With the goal of advancing a powerful cancer treatment strategy that uses immune cells to fight the disease, Ellen and Gary Davis have made a generous gift to Weill Cornell Medicine to drive ongoing research in immunotherapy.

This significant, foundational gift will launch the Ellen and Gary Davis Immune Monitoring Core, a critical research infrastructure that will serve as a repository for patient tumor samples, genomic sequencing and bioinformatics. The core will analyze and provide centralized, sensitive and quantitative patient data that investigators can use to advance their research into immunotherapy. This $2 million gift lays the cornerstone for further expansion in immunotherapy research and strengthens Weill Cornell Medicine's position as a leader in the development of powerful new weapons in the fight against cancer. A portion of the gift will fund research collaborations between investigators at Weill Cornell Medicine, Cornell University and Cornell Tech, strengthening the critical bridges between New York City and Ithaca.

“We are extremely grateful to Ellen and Gary, whose strategic gift establishes an important foundation for immunotherapy research that is befitting of the treatment’s promise,” says Chairman of the Board of Overseers Jessica Bibliowicz. “Ellen and Gary’s generous support will augment our growing immunotherapy program, bolster our rich research communities at Weill Cornell Medicine and Cornell University, and bring us closer to eliminating cancer.”

The Davises have a legacy of philanthropy at Cornell University and Weill Cornell Medicine – Mrs. Davis is a Weill Cornell Medicine Overseer and Mr. Davis is a Cornell University Trustee and alumnus. They have endowed the Gary S. Davis Professorship of Government, the Gary and Ellen Davis Curator of Photography at the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art in Ithaca, and established a joint fellowship at the Meinig School of Biomedical Engineering and Weill Cornell Medicine to advance research into epilepsy.

“Immunotherapy represents one of the most exciting avenues of investigation for fighting cancer,” say Mr. and Mrs. Davis. “We are proud to be able to make this important investment, empowering Weill Cornell Medicine and its unparalleled oncology program, led by Dr. Lewis Cantley, as well as the distinguished investigators at Cornell in Ithaca and engineers at Cornell Tech, to realize the promise of immunotherapy.”

Immunotherapy has become a promising new therapy for many types of cancers, hailed as the “fifth pillar” alongside surgery, radiation, chemotherapy and precision-targeted therapeutics. While the latter four attempt to remove or attack cancer cells directly, immunotherapy utilizes a patient’s own immune system to strike the disease from within. Scientists have made important advances in this therapeutic area that have improved patients’ lives and the outcomes of their diseases. However, most patients do not respond to immunotherapy alone, and it is not yet possible to predict how their immune systems will react.

“We are proud to be able to make this important investment, empowering Weill Cornell Medicine and its unparalleled oncology program.”

Continued on p.2
From Our Chairman

At Weill Cornell Medicine, we work to accelerate science, make breakthrough discoveries, empower our future healthcare leaders and deliver the best treatments and cures to our patients. Our leadership, faculty, staff and students thrive on moving medicine forward; they are committed to addressing the needs of today, with a steady eye on the promise of tomorrow.

I am often struck and excited by the power of this momentum. I am also acutely aware that this ongoing drive forward is made possible by the incredible bedrock that supports it. That foundation is built, in part, by the friends and donors whose philanthropy has shaped our infrastructure here at Weill Cornell Medicine. Core facilities like the Ellen and Gary Davis Immune Monitoring Core and The Starr Foundation Glionoid Assay Translational Screening Core are vital to our progress. They allow our world-class physician-scientists to innovate and tackle some of the most critical diseases of our time.

With so many discoveries already being made in our laboratories—and so many scientific breakthroughs on the horizon—this is a thrilling time to be at Weill Cornell Medicine.

With gratitude,

Jessica Bibliowicz
Chairman
Weill Cornell Medicine Board of Overseers

Davis Gift to Advance Cancer Immunotherapy Research continued from cover

who may need secondary, complementary treatments—or who may have developed treatment resistance. The Sandra and Edward Meyer Cancer Center at Weill Cornell Medicine is committed to overcoming these obstacles.

“Thanks to the Davises’ generosity and steadfast dedication to improving health, we will now be able to advance our understanding of this powerful therapeutic avenue, ensuring that more patients benefit from immunotherapy,” says Dr. Cantley, Meyer Director of the Meyer Cancer Center and professor of cancer biology in medicine.

The Davis Immune Monitoring Core will be a valuable, shared resource for the Meyer Cancer Center and the Caryl and Israel Englander Institute for Precision Medicine. In order to drive new scientific breakthroughs and innovations that may enhance the potential of immunotherapy, the core will offer a robust technological infrastructure that will allow investigators to analyze, sequence and archive tumor samples, explore the tumor microenvironment and conduct expression studies. Bioinformatics technology will empower scientists to examine the array of data from those studies and translate their findings into assays that can be used to measure the efficacy of immunotherapy for each patient.

Insights gleaned from those tests will be used to inform ongoing treatment decisions, determine effective adjunct therapies and predict patient response and resistance to therapy.

Underscoring the special synergy between Cornell University, Weill Cornell Medicine and Cornell Tech, the Davises have dedicated $400,000 of their gift to fund research collaborations between investigators in New York and Ithaca. The research support, offered through competitive grants, will enable investigators to drive new innovations in immunotherapy that will benefit patients in New York and beyond.

“Cancer is a devastating disease, and it is our responsibility to find new, more effective and more tolerable treatments that will allow patients to get back to their everyday lives,” says Dr. Augustine M.K. Choi, interim dean of Weill Cornell Medicine and interim provost for medical affairs at Cornell University. “The Davises’ transformative gift helps us to do just that, providing valuable resources and fostering research collaborations so that we can perfect immunotherapy. We thank these champions of groundbreaking biomedical research for their incredible generosity.”
Endowed Directorship in Transplant Surgery Established

After losing one kidney to cancer in 2000, Jeffrey Lasdon learned a few years ago that his other kidney had stopped functioning. He signed up for the organ donation waiting list in New York, but knew his chances of receiving a kidney were slim. Fortunately, his cousin, Jan Fried, came to the rescue at the eleventh hour. “We grew up together and were very close. I got a call from Jan when I only had a few days left, and she said, ‘I have something you want!’” Mr. Lasdon says. “She actually had gotten screened and found out we were a perfect match without even telling me.”

Mr. Lasdon considers Sandip Kapur, MD ’90, director of the Kidney and Pancreas Transplant Programs at NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center, who performed his transplant surgery, a hero. And as a way to show his gratitude, Mr. Lasdon and his wife, Jeanette, decided to contribute $2 million to Weill Cornell Medicine in order to recognize Dr. Kapur for his extraordinary care. The endowed gift will establish the Jeanette and Jeffrey Lasdon Director of the Kidney and Pancreas Transplant Programs.

“You can’t put a price on the leading-edge surgery done at Weill Cornell Medicine. Their quality of care is incredible and we wanted to help keep that going,” says Mr. Lasdon.

Mrs. Lasdon, who is a cancer survivor herself, added that their gift was also inspired by the nurses at the medical center who they have encountered along the way. “They are the unsung heroes, really,” she said. “We’ve had some great experiences with nurses. When the battle gets tough, they’re the ones who are always with you.”

Mr. Lasdon’s family have been ardent supporters of Weill Cornell Medicine since the late 1940s. His parents, Stanley and Gene Lasdon, were dedicated supporters of the institution for as long as he can remember. They instilled in him the value of philanthropy at an early age. Names of his family members adorn both the William and Mildred Lasdon Biomedical Research Center and the Jacob S. Lasdon House, a residential building for medical students. And now, through this new gift, the Lasdons’ generosity will provide stable funding for Weill Cornell Medicine’s transplant initiatives for years to come.

“This gift from the Lasdons is transformative for our transplant program,” says Dr. Kapur, the G. Tom Shires, M.D. Faculty Scholar in Surgery. “I am so grateful for their generosity, which will allow us to save even more lives in the future.”

Daedalus Fund Advances Third Round of Discoveries

Seven winners have been selected for the third round of the Daedalus Fund for Innovation awards. This Weill Cornell Medicine program helps advance promising applied and translational research projects and emerging technologies with commercial potential. Thanks to donors and friends who have supported this critical initiative, the award recipients will each receive $100,000 to fund proof-of-concept studies that may help translate their technologies with commercial potential. Thanks to donors and friends who have supported this critical initiative, the award recipients will each receive $100,000 to fund proof-of-concept studies that may help translate their technologies with commercial potential.

“The most challenging time for translational research is the period after initial discovery, in what is known as the ‘pre-competitive’ space, when investigators need to develop validation data in order to attract partners and investment from industry and/or the venture capital community,” says Larry Schlossman, managing director of BioPharma Alliances and Research Collaborations. “The Daedalus Fund is designed to bridge the ‘development gap’ by providing philanthropic support at this critical juncture.”

The 2016 Daedalus Fund recipients (listed below) are working to discover treatments and cures for some of the most pressing health conditions of our time.

Lewis Cantley, PhD
- Meyer Director of the Sandra and Edward Meyer Cancer Center
- Professor of Cancer Biology in Medicine
Dr. Cantley is developing a small molecule inhibitor that could be used to treat aggressive cancers with poor prognoses.

Ronald Crystal, MD
- Chairman of Genetic Medicine
- Bruce Webster Professor of Internal Medicine
Dr. Crystal is researching a gene therapy to treat neurodegenerative diseases.

Gang Lin, PhD
- Associate Professor of Research in Microbiology and Immunology
Dr. Lin is developing proteosome-inhibitor drugs to treat deadly fungal infections.

Randi Silver, PhD
- Associate Dean in the Weill Cornell Graduate School of Medical Sciences
- Professor of Physiology and Biophysics
Dr. Silver is studying how to alleviate chronic lung disease of prematurity, the most common preterm birth complication.

Stefan Worgall, MD, PhD
- Distinguished Professor of Pediatric Pulmonology
- Professor of Pediatrics
- Professor of Genetic Medicine
Dr. Worgall is devising a therapeutic strategy to address asthma’s underlying cause.

Haifying Zhang, PhD
- Assistant Professor of Cell and Developmental Biology in Pediatrics
Dr. Zhang is developing nanotechnology for organ-specific drug delivery.
The Greenbergs and The Starr Foundation have a historic partnership with Weill Cornell Medicine that includes more than $330 million in critical philanthropic support for medical education, scientific innovation and clinical care. Their philanthropy has touched each area of the institution’s mission – leading the way in efforts including student scholarship, cardiovascular research and cross-institutional initiatives such as the Starr Cancer Consortium, a multi-institutional partnership that provides critical support for biomedical investigators tackling cancer research, and the Tri-Institutional Stem Cell Initiative, an interdisciplinary effort that funds competitive research projects focused on using stem cells to treat a wide array of illnesses. The award-winning Weill Greenberg Center is named, in part, to honor the Greenbergs’ and The Starr Foundation’s extraordinary generosity and support of clinical care, and The Starr-Greenberg Conference Center and Terrace in the Belfer Research Building are tributes to their inspiring philanthropy and visionary leadership in all areas of the institution’s mission.

With a new $7 million gift to accelerate groundbreaking research in brain cancer, The Starr Foundation continues its legacy of advancing innovative scientific discovery at Weill Cornell Medicine.

This generous gift will support Dr. Howard Fine’s revolutionary work to discover new treatments for glioma, a deadly form of brain cancer. Specifically, the funding will allow Dr. Fine, chief of the Division of Neuro-Oncology, and his team to create the **The Starr Foundation Gliomoid Assay Translational Screening Core** – a powerful tool to screen patient-specific drug therapies in various metastatic brain cancers.

“We now understand the biology and genetics of brain tumors much better than we ever did,” says Dr. Fine, who is also the Louis and Gertrude Feil Professor of Medicine and the associate director of translational research at the Meyer Cancer Center. “Our basic knowledge has dramatically expanded. With this generous funding, we’re taking a brand new look at this disease, and we’re doing something different – something we’re really excited about.”

This novel approach to glioma involves using tiny human brain-like organisms – called cerebral organoids – grown in the lab from patient stem cells. These “tiny brains” are replicas of a patient’s own brain – and have already been used as models for conditions like Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s diseases. Dr. Fine’s team is the first to use them in the fight against brain cancer.

“The Starr Foundation continues to be a pioneer for sparking innovative discoveries at Weill Cornell Medicine,” says Interim Dean Choi. “The foundation’s vision and forward-thinking philanthropy are inspirational. With its support for this translational core, we hope to be able to bring more treatment options to patients suffering from this deadly disease.”

The core will use two novel technologies – pairing patient-specific glioma stem cells with these “tiny brains” – in order to mimic a specific patient’s tumor in vitro. Researchers will then use this microenvironment to test many potential medications and treatments for a specific patient.

“Supporting groundbreaking discoveries that lead to better treatment options for patients is central to our mission at The Starr Foundation,” says The Starr Foundation Chairman Maurice “Hank” Greenberg, who has been a Weill Cornell Medicine Overseer since 2001 and is also chairman emeritus of NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital. “Dr. Fine’s work in brain cancer is not only important – it’s essential in combatting this disease. We are proud to stand behind him and his team as they accomplish this work.”

Maurice and Corinne Greenberg and The Starr Foundation have a long history of advancing science, medical education and patient care at Weill Cornell Medicine (see sidebar). This gift from The Starr Foundation will continue this legacy of supporting breakthrough discoveries that will have a significant impact on people’s lives.

**“Dr. Fine’s work in brain cancer is not only important – it’s essential in combatting this disease.”**

The Starr Foundation Advances Brain Cancer Research
What Inspires Giving?
Meet Dr. Madelyn Antoncic

Giving and helping others has always come naturally to Overseer Dr. Madelyn Antoncic, former vice president and treasurer of the World Bank. With a long history of bolstering cancer research efforts at Weill Cornell Medicine, Dr. Antoncic decided recently to expand her philanthropic focus and support those who cannot advocate for themselves; her generous estate gift of $10 million will establish the Madelyn Antoncic, PhD, Pediatric Research Fund for Childhood Disease, funding basic and translational research leading to cures for many of today’s life-threatening pediatric diseases. In 2005, Dr. Antoncic joined the Weill Cornell Medicine Board of Overseers and has been an avid member of the Board’s Development Committee, Business and Finance Committee, Clinical Affairs/Physician Organization Committee and Special Committee on Research.

Dr. Antoncic recently sat down with Larry Schafer, vice provost for external affairs, to speak about the impact of philanthropy and what she hopes her gift will accomplish at Weill Cornell Medicine.

LS: You joined the Board of Overseers in 2005; can you tell me what that experience has been like for you?

MA: I honestly can’t believe how fast time has gone. It’s been a great experience. Being on the Board is like being part of a family. It’s been amazing to see the incredible things that have happened here – in 11 years, there’s been so much progress. For example, when we started the Special Committee on Research (SCOR) we knew we had to fix our entire tech transfer process. Navigating what was a bureaucratic system to get licenses and patents was cumbersome and time consuming for researchers. We needed to provide researchers the framework and tools to enable them to focus on doing their great work. We needed to create transparency and to streamline the process. And through this committee, we did just that. We recently had a SCOR meeting where we reviewed the licensing, patent and research results, and I commented about how far we have come and how much we have been able to accomplish. It is so rewarding to see the by-product of putting in place a process that allows the researchers to concentrate on their work.

Another example of being able to be part of incredible things happening is the Belfer Research Building. When I first walked into that building after it opened, I looked up and saw this amazingly impressive space and thought to myself, “Wow, this is so great.” I remember being part of the planning process and sitting with the architects about what should be done in that building – how the entrance should look; where the open space for students and researchers should be; and all of the details that go into planning a building. I remember the groundbreaking. And now it’s here – a wonderful space where great research is happening.

LS: You were one of the leaders on the Board who underscored the importance of research at our institution. Now the Belfer Research Building is almost full and we have a huge number of cancer researchers here, thanks to donors like you. What made you decide to start supporting children’s health research as well?

MA: I have always been passionate about supporting cancer research, both personally and by raising funds. Earlier in my life I supported leukemia. Then my attention turned to helping establish the Neuberger Berman Lung Cancer Research Center. But recently, I started thinking, “Where else can I help make a difference?” Cancer is often considered a disease of older people. I began to wonder, “What could I support that would give hope and a future to someone who may not even have a chance to grow old?”

That made me start thinking about children. I was thinking about a little girl who has become such an important part of my life – how vulnerable she is and how much she relies on me and needs me. That was the moment that I made the connection. She was my inspiration. I want to help the most vulnerable in life – they need advocates – and supporting pediatric research at Weill Cornell Medicine is one of the best ways I can do that.

LS: Thank you for being an inspiring advocate by establishing the Madelyn Antoncic, PhD, Pediatric Research Fund for Childhood Disease. What do you hope this fund will accomplish?

MA: The amount of research that goes into supporting children’s health is so small in comparison to other research areas. I think many people just don’t think about the fact that kids are not just little people – they have different diseases and different needs. I hope this fund will provide an opportunity to generate more ideas and more resources to discover cures. I want to lead by example and hope that this endowment will also encourage others to support pediatric research.

LS: Did someone teach you to be philanthropic or is that something you learned on your own?

MA: I would say there are some things in life that are not “learned” – some things just feel natural or they don’t. To me, helping others just feels natural. Whether it was tutoring disadvantaged students after school or visiting with the underprivileged and the sick on the weekends during my earlier years, helping others and giving back has always just felt like the right thing to do. Later, I joined the World Bank to “give back.” There I used my background, working hard to help raise emerging and developing countries out of poverty through technical assistance and capacity building in the areas of economics and finance. I also see being a member of the Board of Overseers as one more way I can give back. I am fortunate now to be able to help others financially. However, being an Overseer also gives me an opportunity to be involved and to contribute my time and experience to help solve important problems or give advice on critical topics. It’s incredibly rewarding.

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In September, more than 300 Weill Cornell Medicine alumni returned to their alma mater for an exciting Reunion weekend, filled with nostalgia and celebration. The two-day event featured an exclusive interview and keynote presentation by Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Dr. Anthony Fauci, MD ’66, as well as several lectures and award presentations.

Dr. Spencer Kubo, MD ’80, chief medical officer of BioControl Medical, and Dr. Stuart Mushlin, MD ’73, president of the Weill Cornell Medical College Alumni Association, received Honorary Fellowship Awards for their outstanding scholarship and dedication. The weekend ended with a festive gala at The Plaza.
events

Appel Symposium

On October 5, the Starr Greenberg Conference Center was packed with participants attending the Annual Appel Alzheimer’s Disease Research Institute Symposium, which featured the topic “Neurodegeneration and a New Generation of Discovery.” Presenters included: Dr. Samantha Budd Haeberlein, vice president of clinical development at Biogen, Dr. Jacqueline Burré, assistant professor of neuroscience at Weill Cornell Medicine, and Dr. David Holtzman, chairman of the Department of Neurology at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis. Established by Helen and Vice Chair Overseer Bob Appel in 2006, the Appel Institute is home to researchers who are committed to developing treatments and finding a cure for Alzheimer’s disease.

Support for Groundbreaking Alzheimer’s Research

One of the most promising avenues for Alzheimer’s research involves the apolipoprotein E, or ApoE, gene which has been identified as a strong genetic risk factor for late-onset Alzheimer’s disease. Thanks to funding from the Alzheimer’s Drug Discovery Fund, with significant support from longtime Weill Cornell Medicine champions Renée and Vice Chair Overseer Robert Belfer and Helen and Vice Chair Overseer Bob Appel, researchers at the Appel Institute continue to unlock the mysteries of the ApoE gene in an effort to find new treatments and cures for this prevalent disease.

This funding has provided more than $1.5 million in vital support for this key avenue of discovery, accelerating ongoing efforts in critical ApoE gene therapy research at Weill Cornell Medicine. Although only 20% of the population carries the ApoE gene, these individuals account for up to 65% of all Alzheimer’s cases. “With this funding, the Belfers, the Appels and the Alzheimer’s Drug Discovery Foundation have demonstrated their incredible vision and foresight in the fight against Alzheimer’s disease,” says Interim Dean Choi. “This philanthropy has enabled our physician-scientists to continue working toward bringing more treatment options to the people who need them most.”

Cabaret

This year’s Cabaret celebration took place on November 9th at Chelsea Piers’ Pier Sixty. The event, which raised over $3.5 million for Weill Cornell Medicine and NewYork-Presbyterian, honored the many donors and friends who support both of these institutions. Legendary comedian Jerry Seinfeld provided entertainment for the evening.
Women’s Health Symposium

During the 34th annual Women’s Health Symposium on October 19, participants gathered at the Citigroup Executive Conference Center in New York City to learn more about concussions and the aging brain. Hosted by Co-Chairwomen Joan Weill and Dr. Orli Etingin, medical director of the Iris Cantor Women’s Health Center and the Lisa and Sanford B. Ehrenkranz Professor in Women’s Health, the symposium included presentations by Dr. Barry Kosofsky, chief of the Division of Pediatric Neurology and the Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation Professor of Pediatrics, and Dr. Gregory Petsko, director of the Helen and Robert Appel Alzheimer’s Disease Research Institute and the Arthur J. Mahon Professor of Neuroscience.

Save the Date
Palm Beach Healthy Living Symposium

The annual Healthy Living Symposium will take place on Monday, February 27, at The Breakers in Palm Beach, Florida. The symposium brings together top-tier physicians and scientists from Weill Cornell Medicine to discuss today’s most pressing health concerns. Speakers provide expertise and strategies for disease prevention and healthy living.

Speakers:
- Dr. Robert Brown, Gladys and Roland Harriman Professor of Medicine
- Dr. Leonard Girardi, MD ’89, chairman of Cardiothoracic Surgery and O. Wayne Isom Professor of Cardiothoracic Surgery
- Dr. Mark Rubin, director of the Caryl and Israel Englander Institute for Precision Medicine, Homer T. Hirst III Professor of Oncology in Pathology, and professor of pathology and laboratory medicine and of pathology in urology

For more information or to register, please contact: Eliza Cohn, Special Events Manager, 646-962-9482 or erc2004@med.cornell.edu

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