Visionary $10 million gift helps launch new Center for Precision Immuno-Oncology

To change the landscape of cancer care requires translating scientific discoveries into therapies to help patients today, while laying the groundwork for treatments still to come. Immunotherapy—which harnesses the body’s own immune system to fight cancer—shows great promise, but its full potential has not yet been realized. Through the leadership of Dana-Farber President and CEO Laurie H. Glimcher, MD, the Institute is poised to drive a groundbreaking new effort to accelerate the availability and effectiveness of immunotherapy for more patients.

Inspired by Glimcher’s vision for the future, and wanting to make a difference for patients across all forms of cancer, an anonymous donor has made a transformative gift of $10 million to help launch Dana-Farber’s Center for Precision Immuno-Oncology. The donor is hopeful that this gift will inspire additional support for this important initiative.

The mapping of the human genome and the knowledge that genetic mutations drive the development of individual tumors spurred a revolution in cancer care. This understanding ushered in the era of precision medicine, in which the underlying biology of each patient’s cancer can guide their therapy. Dana-Farber capitalized on this revolution through its Profile project, one of the largest and most comprehensive patient-based cancer genetic studies in the world. Designing the Profile infrastructure was an accomplishment that makes Dana-Farber unique among cancer institutions, and led to a versatile clinical testing platform that is ready-made for the introduction of immune profiling.

Immunotherapy marks a second revolution in cancer research. Many patients can develop immune responses that could destroy their cancers, but this potent anti-cancer reaction is blocked by the disease itself. Dana-Farber has been at the forefront of this research, discovering the molecular blockers and developing drugs to remove them. However, these drugs are not yet effective for all patients or in all types of cancers, and investigators are still developing ways to predict which patients will respond to them.

Combining precision medicine and immunology in pursuit of precision immuno-oncology—a form of care that focuses on understanding the role of the immune system in each patient’s cancer and delivering treatments designed to bolster an individual’s natural immune response—will help identify the most promising treatments for each patient. Investigators at Dana-Farber have developed techniques to visualize and characterize how immune cells attack cancer cells—techniques that also reveal how cancer cells avoid immune detection. As a result, it is possible to both determine which existing immunotherapy strategies might be effective, and use the findings to help develop novel immunotherapies. The Center for Precision Immuno-Oncology aims to bring the benefits of such testing to patients through a standardized diagnostic system for immuno-profiling.

“As the focus of my personal research, immunology is a topic close to my heart, and this tremendous gift inspires me to generate data for the Institute’s precision medicine efforts,” said Glimcher, the Richard and Susan Smith Professor of Medicine. “Powered by this visionary gift, we are building a foundation of knowledge that will continue to benefit patients while keeping Dana-Farber at the forefront of these promising areas in research for many years to come.”

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WITH GENEROUS DONOR SUPPORT, SCIENTISTS IN DANA-FARBER’S CENTER FOR PRECISION IMMUNO-ONCOLOGY WILL HAVE THE DATA NECESSARY TO INVESTIGATE:

- What kind of immune cells are present in the tumor?
- Are they armed to destroy a tumor or are they quiescent?
- Are the cells expressing molecules known to suppress the immune response?
- Are the immune or cancer cells expressing novel molecules that might be used as new targets for immune therapy drugs?
- Are the cancer cells in the sample expressing genes that drive the cancer or repel the immune system?
Dear Friends,

There is so much exciting news to share with you! In some recent transformative research, Dana-Farber physician-scientists demonstrated the effectiveness of the first truly personalized cancer vaccine, NeoVax, in a clinical trial for melanoma patients. Dana-Farber also played a major role in the FDA approval of another revolutionary cancer treatment, CAR T-cell therapy, and is one of the first cancer centers nationwide to offer this treatment. Dana-Farber’s part in such groundbreaking advances for our patients would not be possible without generous support from you, our loyal donors.

I am delighted to announce that a friend of the Institute who wishes to remain anonymous has made a transformative gift of $10 million to help establish Dana-Farber’s new Center for Precision Immuno-Oncology: Leveraging the Institute’s Profile project, Dana-Farber is uniquely poised to apply precision medicine techniques to profiling a patient’s immune system, enhancing our ability to make immuno-therapies more effective for more patients.

Showing her deep support for Dana-Farber, and her dedication to women’s health, Institute Trustee Jane Brock-Wilson recently endowed a faculty chair with a gift of $2.5 million, providing an ongoing fund to support gynecologic cancer research. Ursula Matulonis, MD, director of a faculty chair with a gift of $2.5 million, providing an ongoing fund to support gynecologic cancer research. Ursula Matulonis, MD, director of gynecologic oncology at the Susan F. Smith Center for Women’s Cancers, is the first incumbent of the Brock-Wilson Family Chair.

The Boston Marathon® Jimmy Fund Walk presented by Hyundai, the most successful single-day fundraising walk in the nation, is always a joyful event and major source of support for the Institute. In its 29th year, more than 9,300 walkers, along with 1,000 volunteers and 49 generous sponsors, raised a record-breaking $8.7 million. Since 1989, this enduring event has raised more than $125 million for our lifesaving mission.

The dedicated community of Jimmy Fund golfer also broke records this year, with 168 tournaments in 12 states raising $7.68 million to support Dana-Farber. It is inspiring to see our supporters devote so much of their precious time and energy to successful events that fuel our battle against cancer.

Stand Up To Cancer® (SU2C) strives to bring together the best and brightest researchers to drive collaboration in the cancer community. We are honored that SU2C recently awarded two of its prestigious SU2C Catalyst® grants totaling $4 million to Dana-Farber, to advance clinical trials in breast and ovarian cancers and in multiple myeloma.

For a powerful 36 hours in August, the annual WEEI/NESN Jimmy Fund Radio-Telethon presented by Arbella Insurance Foundation was broadcast live. Moving stories from Dana-Farber patients, caregivers, and families, combined with guest appearances by Boston Red Sox players and other luminaries, all added up to an unforgettable event that inspired listeners nationwide to give more than $4.2 million to our lifesaving cause.

Dana-Farber remains a leader in garnering major grants from an ever-shrinking pool of federal dollars, such as the prestigious SPORE grant detailed at the right. But federal funding does not cover all of the costs of research. So much of the extraordinary progress we make in the fight against cancer is made possible by our donors, and we cannot thank you enough.

Sincerely,

Susan S. Paretsky
Senior Vice President for Development

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**UPDATE ON FEDERAL FUNDING AT DANA-FARBER**

**Dana-Farber leads new NIH SPORE grant of $11 million**

A decade of discoveries has revealed many of the genetic underpinnings of myeloid malignancies, including leukemia and myelodysplastic syndrome (MDS).

At Dana-Farber/Harvard Cancer Center (DF/HCC), efforts to hone this research for patients’ benefit are accelerating with an $11 million grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to create a Specialized Program of Research Excellence (SPORE) in Myeloid Malignancies.

The new SPORE—only the third nationwide in leukemia and one of seven SPORES now active at DF/HCC—will fund research projects involving four major approaches to novel treatments for leukemia and related diseases. The grant, which runs for five years, also covers the creation of shared laboratory facilities and career development opportunities for basic and clinical researchers.

“The goal is to encourage the translation of laboratory research findings into improvements in clinical practice,” says Dana-Farber Chair of Medical Oncology Benjamin Ebert, MD, PhD, who is leader of the DF/HCC Leukemia Program and co-principal investigator of the new SPORE. “Dana-Farber/Harvard Cancer Center has the mix of resources and scientific expertise to make that transition happen.”

The other co-principal investigator of the SPORE is Dana-Farber Chief of Staff and Director of the Adult Leukemia Program Richard Stone, MD.

Research funded by the SPORE will focus on leukemia and MDS, a group of conditions that occur when genetic mutations in blood-forming cells in the bone marrow cause the cells to become cancerous. Both leukemia and MDS are considered myeloid malignancies because they arise in cells that generate red blood cells, certain kinds of white blood cells, and cells that form platelets.

Each project covered by the grant reflects the SPORE program’s emphasis on bench-to-bedside and bedside-to-bench research, which has been a hallmark of Dana-Farber’s approach since its earliest days.

“The program places a premium on exceptional basic science projects that can be linked to clinical trials within the five-year time frame of the grant,” Ebert says. “Being able to identify several projects within that ‘sweet spot’ speaks to the range of research underway at DF/HCC and the breadth of resources available for conducting outstanding translational research.”

A main goal of the SPORE program is to foster a communal research environment that will outlast its five-year term, Ebert says. “It brings people together from different institutions and specialties—clinicians as well as basic scientists—in a way that strengthens our entire research effort. It produces a kind of synergy that’s difficult to achieve with other, more narrowly directed grants.”

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**THE GENE DISPLAY:**

**IN THE ROBERT J. TOMSICH FAMILY GALLERY**

**Make your mark on cancer**

Name a gene in the Gene Display, located in Dana-Farber’s Yawkey Center for Cancer Care. This unique opportunity allows you to honor a family member, friend, physician, or caregiver with a lasting tribute that also fuels groundbreaking research and patient care. Genes can be named individually or as a group with a gift of $5,000, payable over one or two years.

Name a gene today. Please contact Rebecca Sears at 617-582-8830 | Gene_Display@dfci.harvard.edu

Learn more at NameAGene.org

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[Image of a person and text]

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[Image of a person and text]
On Sunday, September 24, more than 9,300 walkers and 1,000 volunteers participated in the 29th Boston Marathon® Jimmy Fund Walk presented by Hyundai. Participants raised more than $8.7 million for a total of $125 million since 1989.

Hyundai Motor America was the presenting sponsor for the 15th consecutive year, and was joined by 48 other generous sponsors who helped make the nation’s most successful single-day fundraising walk a spectacular event.

President and CEO Laurie H. Glimcher, MD, and her husband, Greg Petsko, DPhil, participated in the Walk for the second year, inspiring fellow walkers with remarks at Dana-Farber’s 5K start. Additional inspiration came from the faces of 52 Jimmy Fund Walk Heroes on posters that served as markers at every half mile on the course, and the more than 930 teams that participated, including Team Todd and Team Tara.

A million-dollar milestone
Todd Schwartz, a funny, charismatic, Boston sports fan, was just 17 when he was diagnosed with cancer in 2000. To honor their beloved son, brother, and friend, the Schwartz family started Team Todd. Though Todd passed away two years later, Team Todd has continued to stand strong in his memory. Janet, Todd’s mom, explained, “This September marked 16 years that I have taken on the Jimmy Fund Walk, and while Todd was only able to be at one of the Walks as my personal cheerleader, it’s his face I see all along the route. It’s his inspiration that pushes me on when I’m tired and allows me to smile, remembering better times as I walk.”

This year, Team Todd reached an incredible milestone, raising more than $112,000 to surpass $1 million in cumulative fundraising. Team Todd continues to grow and has encouraged others to walk, including Tara Shuman.

Teaming up for Tara
Tara Shuman was diagnosed with triple-positive breast cancer in August 2012 at the age of 32. In the wake of the devastating news, Tara learned about the Jimmy Fund Walk from her friend Laura Zaks, Todd Schwartz’s sister. Inspired by Laura, Janet Schwartz, and Team Todd, Tara decided to walk in 2013 with her son, Teddy, and in 2014 she started Team Tara. Now, in her fourth year as a captain of her team, Tara sets ambitious goals with her Co-Captain Amy Killeen, including recruitment of more than 260 teammates. This year, they far exceeded this goal: with 273 people registered, Team Tara was the largest team participating in the Jimmy Fund Walk. In addition to the team’s extraordinary participant count, Team Tara raised more than $180,000 in 2017, bringing their cumulative total to more than $500,000.

“There is no doubt that I absolutely love this Walk, largely because it’s all about hope. We have to walk, walk, and walk some more.”

— TARA SHUMAN

Thousands walk to raise more than $8.7 million

Thank you for supporting Dana-Farber and the Jimmy Fund!
First endowed chair for gynecologic cancer recognizes Ursula Matulonis, MD

Chair is the highest honor that Dana-Farber can bestow upon a physician or scientist. In 2017, Institute Trustee Jane Brock-Wilson endowed the Brock-Wilson Family Chair at Dana-Farber with a gift of $2.5 million to provide a permanent fund to bolster gynecologic cancer research. The Brock-Wilson Chair is the first at Dana-Farber to support this category of women’s cancers, and the first incumbent of the chair is Ursula Matulonis, MD, director of Gynecologic Oncology at Dana-Farber’s Susan F. Smith Center for Women’s Cancers. The Smith Center comprises four programs: breast cancer, gynecologic cancer, basic research, and genetics and prevention.

Brock-Wilson is a longtime supporter of the Smith Center, having first become involved through the Susan F. Smith Center for Women’s Cancers Executive Council. She is also co-chair of the Susan F. Smith Center Presidential Visiting Committee. “The work being done by the team in the Susan F. Smith Center is nothing short of extraordinary,” said Brock-Wilson. “Ursula and her colleagues are making important progress against gynecologic cancers. I was delighted to establish this chair to help enable the exceptional research and care offered at the Smith Center in the long term, while also supporting the career of an extremely talented and dedicated senior faculty member like Ursula Matulonis.”

Under Matulonis’s leadership, the Gynecologic Oncology disease center at Dana-Farber is at the forefront of research in this field, using laboratory findings to inform the next stages of clinical investigation. Recently, Matulonis was instrumental in developing the first PARP inhibitor approved by the FDA for women with recurrent ovarian cancer who have BRCA mutations. Matulonis led the North American arm of a phase 3 clinical trial testing a PARP inhibitor in patients with recurrent ovarian cancer with and without BRCA mutations. It was the first clinical trial to explore whether this class of drugs can extend progression-free survival after a patient has responded to initial treatment. This study led to the FDA approval of a PARP inhibitor for maintenance therapy, which had never before been an option. Matulonis and Joyce Liu, MD, developed the combination of the PARP inhibitor olaparib and the anti-angiogenic drug cediranib, which is in phase 3 testing for recurrent ovarian cancer patients.

Despite this and other recent successes, there remains a tremendous need to advance aspects of gynecologic cancer care including early detection, resistance, clinical trials, and immunotherapy. The Brock-Wilson Family Chair provides a perpetual source of funding to help undertake this critical research and improve the outcomes for women with gynecologic cancers.

This is a critical time for those of us engaged in research and patient care for gynecologic cancers,” said Matulonis. “As we’ve learned more about these cancers—their early formation, molecular machinery, and the body’s defenses against them—we’ve also come to understand their potentially exploitable weaknesses. I am truly grateful and honored to be named as the Brock-Wilson Family Chair. Jane’s remarkable and generous gift will fuel new research into combination therapies, immunotherapies, and early detection, ultimately offering greater hope to patients with gynecologic cancers.”

Lustgarten Foundation grants more than $1.7 million to drive personalized treatment

The availability of genomic technologies has been a game changer for certain cancers, helping to tailor treatments to a tumor’s molecular profile. However, many of the genomic drivers of pancreatic cancer are not targetable with available drugs, so few targeted therapies are currently approved for the disease. To define new treatment strategies, cancer scientists will need to take approaches beyond sequencing tumor DNA. To help address this issue, The Lustgarten Foundation established The Lustgarten Foundation Pancreatic Cancer Research Laboratory at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory. With a limited treatment window following diagnosis, there is an urgent need to identify effective therapeutic options, making the development of the organoid critical. In addition, Wolpin and his colleagues will perform deep whole-exome DNA sequencing and RNA sequencing, the process used to reveal the code contained in genetic material, to investigate the underlying mechanisms driving pancreatic cancer. These analyses could also uncover targets that may influence clinical decision-making.

The Lustgarten Foundation is a longtime supporter of Wolpin’s work. In 2015, the foundation awarded him pilot funding to establish the feasibility of building this research platform. Since then, Wolpin and his team have established a more than 90 percent success rate of high-quality DNA and RNA sequencing from biopsy specimens. Thanks to The Lustgarten Foundation’s generous support, Wolpin will be able to build upon this promising work.

“We are honored to support Dr. Wolpin’s innovative organoid research that is going to impact patient care in real time,” said Kerri Kaplan, president and chief executive officer of The Lustgarten Foundation. “Only through funding groundbreaking studies—like Dr. Wolpin’s research at Dana-Farber—will we change the odds for pancreatic cancer patients who need it most.”

This organoid technology was pioneered by David Tuveson, MD, PhD, at The Lustgarten Foundation Pancreatic Cancer Research Laboratory at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory. With a limited treatment window following diagnosis, there is an urgent need to identify effective therapeutic options, making the development of the organoid critical. In addition, Wolpin and his colleagues will perform deep whole-exome DNA sequencing and RNA sequencing, the process used to reveal the code contained in genetic material, to investigate the underlying mechanisms driving pancreatic cancer. These analyses could also uncover targets that may influence clinical decision-making.

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Hanlons re-up commitment to fighting rare mutation

Longtime Dana-Farber supporter Kevin Hanlon knows a thing or two about determination. Whether he be preparing for a charity run, the Pan-Mass Challenge, or traversing dozens of 4,000-foot-high peaks with his family, he is not one to give up. When faced with a diagnosis of lung cancer with an uncommon mutation, Hanlon applied the same determination to finding a cure, creating the Denise and Kevin Hanlon Family Fund for Lung Cancer Research at Dana-Farber. Recently, Kevin and his wife, Denise, pledged an additional gift of $250,000 to the fund, managed under the direction of Pasi Jänne, MD, PhD, director of the Carole M. and Philip L. Lowe Center for Thoracic Oncology.

The Hanlons hope that their gift brings more attention to the importance of investing in cures for diseases caused by rare mutations. “We’re interested in fostering more awareness of less common types of lung cancer while bolstering the treatment options,” Kevin Hanlon said. In addition to supporting research, Kevin and other patients are organizing to push broadly for more funding to investigate exon 20 and other mutations. “The EGFR exon 20 mutation had no medicines to combat it two years, ago and now there are more options for patients,” he added. “We hope to see more progress.”

“Rare mutations don’t get as much research funding as more common anomalies but the needs of patients are just as important,” Jänne said. “Mr. Hanlon’s commitment will help my group to develop targeted treatments.”

Pan-Mass Challenge presents record-breaking $51 million

In November 2017, the Pan-Mass Challenge (PMC) presented a ceremonial check for an astounding $51 million to Dana-Farber and the Jimmy Fund, representing 100 percent of each dollar raised by more than 6,200 dedicated riders of the 38th PMC in August 2017. This was another record-breaking total, exceeding the 2017 goal of $48 million and raising $4 million more than the previous year. Since 1983, the PMC has raised over $598 million for Dana-Farber. This remarkable accomplishment would not have been possible without the committed support of presenting sponsors Red Sox Foundation and New Balance, media partner WBZ-TV, 200 additional sponsors, and over 4,000 dedicated volunteers. From left, at the presentation: New Balance CEO and President Rob DeMartini; WBZ-TV anchor Lisa Hughes; PMC Director of Stewardship Meredith Beaton-Star; PMC Chairman of the Board David Falkow; PMC Founder and Executive Director and Dana-Farber Trustee Billy Starr; Dana-Farber President and CEO Laurie H. Glueckner, MD; Dana-Farber Board of Trustees Chairman and PMC Board member Josh Bekenstein; Chairman of the Jimmy Fund and Dana-Farber Trustee Larry Lucchino; and WBZ-TV, myTV38, and CBSBoston.com President and General Manager Mark Lund.

PCRF grant drives advances in pediatric sarcoma research

Committed to fighting for a cancer-free future for children, the Pediatric Cancer Research Foundation (PCRF) has funded promising scientific research since 1982. Through its grants, PCRF seeks to improve the care, quality of life, and survival rates of pediatric cancer patients.

Since 2013, PCRF has supported the research of Dana-Farber’s Brian Crompton, MD, who focuses on new treatment approaches for patients with aggressive pediatric sarcomas. High-grade sarcomas in children are often resistant even to intensive chemotherapy, surgery, and radiation. The cure rate of less than 75 percent has remained static for several years. “There are two major challenges that need to be overcome to improve our treatment approaches for pediatric cancer: we need better drugs and we need to be able to predict which patients need these new treatments,” said Crompton. “Funding from the Pediatric Cancer Research Foundation has helped us test new candidate treatment approaches in the laboratory and make exciting progress developing non-invasive blood tests to identify patients at risk of treatment resistance.”

“PCRF is proud to support Dr. Brian Crompton’s research seeking new treatment approaches for children with high-grade sarcomas,” said PCRF Executive Director Jeri Wilson. “With our help, Dr. Crompton is developing a blood test that will help to track patients’ response to therapy. We hope that his work will lead to the development of additional patient-specific approaches to treatment.”

Schussel gift helps Dana-Farber scientists explore new territory

Both Sandi and George Schussel believe that knowledge is power, and, with more knowledge, the end of cancer is inevitable. When Sandi was diagnosed with angioimmunoblastic T-cell lymphoma (AITL) and began treatment at Dana-Farber with oncologist Matthew Davids, MD, MMSc, she and her family learned that the genetic drivers of her rare blood cancer were not known. In response, the Schussels made a new gift of $100,000 to the previously established Sandra and George Schussel Family Fund at Dana-Farber to research the drivers of T-cell lymphomas, including AITL. The fund will be managed under the direction of David Weinstock, MD, whose lab focuses on T-cell lymphomas.

“As a nurse, I am very interested not only in advancing discoveries, but also in encouraging the sharing of information within the research community,” Sandi said. Their gift is already having a significant impact. With support from the Schussels, an instructor in Weinstock’s lab, Samuel Ng, MD, PhD, created the first cell line for this disease. “This cell line will allow us to determine which genes AITL depends on for survival and to find drugs that specifically kill it,” Weinstock said. “The Schussels’ gift has helped us make a completely unique resource for the whole lymphoma research community.”

George shares this commitment to increasing knowledge of this “orphan” disease: “The more we know about what we’re battling, the easier we can find cancer’s weak point, and we can treat it with agents less injurious to patients.”

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

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Through a unique partnership, the Prostate Cancer Foundation (PCF) and The V Foundation for Cancer Research are joining forces in the fight against prostate cancer, a disease that will affect one out of every eight men within their lifetime. Together, PCF and the V Foundation made a joint $1.6 million grant to support game-changing prostate cancer studies being spearheaded by Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.

Founded in 1993, PCF funds the world’s most promising research aimed at improving the prevention, detection, and treatment of prostate cancer, with the goal of an ultimate cure. Also founded in 1993 by ESPN and by basketball coach Jim Valvano, the V Foundation’s overarching mission is to save lives by helping to find cures for cancer. Through the V Foundation – Stewart J. Rahr Foundation PCF Challenge Award, Alan D’Andrea, MD, director of the Center for DNA Damage and Repair and of the Susan F. Smith Center for Women’s Cancers, and Eliezer Van Allen, MD, are leading an ambitious project with national and international collaborators to determine whether a subtype of prostate cancer that harbors mutations in its DNA repair genes could be sensitive to immunotherapy. For patients with metastatic disease who have no other options, the result of this trial could have important implications.

Despite recent scientific advances, metastatic castration-resistant prostate cancer (mCRPC) remains incurable. In other forms of cancer, otherwise intractable diseases have been shown to respond to certain immunotherapies if they contain specific DNA repair mutations—and so the Dana-Farber-led team is testing whether the same strategy might also work against mCRPCs harboring these same alterations. To determine the effectiveness of this potential treatment strategy, the team will conduct two clinical trials using a type of immunotherapy known as PD-1 checkpoint blockade.

Alex’s Lemonade Stand advances pediatric cancer research

D iagnosed with neuroblastoma before her first birthday, Alexandra “Alex” Scott refused to let years of arduous treatment dim her hope for the future—or her generosity. After a long hospitalization at age 4, Alex set up a lemonade stand to raise money for pediatric cancer research. When she died four years later, Alex had raised nearly $1 million.

The Scott Family established Alex’s Lemonade Stand Foundation (ALSF) to honor Alex’s wish to help other kids with cancer. Since 2006, ALSF has granted more than $75 million to fund research at Dana-Farber.

Recently, Scott Armstrong, MD, PhD, chair of Pediatric Oncology and the David G. Nathan, MD, Professor of Pediatrics, received a $250,000 ALSF Innovation Grant for research into synovial sarcoma, which strikes children and young adults. “I am grateful to Alex’s Lemonade Stand Foundation for their support of this research, which will significantly expand our studies into the biology of specific types of sarcoma,” said Armstrong. “We hope that this work will ultimately increase treatment options available to patients.”

Also, Dana-Farber’s Cecile Rouleau, PhD, received a $100,000 Young Investigator Award to support her research into pediatric low-grade gliomas.

“The Young Investigator and Innovation Grants encourage experienced researchers in the field to push for breakthroughs in childhood cancers, ultimately leading to new clinical interventions,” said Jay Scott, co-executive director of ALSF. “Each year, Dana-Farber grant recipients show great promise moving us toward desperately needed cures, with important findings along the way.”

Lecture honoring Carolyn Kaelin, MD, MPH, is launched

Carolyn Kaelin, MD, MPH, was a gifted surgeon and much admired for her dedication to providing breast cancer patients with superb care. Tragically, Kaelin died at age 54 in 2015 after her own battle with breast cancer, followed by brain cancer.

After Kaelin’s husband, Dana-Farber investigator William G. Kaelin Jr., MD (left), conceived of an annual lecture in her memory, generous support from her cousin, Barbara Hawkins, her husband, David, and others helped make the lectureship a reality. Last September, Monica Morrow, MD (center), chief of the breast surgery service at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, delivered the inaugural Carolyn Kaelin, MD, MPH, Surgical Breast Oncology Visiting Scholar Lecture. Morrow was introduced by Tari King, MD, FACS (right), Dana-Farber’s chief of breast surgery and Anne E. Dyson Associate Professor of Surgery in the Field of Women’s Cancers.

With their V Foundation – Stewart J. Rahr Foundation PCF Challenge Award, Eliezer Van Allen, MD (left), Alan D’Andrea, MD, and their collaborators are conducting research to determine whether a subtype of prostate cancer that harbors mutations in its DNA repair genes could be sensitive to immunotherapy.
Everyone wins with A Chance For Kids & Families®

A Chance for Kids & Families® has raised nearly $14.9 million for Dana-Farber Cancer Institute since the program began in 2000 as a partnership between Burger King® and the Jimmy Fund. Valvoline Instant Oil Change℠ joined the effort in 2014.

A Chance for Kids & Families continued this past summer as Burger King restaurants and Valvoline Instant Oil Change service centers raised more than $572,000 to help the Jimmy Fund conquer cancer at Dana-Farber. Customers who contributed $1 to the Jimmy Fund received a scratch card and won a prize. Major prizes included vacations from Funjet Vacations and Elite Island Resorts, American Airlines AAdvantage®, Miles in Concert tickets, Blue Man Group tickets, Six Flags New England passes, Museum of Science tickets, Lyft ride credits, and Water Country passes, as well as Burger King and Valvoline Instant Oil Change prizes. This year, customers also got a second chance to win a vacation by entering their unique scratch card code online.

Gifts as small as $1 can add up and make a big difference in the fight against cancer, helping patients like Maria, age 5, one of the Dana-Farber patient partners who served as ambassadors to help promote the program. Maria and her family had the fun opportunity to act as Burger King employees for the day at the Burger King in Lynn, Mass. They took orders, flipped burgers, made fries and ice cream cones, and were even given their own uniforms.

President Visiting Committees explore drug development

At the 2017 Joint Visiting Committee Symposium, entitled “Cancer Drug Development: From Discovery to Delivery,” Dana-Farber President and CEO Laurie H. Glimcher, MD, led a discussion with renowned economist and cancer survivor Lawrence H. Summers (top photo) on what can be done from a policy perspective to accelerate progress in cancer research.

Glimcher also moderated a panel discussion on the importance of collaboration between academic medical centers like Dana-Farber and the pharmaceutical industry, with (bottom photo, from left) James Bradner, MD, formerly of Dana-Farber and now president of Novartis Institutes for Biomedical Research; Jeffrey Leiden, MD, PhD, chairman, president, and CEO of Vertex Pharmaceuticals; and David Schenkein, MD, CEO of Agios Pharmaceuticals.

The mission of the Presidential Visiting Committees is to advise and counsel Dana-Farber’s president, serve as educational ambassadors to the community at large, and help to secure financial and intellectual resources to support the Institute’s mission.

Doris Duke Charitable Foundation supports young researchers

For nearly two decades, the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation (DDCF) has been a generous supporter of Dana-Farber’s most promising junior physician-scientists, serving as a powerful launch pad for their careers and their pioneering research projects. In 2017, the foundation awarded two Clinical Scientist Development Award grants to Dana-Farber. It is a rare honor to receive two such grants in the same cycle, and the total $990,000 will have a significant impact on the Institute’s early stage research efforts as it supports the long-term careers of its scientists.

The first $495,000 grant will propel the work of Andrew Aguirre, MD, PhD, to increase understanding of metastatic pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma (PDAC). He and his team are identifying new biomarkers, or molecular characteristics, that can aid oncologists in predicting patient responses to standard therapies for PDAC. Ultimately, this could help to guide more effective personalized treatment strategies with lower toxicity to patients. Additionally, Aguirre is leading in-depth genomic studies of PDAC to uncover the mechanisms that lead to resistance. “This grant is providing key support in our efforts to expand treatment options for patients with metastatic pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma,” Aguirre said.

Andrew Lane, MD, PhD, is the recipient of the second grant and will leverage this funding to enhance therapeutic targeting of acute myeloid leukemia (AML). His work will also focus on identifying causes of treatment resistance in AML with the aim of testing novel combination therapies to overcome it. “This award serves as an exceptional platform to expand my study of AML,” said Lane.

“We cannot thank the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation enough for their extraordinary philanthropy.”

“Dr. Aguirre and Dr. Lane have demonstrated serious commitment to their research and great potential for translating their work to real improvements in the quality of their patients’ lives,” said Betsy Myers, program director for medical research at DDCF. “We were excited to see their names emerge among the recipients of our 2017 Clinical Scientist Development Awards. They join a cohort of highly talented physician-scientists finding and seeking solutions to some of society’s most urgent biomedical challenges, and we are proud to support them as their careers and contributions to the research field unfold.”

“We have been a proud partner of this inspiring program since 2000,” said Jim Froio, owner of Froio Management Group, a Burger King franchisee. “Each year we are honored to support A Chance for Kids & Families in helping to raise money for the Jimmy Fund and Dana-Farber and the amazing work they do. Hopefully with our help, one day we will be able to conquer cancer.”

Doris Duke was a lifelong philanthropist who served others through her contributions to art, environmental, medical research, and much more.
SU2C Catalyst grants propel collaborative research in women’s cancers and multiple myeloma

"The exciting research conducted by Drs. D’Andrea and Ghobrial offers hope that immunotherapy in combination with other therapies may begin to turn the tide in providing treatment options.”

— RAYMOND DUBOIS, MD, PHD, chair, SU2C Catalyst Executive Committee

2017 DFMC members celebrate $5.9 million raised

G1ve A Buck Fund advances pediatric immunotherapy research

G1ve A Buck Fund, Inc., a California-based, volunteer-driven charity that funds childhood cancer research, has made a $100,000 commitment to Scott Armstrong, MD, PhD, chair of Pediatric Oncology and the David G. Nathan, MD, Professor of Pediatrics, toward pediatric immunotherapy research at Dana-Farber. According to G1ve A Buck, only 3.8 percent of the National Cancer Institute’s research budget is dedicated to pediatric cancer research. One hundred percent of the money raised through G1ve A Buck raises public awareness and funds vital research.

Supporting advances in pediatric immunotherapy is a personal mission for Gail Lopez, who founded G1ve A Buck after her daughter Kate was diagnosed with osteosarcoma in 2011. After witnessing firsthand the long-term aftereffects of chemotherapy on her daughter, Lopez was motivated to help pediatric cancer research progress to create better treatments. She became connected to Armstrong and Dana-Farber when philanthropic collaborations with Major League Baseball led her to Boston Red Sox President/CEO Emeritus Larry Lucchino, now Chairman of the Jimmy Fund.

"After meeting with Dr. Armstrong, it was obvious to me that our funds gifted to his research program are in exactly the right place," said Lopez. "The dedicated work of Dr. Armstrong’s program is paying off with exceptional results and we are proud to support Dana-Farber and him for all they do." Today, with her daughter in remission, Lopez is dedicated to G1ve A Buck and its focus on bringing continued awareness and funding to pediatric cancers.
Phyllis Levine left a legacy for patients of the future

When Phyllis Levine’s father was only 48, a doctor took the family into the hospital corridor and whispered, “He has cancer.” It was 1949, when limited treatment was available, and cancer was not discussed openly. Her father died within the year.

When Phyllis received the same diagnosis of gastric cancer more than six decades later, treatment options had improved enormously, thanks to scientific discovery. To her amazement, Phyllis’ treatment restored her health for more than five years. “I am so grateful to Dana-Farber,” she said recently. “This is the place where cancer research is getting done.”

Cancer’s impact on the family went beyond Phyllis and her dad, her daughter was treated for Hodgkin lymphoma and breast cancer as an adult, and Phyllis’ first husband died of pancreatic cancer in 2001. To support cancer research, Phyllis’ daughter, Deborah Cohen, has ridden in the Pan-Mass Challenge, and her granddaughters, Grace and Abigail, participate in many fundraising events.

Although Phyllis died in October 2017 at age 85, her support for Dana-Farber lives on. Phyllis created a $100,000 charitable gift annuity (CGA) with a gift of stock, providing funding for research at Dana-Farber. “My biggest hope is that cancer will be wiped out just as polio was. Generations to come can benefit from my gift.”

“My biggest hope is that cancer will be wiped out just as polio was. Generations to come can benefit from my gift.”

— PHYLLIS LEVINE

Madison recently passed away from osteosarcoma. Dawn relayed a warm memory of a hospital visit Holt paid Maddie, who lit up as soon as he entered the room. LeClair recalled how this visit revitalized Maddie’s mood and recovery from surgery, and she emphasized how much Holt’s ongoing friendship meant to Maddie.

“Cancer’s impact on the family went beyond Phyllis and her dad; cancer research is getting done,” said recently. “This is the place where cancer research is getting done.”

The Boston Red Sox stepped up to the plate to help the WEEI/JIMMY FUND Jimmy Fund Radio-Telethon presented by Arbella Insurance Foundation raise critical funds for cancer research and care at Dana-Farber.

Jimmy Fund Captain Brock Holt, fellow players Mookie Betts, Jackie Bradley Jr., and Chants Sale, as well as Red Sox President/CEO Emeritus and current Chairman of the Jimmy Fund Larry Lucchino, among others. Team owners and executives also pitched in through the Red Sox Partners Challenge, which raised $206,000. Local celebrities who appeared on-air or phoned in to lend their support included Academy Award-winning actor Casey Affleck, Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker, Boston Mayor Marty Walsh, Patriots quarterback Tom Brady, former Bruins star Shawn Thornton, Celtics head coach Brad Stevens, and other notables.

Dana-Farber patients and families were the real stars throughout the Radio-Telethon. Hannah Wetens, a 14-year-old patient at Dana-Farber’s Jimmy Fund Clinic, touched the hearts of fans with her stirring rendition of “God Bless America” during the Red Sox-St. Louis Cardinals game. She also took her talents to NESN during the broadcast, sharing a hopeful song she wrote in the hospital and stealing the show with her “million-dollar smile,” in the words of Amanda Dean, a child life specialist at the clinic who joined Hannah on air.

Another emotional moment took place during a WEEI interview with Jimmy Fund Captain Brock Holt and Dawn LeClair, whose daughter

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Phyllis Levine, who created a charitable gift annuity benefiting Dana-Farber, dreamt that cancer would one day be eradicated.

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Casey Quinn
Casey.Quinn@dfci.harvard.edu
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Phyllis Levine left a legacy for patients of the future

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— PHYLLIS LEVINE
Jimmy Fund Golf raises a record-breaking $7.68 million for Dana-Farber

It takes time and dedication to organize a successful golf tournament, but that doesn’t stop the tireless supporters of Jimmy Fund Golf presented by Mohegan Sun. In 2017, 168 tournaments drew tens of thousands of participants in 12 states from coast to coast, raising a record-breaking $7.68 million.

Jimmy Fund Golf’s tournament organizers and participants play the game they love while supporting Dana-Farber’s leading-edge research and patient care. Many have lost friends or family members to cancer; others survived cancer themselves. Several tournaments surpassed their previous fundraising totals, and many marked anniversary milestones, demonstrating the long-term commitment of the Jimmy Fund Golf community to the fight against cancer.

Both of Jimmy Fund Golf’s top two fundraising events greatly surpassed their previous year’s totals, each raising more than $800,000 (see sidebar stories at right). Expect Miracles Foundation grew their support through their dedicated network of sponsors and benefactors. The Dunkin’ Donuts Jimmy Fund Golf Tournament hosted by NDCP celebrated its 20th year raising funds for Dana-Farber.

The Ahold USA Store Development Jimmy Fund Classic, held at The International Golf Club in Bolton, Mass., raised $550,000 for the Stop & Shop Brain Tumor Clinic at Dana-Farber. The Stop & Shop Construction Department has organized this successful tournament for an impressive 26 years.

The Jimmy Fund Golf Tournament/ Jeffrey Vinick Memorial held its 38th event at three beautiful golf courses in Western Massachusetts and Connecticut, raising $323,000. Participants rounded off their day of golf with an evening reception, celebrating their successful fundraising and honoring the memory of Jeffrey Vinick, a beloved young man who died of cancer in 1982.

In its seventh year of support for Jimmy Fund Golf, the Whole Foods Market Golf Classic raised $300,000 for bladder cancer research at Dana-Farber’s Gentourinary Cancer Treatment Center. Employees and vendors honored the memory of Cheri Snell, a Whole Foods regional vice president who died of bladder cancer at age 47.

The Robyn Elise Abrams Memorial Golf Tournament raised $200,000 to support pediatric patient and family resources in the Jimmy Fund Clinic. Longtime participants of this event, now in its 20th year, come together each year with the mission of greatly improving the treatment experience for Dana-Farber’s youngest patients.

On Cape Cod, the John R. Svenson Classic celebrated its 10th year while raising $234,000 for genomic research. Their support has helped Dana-Farber become a leader in precision medicine, making advances in genomic technologies that allow doctors to develop targeted therapies for patients.

Now in its 32nd year, the C&S Charity Golf Outing/Tee Up for Kids* raised $263,000 for pediatric cancer research with tournaments in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont. C&S is proud of its employees’ long-term commitment to helping children with cancer.

In only its second year, the Bob Parsons Memorial Golf Outing raised an extraordinary $177,022 to support both the Bob Parsons Fellowship, which focuses on research into early detection of pancreatic cancer, and the Patient Assistance Crisis Fund.

We are grateful to the many tournament organizers, participants, volunteers, and sponsors across the country for their exceptional commitment to the fight against cancer.

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Tournament Director Gabriella Graceffa- Banker (left) and committee members of the Whole Foods Market Golf Classic celebrated a record-breaking year, raising $300,000 for bladder cancer research.

The Svenson family proudly celebrated raising more than $234,000 at the 10th annual John R. Svenson Classic.

The Robyn Elise Abrams Memorial Golf Tournament raised $200,000 to support pediatric patient and family resources in the Jimmy Fund Clinic.

From right: Tournament Co-Chairs Mike McKnight and Bill Lawrence with committee members Bob Fox and Craig Itoh, celebrating their successful fundraising while raising $234,000 for the Ahold USA Store Development Jimmy Fund Classic.

Co-Chairs Anthony Franco (left) and Lou Costa presented a ceremonial check for the $323,000 raised at the 38th annual Jimmy Fund Golf Tournament/ Jeffrey Vinick Memorial.

Kenny and Susan Abrams commemorated the 20th anniversary of the Robyn Elise Abrams Memorial Golf Tournament, which raised $200,000 for genomic research.

Tournament Organizer Tom Patterson (center) and volunteers of the C&S Charity Golf Outing/Tee Up for Kids* proudly contributed $263,000 for pediatric cancer research.

Scott Goldberg (left), tournament director of the Bob Parsons Memorial Golf Outing, which raised $177,022 for the Bob Parsons Fellowship under the direction of Brian Wolpin, MD, MPH (right), and the Patient Assistance Crisis Fund.

Chris Snell, a Whole Foods regional vice president who died of bladder cancer at age 47, is honored by the Jimmy Fund Golf Tournament/ Jeffrey Vinick Memorial.

Tournament Director Gabriella Graceffa-Banker (left) and committee members of the Whole Foods Market Golf Classic celebrated a record-breaking year, raising $300,000 for bladder cancer research.
Expect Miracles Golf Classic raised more than $800,000 for the Rob-ert and Renée Beller Center for Applied Cancer Science at Dana-Farber, the top contribution of more than 160 Jimmy Fund Golf tournaments held in 2017. Thanks to the dedication of Tournament Directors Frank Strauss, Frank Heavey, and Maggie Dombroski, and members of the Expect Miracles Board of Directors, Expect Miracles Foundation (EMF) has raised nearly $8 million for Dana-Farber since 1995. Founded by Frank Strauss, who credits Dana-Farber with saving his mother’s life, Expect Miracles Founda-tion has rallied the financial services industry to support high-quality cancer research and patient care for more than 10 years. As a testament to the strong support for Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and the Jimmy Fund, this growth has continued with an additional $500,000 in 2017.

The tournament pays homage to friends in the Dunkin’ community who are in remission or have lost their battle with cancer. The tournament has become that of a family reunion, a way for friends and colleagues to reconnect on the golf course and demonstrate their commitment to cancer research. “NDCP is proud to bring our member and supplier communities together to drive these groundbreaking advances forward at Dana-Farber,” said Tournament Director Melanie King. This year, participants and volunteers exceeded last year’s total by an astonishing $125,000. Grateful to individuals and companies in financial services who have faithfully supported their efforts, Expect Miracles Foundation leaders believe that the collective power of their industry will help bring about a day when all cancers have a cure.

Dunkin’ Donuts Jimmy Fund Golf Tournament marks 20 years

Dunkin’ Donuts and National DCP (NDCP) are longstanding and loyal partners of Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and the Jimmy Fund. In 2017, the Dunkin’ Donuts Jimmy Fund Golf Tournament hosted by NDCP celebrated its 20th year, raising more than $800,000 at the International Golf Club in Bolton, Mass. The tournament has generated more than $13 million of support for Dana-Farber since its founding in 1998. The tournament pays homage to friends in the Dunkin’ community who are in remission or have lost their battle with cancer. The tournament has become that of a family reunion, a way for friends and colleagues to reconnect on the golf course and demonstrate their commitment to cancer research.

“NDCP is proud to bring our member and supplier communities together to drive these groundbreaking advances forward at Dana-Farber,” said Tournament Director Melanie King. This year, participants and volunteers exceeded last year’s total by an impressive $150,000. The money raised supports Dana-Farber’s Translational Research Laboratory through the Dunkin’ Donuts “Right Treatments Right Cancer” Research Fund. Under the direction of Dana-Farber Senior Vice President of Experimental Medicine and PMC Chair Lee Nadler, MD, the lab provides investigators with the opportunity to pursue basic scientific research that often paves the way for promising breakthroughs and targeted treatments for many types of cancers.
Ninety Nine Restaurant & Pub to raise funds for Dana-Farber through a variety of events in memory of their beloved Regional Vice President Dave Lanzoni, who died of cancer. This year, two of Team Lanzoni’s Falmouth runners came together with an additional goal: to rally behind one of their loyal customers, Bruce Manuel, a Dana-Farber patient. Connie Matos has been serving Manuel at the Ninety Nine in Fall River for more than 10 years, and joined Team Lanzoni to honor him. “The struggle of battling cancer was hard, but Bruce and his family were fighting,” said Matos. “I wanted to make a difference in their lives and quickly found what they needed was a reason to smile and a distraction from the disease. That’s when I decided to run Falmouth for Dana-Farber.”

Eric Precourt, another member of Team Lanzoni and kitchen manager at the Ninety Nine, pitched in to help Matos host a spaghetti dinner fundraiser in Manuel’s honor. In a true team effort, the contributions of customers and staff at the Ninety Nine, Bruce’s care team at Dana-Farber, and family and friends all helped Team Lanzoni surpass its goal and raise a tremendous $339,000.

The runners don’t plan to rest on their laurels. “We hope to make 2018 even bigger and better, for Bruce and for all those at Dana-Farber,” said Precourt.

Cancer Research Institute fuels immunotherapy research

Harnessing the power of the immune system holds potential to treat all types of cancer. However, current therapies are only successful in a fraction of patients. Cancer Research Institute (CRI) is dedicated to advancing immunotherapy to make these treatments effective for more patients.

To further this mission, CRI awarded five grants to Dana-Farber investigators in 2017 totaling $902,000, the largest amount of funding CRI has awarded to Dana-Farber in a single year. Philip Kranzusch, PhD, received a Clinic and Laboratory Integration Program grant, and four postdoctoral fellowships were awarded.

“The Cancer Research Institute reviews hundreds of applications every year from talented scientists all over the world and competition for these awards is fierce,” said Jill O’Donnell-Tormey, PhD, CEO and director of scientific affairs at CRI. “To award five grants to one institution in one year is a testament to the quality of research at Dana-Farber and the ability of our Scientific Advisory Council to identify excellent science.”

Kranzusch is studying a component of anti-tumor immunity called the cell receptor stimulator of interferon genes (STING), which helps immune cells sense tumor DNA. Postdoctoral fellowship awardee Carina de Oliveira Mann, PhD, a member of Kranzusch’s laboratory, is also investigating STING to explore compounds that activate the receptor, boosting tumor recognition.

“I’m grateful for the support of the Cancer Research Institute at this pivotal time in my career,” said de Oliveira Mann. “This funding will help further our studies into how STING can be manipulated to improve responses to immunotherapy.”

Postdoctoral fellowships were also awarded to Bo Hu, PhD, to study the relationship between obesity and immune activity; to Hidetoshi Nakagawa, MD, PhD, to research ways to enhance anti-tumor immune response; and to Deng Pan, PhD, to identify resistance mechanisms to immunotherapy.

Melanoma Research Alliance grants drive innovative research

Melanoma Research Alliance (MRA) supports innovative studies aimed at prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of the disease. In 2017, the MRA made two grants totaling $600,000 to A. Thomas Look, MD, and Ruwan Haq, MD, PhD, at Dana-Farber. “We have made great progress in the fight against melanoma in the last 10 years, but more work must be done to ensure that everyone benefits from these advances,” said MRA President and CEO Michael Kaplan. “Research by Drs. Look and Haq will help further our understanding of how best to treat melanoma and extend lives.”

Look is studying NF1-mutant melanoma, a high-risk subtype that does not contain accompanying mutations in the BRAF or RAS genes. Since most existing drugs for melanoma work by targeting mutant BRAF, patients with the NF1 subtype have few therapeutic options. Look is using zebrafish models to test a vast array of FDA-approved and experimental drugs against NF1-patient melanoma to identify promising therapies. Since his study involves drugs that have already been approved for use in humans, the most effective treatments could be rapidly advanced into the clinic.

Under the mentorship of Anthony Letai, MD, PhD, Haq is studying drug combinations that could help trigger cell death. Although normal cells naturally self-destruct when they become too damaged, cancer cells evolve in ways that allow them to avoid this. Haq and his colleagues have developed a way to test biopsy samples to determine which patients would benefit from drugs that prevent cancer cells from resisting their internal self-destruct mechanisms. Haq is now evaluating whether this technology can help predict patient responses, as well as conducting laboratory tests combining drugs known as BRAF/MEK inhibitors with those that encourage cell death to determine their efficacy.

Team Lanzoni raised nearly $339,000 for the Dana-Farber team in 2017.
Balassiano Family continues to fuel research in targeted therapies for lung cancer

Having experienced Dana-Farber’s world-class patient care firsthand after being referred by his physician in Brazil, Daniel Herchenhorn, MD, PhD, José Carlos Balassiano and his family established the Balassiano Family Fund for Lung Cancer Research in 2016. Interested in renewing their commitment to further lung cancer research, the Balassianos continued their support of Dana-Farber with a generous gift of $150,000 to the fund, which is overseen by Paul Jänne, MD, PhD, director of the Carole M. and Philip L. Lowe Center for Thoracic Oncology at Dana-Farber.

“Taco Bell and KFC restaurants, donors who contributed $3 or more received a coupon sheet featuring deals from Taco Bell, KFC, and other retailers. “Our cashiers work hard to take orders and ask customers for a Jimmy Fund gift, and their speedy work has enabled us to raise more than $2.8 million over the last 16 years,” said Institute Trustee Roger Lockwood, chairman of the Lockwood/McKinnon Company, a Taco Bell franchisee. “Strike Out Cancer empowers thousands of people throughout New England to take action in the fight against cancer.”

“I am so very grateful for the excellent, dedicated care he received from Dr. Peter Enzinger, nurse Marie Zano, and his entire care team at Dana-Farber, which gave him hope and comfort throughout his treatment,” said Vee. “Esophageal cancer is a very difficult disease that receives limited federal funding,” said Enzinger, who is director of Dana-Farber’s Center for Esophageal and Gastric Cancer. “Philanthropic support, like this extraordinary gift from John in Arthur’s honor, is vital in enabling our center to pursue groundbreaking research to develop new treatments to improve and prolong the lives of patients.”

On the day 10-year-old Sean Jucha was diagnosed with gliomatosis cerebri, a rare, inoperable brain tumor, he was an energetic boy who enjoyed playing sports, watching baseball, and spending time with friends and family. And on every day for the next three years, Sean Jucha’s zeal for life and the things and people he loved never wavered. More than once, after an exhausting morning of treatment, he would ask to attend an evening event or activity. His reason for living life on his terms despite the progression of his disease? “Because I can.”

Sean’s parents, Heather and Bob Jucha, honored his legacy by creating the Sean Jucha Research Fund to fuel pediatric brain cancer research under Mark Kieran, MD, PhD, director of Pediatric Medical Neuro-Oncology at Dana-Farber. Kieran’s research seeks to develop more reliable methods of diagnosis and treatment of gliomatosis cerebri, which grows like a spider web, rather than a solid mass, making it difficult to detect and treat. Sean’s positive attitude and strength have inspired incredible support for the fund totaling more than $115,000 from those who knew him.

The Juchas hope that partnering with Kieran to advance research and improve treatment strategies will result in better outcomes for young patients and families. Making sure that Sean’s legacy creates a positive impact for others facing this disease is important to them because they know it can.

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

Hope Funds for Cancer Research was founded in 2006 by people who recognized that a large amount of research funding was directed toward cancers with large patient and survivor populations—cancers that are less aggressive or more prevalent. To encourage progress in the treatment of less common forms of cancer with high rates of mortality, Hope Funds awards postdoctoral fellowships for young investigators conducting research studies that are rooted in innovation. Srivatsan Raghavan, MD, PhD, who focuses on understanding therapeutic sensitivity in pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma (PDAC), was awarded a $154,500 fellowship from Hope Funds for Cancer Research. This form of pancreatic cancer is particularly aggressive and remains resistant to existing therapies that target key pathways for tumor survival and growth. He and his team seek to study the behavior of PDAC cells and understand the importance of childhood cancer.

Hope Funds for Cancer Research supports innovative research in pancreatic cancer by Dana-Farber’s Srivatsan Raghavan, MD, PhD.

Jimmy Fund Little League is a home run

Back in 1987, Massachusetts Little League District Administrator George Berardi and former Boston Red Sox players Rico Petrocelli and Mike Andrews were inspired to create a program that would allow local kids to extend their baseball and softball seasons while raising critical funds for Dana-Farber and the Jimmy Fund. Nearly $5 million raised and 31 seasons later, the idea lives on as Jimmy Fund Little League presented by Extra Innings and Franklin Sports. Jimmy Fund Little League encourages boys and girls like this year’s “designated hitter,” Abby Roxo, to participate in America’s favorite pastime while learning the importance of philanthropy. Abby is a 10-year-old patient at Dana-Farber’s Jimmy Fund Clinic who loves softball. “When Abby was first asked to be part of such a worthy cause she literally grinned from ear to ear, saying, ‘Does this mean I officially work for the Jimmy Fund?’” said Abby’s mom, Jenna.

“We are extremely proud of the Jimmy Fund Little League program and how it has allowed children to help other, less fortunate children,” said John Berardi, the Massachusetts Little League district administrator and program coordinator for Jimmy Fund Little League. “Little Leaguers learn there is more to life than winning and the patients learn that they are not alone during their difficult battle, such meaningful life lessons.” John and his fellow dedicated district administrators organize hundreds of games each season, and raised more than $250,000 in 2017.

National Palliative Care Research Center seeks to ease burden of childhood cancer

As more children are living longer with cancer and other serious illnesses, parents are faced with tough decisions involving complicated treatments. Clinicians and parents may benefit from tools to communicate effectively and engage as partners in care.

“Communication between clinicians and families can be enhanced with supportive tools and teamwork,” said Sean Morrison, MD, director of the National Palliative Care Research Center (NPCRC). “Dana-Farber is a leader in developing pragmatic, evidence-based communication training. We are delighted to invest in an innovative program that will help care teams and families discuss pressing issues.”

With a Junior Faculty Career Development Award of $154,000, the NPCRC is supporting research by Angela Feraco, MD, MMSc, to develop the Day 100 Talk, an in-depth conversation between the care team and the family designed to take place during the early months of active treatment. The Day 100 Talk includes training videos, a family preparation worksheet, and a conversation guide.

“The emotional distress that accompanies a child’s cancer diagnosis can interfere with parents’ ability to absorb information and ask questions,” said Feraco. “The Day 100 Talk helps clinicians dedicate time early in the course of care to ensure that parents understand their child’s medical treatment and that the clinicians themselves understand parents’ concerns, hopes, and goals. I am grateful to the NPCRC for their support of this important project.”

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Million-dollar grant from MMRF focuses on early therapeutics for pre-myeloma conditions

Dana-Farber physician-scientist Irene Ghobrial, MD, director of the Michele and Steven Kirsch Laboratory, has been awarded a $1.05 million in funding from the Multiple Myeloma Research Foundation (MMRF) to develop therapeutic interventions aimed at preventing precursor conditions from progressing to active multiple myeloma.

Multiple myeloma (MM) almost always progresses from precursor states, such as monoclonal gammapathy of undetermined significance (MGUS) and smoldering multiple myeloma (SMM). In fact, more than 70 percent of patients with SMM progress to overt disease.

Ghobrial’s work is part of the MMRF Prevention Project, which was established recently to speed efforts toward early detection, delayed disease progression, and, ultimately, prevention of this incurable disease.

“The MMRF Prevention Project is a bold program that will take us one step closer to a future where our children and grandchildren will never need to worry about incurable cancers,” said MMRF President and CEO Paul Giusti. “We have assembled a world-class team of experts who specialize in MGUS and SMM, including Dr. Irene Ghobrial, and we are confident that this highly collaborative program will accelerate progress for early-disease patients and their families.”

In conjunction with Kenneth Anderson, MD, program director of Dana-Farber’s Jerome Lipper Multiple Myeloma Center and the Lebo Institute of Myeloma Therapeutics and the Kraft Family Professor of Medicine, Ghobrial will focus on developing effective therapies that target genomc markers associated with disease progression.

“We believe that focused research studies that define the molecular mechanisms of MGUS and smoldering multiple myeloma evolution will identify novel biomarkers of disease progression and help develop therapeutic agents that prevent or delay progression of these conditions to full-blown myeloma,” said Anderson.

Ghobrial and her colleagues will analyze blood samples collected by Dana-Farber’s PCRYOwD (for “Precursor Crowd”) initiative to identify markers in tumor cells that lead to disease progression. PCRYOwD is the world’s first attempt to change the paradigm for managing patients with hematologic malignancies by developing novel therapeutic options to prevent or delay progression of this disease.

In addition, Ghobrial’s team will use integrative genomics platforms to identify and target genes present in the bone marrow that regulate progression, and define a high-risk population of patients and screen them with continuous follow-up and potential early therapeutic intervention.

Ghobrial’s MGUS and SMM research emanates from Dana-Farber’s Center for Prevention of Progression of Blood Cancers, or CPOP, of which Ghobrial is the co-principal investigator. CPOP is the first center of its kind in the country to examine the earliest stages of blood cancer formation.

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Chairman of the Jimmy Fund Larry Lucchino met Cooper, age 7, a patient in Dana-Farber’s Jimmy Fund Clinic, when he dropped by the Institute to deliver Addie the Labradoodle to pediatric and adult patients. More than 700 of the adorable toy dogs were purchased for patients by generous donors through Dana-Farber Holiday Cards & Gifts presented by Amica Insurance.