Every other fall, hundreds of Weill Cornell Medicine alumni fill the halls of 1300 York Avenue for their class reunion. They’re there to reconnect with friends, visit their old stomping grounds and learn about some of the latest advances in medicine from their colleagues. The energy and excitement at the Reunion events are palpable – these former students are back where it all began, where they learned the skills to become some of the finest physicians in the country and where they first joined the Weill Cornell Medicine family. The Weill Cornell Medicine alumni – 5,800 in total – are some of the most passionate advocates for the institution – and also some of its most loyal supporters.

In the past five years alone, Weill Cornell Medicine alumni have contributed nearly $10 million to the institution. Their support has been extensive and broad-based – bolstering efforts in research, clinical care and medical education.

“Our alumni are committed to staying connected and keeping this institution strong,” says Stuart Mushlin, MD ‘73, president of the Weill Cornell Medical College Alumni Association.

One of the institutional areas that has benefited most from alumni support is the scholarship endowment. During the past few years, alumni donations toward scholarship have skyrocketed – alumni were key players in helping the institution reach and surpass the $20 million scholarship target for the Campaign for Education, launched in 2014. It is, in part, because of this ongoing alumni commitment that Weill Cornell Medicine students graduate with less debt as compared to their peers.

“As an alumnus and a scholarship donor myself, I know firsthand the power of supporting an institution that has given you so much,” says Richard Cohen, MD ‘75, co-chair of the Campaign for Education. “Watching our alumni help to bring us to our scholarship goal – allowing more students to receive this solid educational foundation – has been incredibly inspiring.”

But scholarship funding is only one critical part of alumni giving. Weill Cornell Medicine alumni have given in areas across the board – often to the direct benefit of current medical students. One example of this is the Paul F. Miskovitz ’75 Stethoscope Fund for Medical Students. Started in 2009 by The Buster Foundation, this fund provides a stethoscope to every incoming student – presented at the White Coat Ceremony during the first week of school. In total, nearly 400 alumni and friends have contributed to this fund, which has raised $180,000.

“There is nothing quite like receiving your first stethoscope – it’s so empowering,” says Raul Martinez-McFaline, student representative to the Board of Overseers. “And knowing that it was given to you from someone who once stood in your shoes makes it even more meaningful.”

Whether supporting the groundbreaking research at the Belfer Research Building, the clinical expertise of the faculty or educational opportunities for the healthcare leaders of tomorrow, Weill Cornell Medicine alumni continue to make this an even stronger institution every day.

“Our alumni are a critical part of what makes this institution thrive,” says Dr. Augustine M.K. Choi, interim dean for Weill Cornell Medicine. “We are so proud of everything they have accomplished – and so grateful for their generosity.”
Many Weill Cornell Medicine graduates go on to become members of the Dean’s Circle, a group that honors alumni who have generously given $25,000 or more to the institution or established planned gifts of $50,000 or more. This giving society continues to grow and flourish as more alumni become involved. The stories of the following Dean’s Circle donors — and there are many more — capture the breadth and diversity of alumni giving at Weill Cornell Medicine.

**Drs. Natasha Leibel and Harlan Levine**

Natasha Leibel, MD ’98, looks back to her time at Weill Cornell Medicine with fondness — especially since that was where she met her husband, Harlan Levine, MD ’98.

When Dr. Leibel and Dr. Levine graduated from medical school, they were fortunate enough to not have to worry about paying off a tremendous amount of debt. But they knew that many aspiring doctors could not afford the same luxury, and so they decided to create the Harlan B. Levine, MD ’98 and Natasha I. Leibel, MD ’98 Scholarship.

Dr. Leibel hopes scholarship recipients enjoy being doctors as much as she and her husband do. “We don’t want someone to be deterred from making the choice of going into medicine because they fear being saddled in debt,” she says. “And the scholarship recipients at Weill Cornell Medicine are truly some of the most inspiring young people.”

Dr. Leibel and Dr. Levine also made a gift to name an investigators’ suite in the Belfer Research Building. Dr. Leibel’s father is a scientist and she has seen firsthand the struggle that scientists go through when it comes to research funding, so the cause was very close to her heart.

For more information on alumni giving at Weill Cornell Medicine, please contact the Office of Alumni Relations at (646) 962-9560 or alumni@med.cornell.edu or visit alumni.weill.cornell.edu.
When Yoram Cohen was diagnosed with a lung disease, he traveled more than 200 miles from his home in Washington, D.C. to receive care from Dr. Nasser Altorki, chief of the Division of Thoracic Surgery, who he and his family deem “the best of the best.”

After reflecting on his life-changing experience as a patient under Dr. Altorki’s care, Mr. Cohen made a generous $1 million gift to support this work. “Our family is incredibly grateful to Dr. Altorki and Weill Cornell Medicine for the world-class care that they provided,” says Mr. Cohen. “We experienced first-hand how cutting-edge medicine, comprehensive attention-to-detail and tremendous dedication by doctors and nurses improves patient outcomes and helps provide peace-of-mind for patients’ families.”

When Mr. Cohen initially traveled to New York to meet Dr. Altorki, the Gerald J. Ford-Wayne Isom Research Professor of Cardiothoracic Surgery, he planned only to have a consultation about his upcoming treatment in Washington. But when circumstances led to him checking into the medical center as a patient, Mr. Cohen was incredibly moved by the care that he received from Dr. Altorki and his team.

“That experience gave us an enormous sense of confidence in Weill Cornell Medicine,” says Adam Cohen, Mr. Cohen’s son. “And after that, we were certain that we wanted Dr. Altorki to be my dad’s physician throughout the entire treatment process.”

“When you experience something like that, you feel like you’re part of a family,” says Adam. “Mr. Cohen returned to Weill Cornell Medicine for treatment and continued to be impressed by Dr. Altorki’s kindness and attention to detail. According to Adam Cohen, “Weill Cornell Medicine provided comprehensive and excellent care. After my dad’s surgery, our family felt strongly that we wanted to do something to support Dr. Altorki and the institution – given what we have experienced, we know that medicine can have a huge impact.”

The Cohens hope their gift will help Dr. Altorki continue to save lives. “I am so touched by the Cohen family’s generosity,” says Dr. Altorki. “With their support we will be able to sustain our efforts in combating lung disease.”

“Now, anytime we know of someone with a serious health issue who needs care, we tell them to go to Weill Cornell Medicine – whether they’re from New York or not,” Adam Cohen says. “We honestly can’t imagine a better place.”
Stimson Luncheon
In June, attendees at the Stimson Society’s annual luncheon were captivated by Dr. Linda Vahdat, director of the Breast Cancer Research Program, who focused on the latest developments in breast cancer research and therapies. She discussed the challenges and advancements in the field, highlighting the importance of continued research and support for innovative treatments.

For more information about the Stimson Society and planned giving at Weill Cornell Medicine, please contact Lisa Lager, director of planned giving, at 646-962-9510 or lil2033@med.cornell.edu.

Partners in Medicine
The annual Partners in Medicine spring luncheon, held on June 21, focused on digestion. During the luncheon, Dr. David Artis, director of the Jill Roberts Institute for Research in Inflammatory Bowel Disease and the Michael Kors Professor of Immunology and Dr. Robert Brown, vice chair of transitions of care, director of the Center for Liver Disease and Transplantation, gave a presentation on the latest research in digestive health. They discussed the importance of maintaining a healthy gut and the role of nutrition in preventing and treating digestive diseases.

For more information about Partners in Medicine and annual giving at Weill Cornell Medicine, please contact Lori Schroeter, director of annual and special giving programs, at 646-962-9531 or las2026@med.cornell.edu.

Greenberg Service Award Dinner
The 36th annual Maurice R. Greenberg Distinguished Service Award Dinner was held on May 19, honoring Dr. Harvey Klein, the William S. Paley Professor of Clinical Medicine. Dr. Klein has been connected to NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center for more than 52 years, starting with an internship and residency in 1963.

This award was established in 1980 by Overseer Maurice R. Greenberg, and the late Dr. Peter Guida, who founded the divisions of Cardiac Surgery, Vascular Surgery and Thoracic Surgery at Weill Cornell Medicine. The award has been presented each year to a senior member of the medical staff for exceptional and longstanding service.

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