishing Tournament

Joe Cronin Memorial Jimmy Fund Fishing Tournament

Joe Cronin Memorial Jimmy Fund Fishing Tournament

Joe Cronin Memorial Jimmy Fund Fishing Tournament

AUGUST 3
Joe Cronin Memorial Jimmy Fund Fishing Tournament

Help the Jimmy Fund raise much-needed funds for cancer research and care at this 25th annual event, which includes a full day of children’s activities, dinner, entertainment, awards, and live and silent auctions. Contact Maryann Zschau at 617-632-5461 or Maryann_Zschau@dfci.harvard.edu.

FOR MORE EXCITING EVENTS GO TO PAGE 19!