

# Milestones



## \$50 Million Gift from Weill Family Foundation Establishes Weill Cancer Hub East

Dr. Richard Lifton, president of The Rockefeller University; Sanford I. Weill, founder of the Weill Family Foundation and chair emeritus of the Weill Cornell Medicine Board of Fellows; Christopher L. Eisgruber, president of Princeton University; Jonathan Skipper, president of the Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research; and Dr. Robert A. Harrington, the Stephen and Suzanne Weiss Dean of Weill Cornell Medicine

JOHN ABBOTT

With a mission to understand how nutrition and metabolism impact the body's ability to control cancer, four leading research institutions have united under the Weill Cancer Hub East, an innovative, collaborative partnership that aims to transform cancer treatment.

The new initiative connects world-class experts from Princeton University, The Rockefeller University, Weill Cornell Medicine's Meyer Cancer Center and the Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research to examine how nutrition and metabolism can enhance a therapeutic strategy known as immunotherapy that harnesses a patient's own immune cells to treat cancer. Immunotherapy holds much promise, but its effectiveness varies in different people and against different types of cancer.

The Weill Cancer Hub East was established with a transformational \$50 million gift from the Weill Family Foundation, directed by visionary benefactors Joan and Board of Fellows Chair Emeritus Sanford I. Weill, and was matched with philanthropy from each of the three partner institutions that together will total more than \$125 million.

The initiative seeks to break down institutional barriers and unite top experts in cancer biology, cancer clinical trials, immunology, nutrition and metabolism to drive pioneering, cross-field collaboration that pushes the boundaries of scientific discovery.

"The Weill Cancer Hub East will offer doctors and scientists a tremendous opportunity to revolutionize the treatment of cancer, a disease that complicates so many lives," says Mr. Weill, founder of the Weill Family Foundation. "With the best minds in the field armed with the most advanced research techniques, the Weill Cancer Hub East will seek to elevate immunotherapy and improve patient care for people battling cancer. Joan and I could not be more excited about the endless possibilities of this special partnership – investment in science and medicine is our labor of love."

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**We're  
Changing  
Medicine.**



# \$50 Million Gift from Weill Family Foundation Establishes Weill Cancer Hub East

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The Weill family and the Weill Family Foundation have long championed the advancement of exceptional science and medicine, and with this gift continue to cement their legacy as Weill Cornell Medicine's foremost benefactors. In total, the Weill family and the Weill Family Foundation have gifted more than \$1 billion to nonprofit organizations in the United States and worldwide, supporting areas ranging from education, social causes, music and the arts to medical research and patient care.

Over the next decade, the Weill Cancer Hub East will marshal multidisciplinary teams to explore the complex relationship between solid tumors and the environment in which they form and grow. Their investigations will leverage the complementary strengths of each research institution to illuminate how the food we eat and the beneficial microbes that help metabolize that food influence the effectiveness of cancer treatments such as immunotherapy.



Researchers Dr. Jedd Wolchok of Weill Cornell Medicine, Dr. Sohail Tavazoie of The Rockefeller University and Dr. Joshua Rabinowitz of Princeton University and Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research

At Weill Cornell Medicine, the Hub's scientific activities will be led by Dr. Jedd Wolchok, the Meyer Director of the Sandra and Edward Meyer Cancer Center, co-director of the Ludwig Collaborative Laboratory and co-director of the Parker Institute for Cancer Immunology at Weill Cornell Medicine. Dr. Wolchok will lead a team of expert physician-scientists in the fields of cancer and nutrition, including outstanding faculty in the Meyer Cancer Center and the Friedman Center for Human Nutrition.

## Cutting-Edge Research to Enhance Immunotherapy

Heralded as the "fifth pillar" alongside surgery, radiation, chemotherapy and precision-targeted therapeutics, immunotherapy is a powerful approach for many types of cancers. While the other therapies attempt to remove or attack cancer cells directly, immunotherapy utilizes a patient's own immune system to strike the disease from within.

"How we can increase the effectiveness of immunotherapy across all cancer types and patients is one of the scientific questions that most needs answering," says Dr. Robert A. Harrington, the Stephen and Suzanne Weiss Dean of Weill Cornell Medicine.

"By convening world-class institutions with leading investigators in their respective fields, including those at our Meyer Cancer

**The Weill Cancer Hub East will explore how metabolism affects the immune system's ability to recognize and control cancer.**

Center, the Weill Cancer Hub East seeks to discover new ways that nutrition and gut microbes can improve the immune response to the disease. This initiative is a testament to the power of philanthropy to advance science and medicine, and we are profoundly appreciative of Joan, Sandy and the Weill Family Foundation for their out-of-the-box, visionary commitment."

Using the latest advances in metabolomics, immunology, computational analysis and

artificial intelligence, the Weill Cancer Hub East will explore how metabolism affects the immune system's ability to recognize and control cancer.

The hub will offer seed funding to basic, clinical and translational scientists from Princeton University, The Rockefeller University and Weill Cornell Medicine to pursue collaborative projects that focus on reprogramming the tumor microenvironment and augmenting cell function by modulating patients' metabolism and microbiomes.

The hub will also offer a portfolio of clinical trials, including those that explore whether GLP-1 agonists, which are designed to modify a person's metabolism, have downstream beneficial effects on a cancer patient's immune response and outcome. Findings gleaned from these investigations may have applications in cardiovascular, metabolic and autoimmune conditions.

A leadership committee, comprising leaders from Princeton, Rockefeller, Weill Cornell Medicine and Ludwig, along with representatives from the Weill Family Foundation, will direct the hub's scientific strategy. Licensed discoveries with commercial potential will provide further financial support for the hub, as will ongoing philanthropy from each of the three academic institutions.

"The Weill Cancer Hub East has enormous potential to transform the way we treat cancer and change the world," says Mr. Weill. "Joan and I can't wait to see all of the innovations that emerge from the initiative."

# From Our Dean



I am so inspired by the extraordinary generosity that we have received for the *We're Changing Medicine* campaign. Your gifts not only amplify the critical work happening at Weill Cornell Medicine, but also demonstrate a clear commitment to advancing science and medicine at this pivotal time in health care. This vital philanthropy is a testament to your trust in our mission to care, discover, teach and build community, and we are resolute in honoring that confidence in us.

Collaboration is central to all we achieve. As a physician and an interventional cardiologist, I've seen firsthand how teamwork saves lives. In the catheterization lab, where we diagnose and treat a variety of heart conditions, each member of the team – including the anesthesiologists, cardiologists, nurses and surgeons – plays an indispensable role in ensuring the best outcomes for patients. This spirit of collaboration defines our approach at Weill Cornell Medicine. Whether at the research bench, the patient's bedside, or in the classroom, breaking down silos and fostering multidisciplinary partnerships are key to who we are and how we succeed. Visionary gifts, like the recent one from the Weill Family Foundation, directed by our extraordinary benefactors, Joan and Board of Fellows Chair Emeritus Sandy Weill, to spark creation of the Weill Cancer Hub East, will allow us to continue bringing the brightest minds together and moving medicine forward. This is key to advancing research and science, now more than ever.

As we look toward the future, there are many milestones to come. Next month, we will hold a ribbon-cutting to open our new state-of-the-art student residence, creating an inspiring place for our students to learn and grow. We are also expanding our clinical footprint to increase access to our world-class care and enhancing our already strong research enterprise to tackle some of the medicine's most urgent questions. None of this would be possible without your partnership.

Together, we are changing medicine.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R. Harrington MD".

**Robert A. Harrington, M.D.**  
Stephen and Suzanne Weiss Dean, Weill Cornell Medicine  
Provost for Medical Affairs, Cornell University



# Ray Herrmann Jr. Leaves

The estate of Raymond R. Herrmann Jr., a member of the Weill Cornell Medicine Board of Fellows for 35 years, has made an extraordinary gift to Weill Cornell Medicine. The exceptional, unrestricted bequest, likely to exceed \$65 million when ultimately received, is one of the largest planned gifts ever to the institution and will have a transformational impact.

The gift from the late Mr. Herrmann and his widow, Mariana, reflects the couple's passion for life, commitment to their community and belief in the power of medicine and science to help people, says Jessica M. Bibliowicz, chair of the Board of Fellows.

"Ray was a deeply caring person who was enthusiastic about living life to the fullest, whether it was traveling the world or serving on the Weill Cornell Medicine Board," says Ms. Bibliowicz. "Mariana is equally compassionate and dedicated, which is why I am so grateful for her continued involvement in our institution."

At the time of his death in 2021, just before his 101<sup>st</sup> birthday, Mr. Herrmann was chairman emeritus of Breakthru Beverage Group, one of the foremost North American wine and spirits distributors, capping a long and distinguished career as a leader in the beverage alcohol industry.



Jessica M. Bibliowicz, chair of the Weill Cornell Medicine Board of Fellows, Mariana Herrmann and Dr. Robert A. Harrington, Dean of Weill Cornell Medicine



# Exceptional Legacy

“Ray loved Weill Cornell Medicine, and he fervently believed in its efforts to provide the finest medical care, pursue the most innovative science and educate the best doctors,” says Mrs. Herrmann.

## A Life of Achievement

Born in Louisville, Kentucky, where his family founded a fine wine and spirits importing company in the 1880s, Mr. Herrmann graduated from Princeton University in 1942 and served with the U.S. Army in the South Pacific during World War II.

He enjoyed a 50-plus year career and was considered an industry leader, innovator and mentor. For his accomplishments, Mr. Herrmann was named a prestigious Chevalier de L’Ordre National du Mérite (Knight of the National Order of Merit) by the French government, among several other awards.

In 2010 he was honored with the Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America Lifetime Achievement Award, and in 2022 the group launched the Ray Herrmann H.E.R.O. award to recognize members who exemplify its namesake’s key qualities: Humanitarian, Ethical, Respectful and One-of-a-kind.

“Ray was a wonderful and giving man,” says Board of Fellows member Andrew M. Crisses, a longtime friend of the couple and a professional colleague of Ray’s. “When someone asked him how he was doing, he would frequently respond by saying, ‘All the better for being with you.’”

At the urging of his close friend Stephen Weiss, a former Board chair and a generous supporter who went on to endow the Stephen and Suzanne Weiss Dean of Weill Cornell Medicine, Mr. Herrmann joined the Board in 1985, becoming a Life Fellow in 1991. He served until 2021 and was an active member of several governance committees over the lifetime of his involvement here.

He was especially interested in education, says Mrs. Herrmann, who is equally committed to volunteering and is a passionate supporter of The Metropolitan Museum of Art. The Herrmanns also funded Weill Cornell Medicine’s cardiovascular and neuroscience research in the Belfer Research Building.



Mariana and Raymond Herrmann, Jr.

“Ray was a very generous man, a leading philanthropist and a dedicated supporter of Weill Cornell Medicine,” says Dr. Antonio M. Gotto Jr., dean emeritus of Weill Cornell Medicine and a member of the Board of Fellows. “An example of his passion for life and new adventures was when he and Mariana accompanied my wife, Anita, and me on a trip to Weill Cornell Medicine – Qatar in the early 2000s. If you really want to get to know what your friends are like, take an overseas trip with them. The Herrmanns were

wonderful traveling companions and keenly interested in the culture around them and our important work in Qatar.”

## Power of Unrestricted Bequests

Unrestricted bequests, like those from the Herrmann family, have an enormous impact on every aspect of the institution’s mission. These donations allow for maximum flexibility, and they support the organization when plans and needs change, and when opportunities arise. Unrestricted gifts have been allocated to such critical areas as essential faculty recruitments, the new student residence scheduled to open in May and an enhanced focus on the institution’s research endeavors.

**“Ray was a very generous man, a leading philanthropist and a dedicated supporter of Weill Cornell Medicine.”**

Dr. Antonio M. Gotto, Jr.  
Dean Emeritus



Mariana Herrmann with Anita Gotto and Dean Emeritus Dr. Antonio M. Gotto, Jr.

“We will forever honor Ray and Mariana for their generosity, volunteerism, leadership and dedication to advancing scientific and medical excellence,” says Dr. Robert A. Harrington, the Stephen and Suzanne Weiss Dean of Weill Cornell Medicine. “I have truly enjoyed getting to know Mariana and, through her cherished memories, Ray, too. Like many visionary donors, they understood the significance of planned giving and how a meaningful, unrestricted bequest could create a lasting impact for years to come.”



# Masin Family Gift Champions Young Scientists in Cancer Research



Joanne Masin and Board Fellow Michael T. Masin

MICHAEL RISCHER PHOTOGRAPHY

A generous gift from Board of Fellows member Michael Masin and his wife, Joanne, is advancing high-quality cancer research at the Sandra and Edward Meyer Cancer Center.

With a \$1 million gift to establish the Masin Family Award for Collaborative Research in Cancer, the Masins are supporting teams of young investigators who collaborate on early-stage projects aimed at discovering new ways in which cancer is diagnosed and treated.

The couple's five-year commitment provides for two \$100,000 awards to be granted annually to two teams of scientists.

Administered by the Meyer Cancer Center under the direction of Dr. Jedd Wolchok, the Masin Family Award is part of the cancer center's Collaborative Research Initiative (CRI), which provides internal funding – in the form of CRI Investigator Awards – for interdisciplinary teams of researchers whose work has the potential to advance the standard of care for cancer patients.

The Masins, who are longtime supporters of Weill Cornell Medicine, have directed much of their philanthropy toward cancer research ever since Mrs. Masin was diagnosed with breast cancer 20 years ago. Mr. Masin has been a member of the Board of Fellows since 2000.

The couple established the Masin Family Award in honor of two of Mrs. Masin's physicians at Weill Cornell Medicine: Dr. Nasser Altorki, the David B. Skinner Professor of Thoracic Surgery and a professor of cardiothoracic surgery, and Dr. Jonathan Knisely, who was recruited as a professor of radiation oncology.

For the Masins, an investment in cancer research represents an important first step in developing the protocols and treatments that can make a profound difference in the lives of patients diagnosed with cancer. They are particularly excited about partnering with teams of scientists who are working together in early-stage research, and are providing the financial support they need to gain traction with projects that have the potential to change the landscape of cancer care.

The goal of the CRI is to generate sufficient preliminary data that will support investigators' hypotheses and lead to extramural

government grants – including funding from the National Institutes of Health – that will continue to bolster their research.

"This meaningful gift from the Masins provides our scientists with the funding they need to make the types of discoveries that might otherwise get stalled in the lab," says Dr. Wolchok, the Meyer Director of the Meyer Cancer Center.

**"We've had friends who have had cancer and sadly not survived, but we've also had a number of friends and family – including Joanne – for whom the treatments were lifesaving."**

"We are profoundly grateful for their thoughtful philanthropy."

Recently, the Masins met with a team of researchers whose work their gift supports – and came away with a renewed sense of appreciation for the transformative research underway at the Meyer Cancer Center.

"It's a thrill and an honor to work with people who are so enthusiastic and so committed to the research," says Mrs. Masin.

"We've had friends who have had cancer and sadly not survived, but we've also had a number of friends and family – including

Joanne – for whom the treatments were lifesaving," says Mr. Masin. "One gets the sense that the improvements in cancer treatments from research have accelerated at an increasingly fast pace over the last 10 years or so. And it seems that researchers will make even greater strides in the next decade."

Led by Dr. John Blenis, the Anna-Maria and Stephen Kellen Professor in Cancer Research and a professor of pharmacology, the CRI has invested about \$2.9 million in early-stage cancer projects since it was established in 2016. Projects funded by the CRI have included those that study breast cancer, leukemia, pancreatic cancer, gastric cancer, lung cancer and immunotherapy.

"Our hope is that continued research leads to less invasive and more nuanced, individually tailored treatments for a variety of cancers," says Mrs. Masin.



# Belfer Research Building Celebrates 10 Years



Life Fellow Robert Belfer and Renée Belfer

Members of the Board of Fellows, donors, faculty, researchers and invited guests celebrated the 10th anniversary of Weill Cornell Medicine's Belfer Research Building at the Board's annual reception in October. The event featured remarks from Board of Fellows Chair Jessica M. Bibliowicz, who paid tribute to the Belfers and all the donors who helped make the building possible. The 18-story Belfer Research Building opened in 2014 near the corner of East 69th Street and York Avenue as the centerpiece of the *Discoveries that Make a Difference* campaign. With 13 floors of laboratories, the building dramatically expanded Weill Cornell Medicine's research enterprise, expanding a bench-to-bedside approach that has helped advance patient care. The facility was made possible by a \$100 million gift from Renée and Life Fellow Robert Belfer, for whom the building was named.



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Board Fellow Andrew Tisch, Board of Fellows Vice Chair Richard Ruben and Board Fellow Laurence Belfer



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