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About This Issue

This special issue of U Magazine honors the generosity of donors during the Centennial Campaign for UCLA and their impact on UCLA Health. The cover, designed by art director Brad Donenfeld, salutes our leading donors during the campaign, which raised an astonishing $2 billion for the health sciences for a wide array of fields, including brain health, cancer treatment and research, wellness for all ages and scholarships for the next generation of medical professionals. We are proud to celebrate our partners who make possible our vision of healing humankind, one patient at a time.

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"The purpose of life," wrote Ralph Waldo Emerson, "is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well." Those words are foundational for those of us who have dedicated our careers to health care. The purpose of our being and the core of all our efforts — whether in clinical care, research or teaching — is to make some difference in the lives of others. It is explicit in our mission "to heal humankind, one patient at a time, by improving health, alleviating suffering and delivering acts of kindness."

But we can’t do it on our own. It takes the generosity of philanthropic men and women, foundations and corporations, who embrace the choice to make an indelible impact on health care and improve the lives of their fellow global citizens by supporting our work. It is remarkable that over the six years of the Centennial Campaign for UCLA, you have contributed $2 billion to UCLA Health and the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA — nearly half of the campus-wide campaign’s original $4.2 billion goal and more than 36 percent of the $5.5 billion that ultimately was raised.

We are so grateful to you. You truly are more than our benefactors; you are our partners. When speaking with members of our giving community, we often hear that philanthropy is among the most fulfilling activities in your lives. It is as the theologian, philosopher and physician Albert Schweitzer said, “The only ones among you who will be really happy are those who will have sought and found how to serve.”

It is remarkable that over the six years of the Centennial Campaign for UCLA, you have contributed $2 billion to UCLA Health and the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA — nearly half of the campus-wide campaign’s original $4.2 billion goal and more than 36 percent of the $5.5 billion that ultimately was raised.

That statement has been true, too, as UCLA Health and its doctors, nurses, therapists and staff have worked tirelessly over the past months to confront the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. The generosity of donors has been essential to provide necessary resources to safely engage with patients and protect our staff working on the frontlines. Whether it has been material donations of crucial personal protective equipment (PPE), such as N95 and surgical
masks, or significant financial gifts — more than $17 million in total — to help meet our needs for PPE and ventilators and research to develop new tests and therapies, our donor community has stepped up to meet the moment.

We are lucky to be located in a city where there are people who have both the means and the motivation to be philanthropic. That is not the case for many of our fellow academic health care institutions. I think about all the things we have been able to do as a result — leading-edge research to discover new therapies and cures for devastating illnesses, clinical programs that blaze the way toward new standards of care, scholarships to support the next generations of health care professionals, buildings and the infrastructure for faculty to innovate and create and hiring of the best researchers and clinicians in the country.

It has been interesting to see a shift throughout the campaign in how donors approach giving. More donors have come forward to ask, “What do you need that is most urgent?” In line with this change, we received some significant unrestricted gifts — those that are not earmarked for any specific purpose. These contributions give Dr. Kelsey C. Martin, dean of the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA and Gerald S. Levey, MD, Endowed Chair, and Johnese Spisso, president of UCLA Health, CEO of the UCLA Hospital System and associate vice chancellor of UCLA Health Sciences, and me the ability to channel support to urgent needs that are sometimes difficult to fund.

One example is the bequest of $50 million, in 2015, from the Irma and Norman Switzer estate to the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA. This unrestricted funding to advance medicine and health benefited numerous research areas and established the Switzer Prize, an international award that recognizes excellence in basic-science research. As a tribute to the Switzers, the UCLA Center for the Health Sciences Plaza was renamed the Irma and Norman Switzer Plaza.

Another bequest benefiting medical research in the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA came from the estate of entertainer Garry Shandling, which, in 2019, gave $15.2 million to support three separate areas, as well as general medical research. It takes donors who really believe in and trust the whole mission of the organization to make gifts like that.

Trust. That is an essential word. In the end, transformative philanthropy is about relationships that are built upon trust over a long period of time. And vision — both ours as an institution and yours, the philanthropists. Visionary philanthropy can alter the course of science. Visionary philanthropy can change the direction of clinical care. Visionary philanthropy can develop the next generations of physician and scientist leaders. Visionary philanthropy can help to heal humankind, one patient at a time. Visionary philanthropy can shape the future.

To all of you who have placed your trust in us and whose vision has helped to shape our direction, I say thank you.

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Thank you for getting to know me and everyone with whom you interact at UCLA Health and the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA. Thank you for taking the time to learn about what it is we do and why it is important. Thank you for being a part of our family.

And thank you for being patient. Academic medicine is not always nimble or quick; research requires a time investment and the long view. Thank you for being our partners and ambassadors for years — sometimes for decades — when that’s what it takes to transform medicine and health care.

Through your commitment to and support of the work that we do, you exemplify Emerson’s words, “to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have [your life] make some difference.”

Dr. John C. Mazziotta (RES ’81, FEL ’83)
Vice Chancellor, UCLA Health Sciences
CEO, UCLA Health
Creating the Edge in Advancing Research

While basic-science research often is associated with organizations like the National Institutes of Health or National Science Foundation, UCLA scientists also are deeply involved in basic-science investigations. Due to the innovative nature of these studies, they are sometimes difficult to fund. Yet, some of the greatest advances in medical science have been made possible because private foundations have supported novel research avenues and technologies. This funding can encourage unconventional partnerships and collaborations across disciplines and disparate institutions, enabling groundbreaking discoveries and providing early-career scientists with a crucial boost.

High Risk, High Reward: W. M. Keck Foundation

Two billion years ago, eukaryotes appeared on earth. These organisms, which would come to comprise all animals, plants, fungi and protists on earth, were the first organisms with a nucleus and internal organelles. Siavash Kurdistani, MD, professor of biological chemistry, discovered that histones, simple proteins in the nucleus of all eukaryotes, also function as an enzyme that generates a usable form of copper ions. This finding has the potential to transform the understanding of the evolution of life on this planet. “Our discovery suggests that histones may have been critical for the emergence of eukaryotes, which appeared when oxygen was accumulating on the planet and challenging the use of metal ions such as copper,” Dr. Kurdistani says. This has implications in the study of diseases like cancer and neurodegenerative conditions due to the role of copper in crucial molecular and cellular processes, such as mitochondrial respiration.

The W. M. Keck Foundation played a vital role in this. “Keck’s support enabled us to pursue a novel line of basic-research inquiry with essentially no precedence in literature,” Dr. Kurdistani says. “We had proposed a provocative idea with preliminary results from our lab that had not been peer-reviewed. This type of research proposal is rarely, if ever, supported by major federal grants.”

The Keck Foundation has been an important part of many other studies during its long partnership with UCLA. Notably, Kelsey C. Martin, MD, PhD, dean of the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA and Gerald S. Levey, MD, Endowed Chair, received a W. M. Keck Foundation Distinguished Young Scholar in Medical Research Program Award in 2001, shortly after she joined the UCLA faculty. Most recently, the Keck Foundation responded to the urgent need for COVID-19 research funding, and, during the Centennial Campaign for UCLA, the space surrounding the three main outpatient buildings at UCLA Medical Plaza was renamed W. M. Keck Court in honor of the foundation’s transformative funding for plaza renovations and competitive biomedical research grants.

“Since 1954, the foundation has supported the highest levels of academic inquiry and discovery conducted by the finest researchers at the most innovative institutions in the United States. At UCLA, we are seeing the real-world impact of these brilliant, though untested, ideas come to fruition,” said Joe Day, co-president of the foundation. Steve Keck, co-president added, “We are delighted that our high-risk, high-reward ventures with these outstanding UCLA investigators are producing the scientific knowledge we seek to generate.”

Mayank Mehta, PhD, professor of neurology and neurobiology, experienced similar support from the Keck Foundation. Ten years ago, the tech industry — as well as the federal government — seemed uninterested in funding work on virtual reality. “The Keck Foundation saw the merit in our high-risk, high-reward ideas,” he says. “Their support made our research possible.”

Virtual reality offered an intriguing way to explore how the brain understands space, providing a perfectly controlled and manipulatable environment. Dr. Mehta’s team found that the part of the brain responsible for memory formation and memory disorders shuts down in virtual reality. They also found that neuronal activity is scrambled in virtual reality, which helped reveal the importance of brain rhythms in learning and memory.

These discoveries, in particular, have far-ranging implications in terms of safety for the multibillion-dollar virtual-reality industry, while also offering intriguing possibilities for therapeutic use for some memory disorders, including Alzheimer’s disease.

Unmatched Collaboration: Dr. Miriam and Sheldon G. Adelson Medical Research Foundation

Some of the most important advances in neurological repair and regeneration are taking place at UCLA, thanks to the Dr. Miriam and Sheldon G. Adelson Medical Research Foundation (AMRF). Its approach has been to fund research across several models of neurological disease and encourage deep and innovative collaboration among its members. AMRF’s penchant for fostering partnerships has led to inspiring and unexpected discoveries.
Working with researchers at Harvard University and the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Michael Sofroniew, MD, PhD, professor of neurobiology and a member of the UCLA Brain Research Institute, and his lab determined a sequence of three treatments that show great promise in encouraging nerve fiber regrowth. These new fibers were even capable of carrying impulses across scar tissue, a potentially important achievement. “The AMRF has brought us together every six months for 15 years,” Dr. Sofroniew says. “The resulting collaborative projects, involving different laboratories in multiple institutions, have led to major advances that would never have happened without the regular interactions of AMRF members.”

Few organizations have succeeded in promoting interdisciplinary projects to the degree that AMRF has, especially in bringing together researchers from seemingly unrelated areas. Daniel Geschwind, MD (RES ’95, FEL ’97), PhD, UCLA associate vice chancellor of precision medicine and Gordon and Virginia MacDonald Distinguished Chair in Human Genetics, characterizes these as “collaborations that connect world-class laboratories with different kinds of expertise and create true synergies.”

Dr. Geschwind’s ongoing association with AMRF has enabled his lab to serve as a genetics and genomics platform for dozens of laboratories. They are working to understand the differences between the peripheral nervous system, which permits some regeneration, and the central nervous system, which does not. “We’re not quite there, yet,” he says, “but over the next three years, we’re going to refine our understanding of the intrinsic genetic program. We’ve identified what we think is the core program that can drive neural regeneration intrinsically.”

S. Thomas Carmichael, MD (FEL ’01), PhD, chair of the UCLA Department of Neurology and Frances Stark Chair in Neurology, works in the area of stroke recovery and has participated in several fruitful partnerships through AMRF. Although the original focus of one of the AMRF projects was to examine the role of the gene CCR5 in learning and memory, it opened new lines of inquiry in stroke treatment. The researchers found that suppressing CCR5 encouraged damaged neurons to form new connections. The team was able to confirm this result by looking at stroke recovery in people who naturally lacked the CCR5 gene and identifying a new molecule for stroke recovery.

The creativity inherent in AMRF’s cooperative approach uniquely positions it to support truly innovative methods, as discoveries in one area are brought to bear on another. It also has had other benefits. “The foundation has helped me grow as a scientist,” Dr. Carmichael says. “In discussions with the best in the field, one develops approaches and expectations of one’s own science and research that similarly demand the best — that seek depth, rigor and novelty in the research approaches.”

— Christopher Best
During the Centennial Campaign for UCLA, UCLA Stein Eye Institute celebrated its 50th anniversary. The Institute was established in 1966 by Jules Stein, MD, an influential entertainment executive and medical doctor, and Bradley R. Straatsma, MD, JD, the founding director of Stein Eye and chairman of the UCLA Department of Ophthalmology. It was the culmination of a dream to prevent blindness by transforming the quality of vision research, education, patient care and community outreach.

Since its founding, UCLA Stein Eye Institute has grown into an entire vision-science campus comprising three buildings: the Jules Stein Eye Institute, the Doris Stein Eye Research Center and the Edie & Lew Wasserman Building — an interconnected community of facilities and people that merges research, training for new ophthalmologists, premier patient care, community outreach programs and ongoing education for doctors worldwide.

Philanthropy has been the driving force behind this transformation, beginning with Dr. Stein’s visionary support and continuing with that
of Lew Wasserman, Dr. Stein’s colleague in business and philanthropy, who received The UCLA Medal in 1996. (Wasserman’s wife Edie also received The UCLA Medal, in 1998.)

The Wasserman Foundation continues to be a leading supporter, and during the Centennial Campaign for UCLA, the Institute received transformative gifts from the Leonard Apt Trust and Pat and Joe Yzurdiaga, helping to ensure that Stein Eye will remain at the forefront of vision science and treatment.

Leonard Apt, MD, an eye surgeon and founding member of Stein Eye, devoted his life to preventing blindness in children. “He was a true renaissance man,” remembers Bartly J. Mondino, MD, chair of the UCLA Department of Ophthalmology and Bradley R. Straatsma, MD Endowed Chair in Ophthalmology. “A scholar, clinician, scientist, philanthropist, patron of the arts, sports enthusiast, wine connoisseur. No physician before him had been board-certified in both pediatrics and ophthalmology, and he is recognized as the father of modern pediatric ophthalmology.” In his lifetime, Dr. Apt established an endowed chair and a fellowship in pediatric ophthalmology. Through his estate, he left a legacy gift to support the UCLA Division of Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus that endows fellowships and funds for residency training and pediatric ophthalmology.

Pat and Joe Yzurdiaga established the Patricia and Joseph Yzurdiaga Endowed Vision Science Research Fund to provide crucial support for vision-science research at the basic-science level. The fund has accelerated the work of Roxana Radu, MD (FEL ’01), on Stargardt disease and age-related macular degeneration, allowing her lab to advance from scientific models to conducting research on human-derived cells. This is a vital step in elucidating the mechanism of disease and identifying potential therapeutic strategies. The fund also supported research by Natik Piri, PhD, of early molecular events that take place in retinal ganglion cells brought on by elevated intraocular pressure, a major risk factor for glaucoma progression. Dr. Piri hopes that this information will yield new neuroprotective strategies in glaucoma treatment. Mr. Yzurdiaga, who died in 2015, recognized the lasting significance of philanthropy. “Pat and I believe in what we are doing,” he said in 2009. “It is our way to serve humanity forever.”

— Christopher Best
During the Centennial Campaign for UCLA, the Division of Digestive Diseases at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA became the medical school’s first division to be named as a result of a philanthropic gift. Tamar and Vatche Manoukian’s landmark 2017 gift provided unrestricted funds to accelerate research and support innovative clinical care and educational priorities. In addition to the UCLA Vatche and Tamar Manoukian Division of Digestive Diseases, the university recognized the Manoukians by naming 100 UCLA Medical Plaza the Vatche and Tamar Manoukian Medical Building.

A leader in the global Armenian community, Vatche Manoukian has been involved in a wide range of businesses, including property investment, retail, pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, entertainment and renewable energy. He and his wife have supported charitable work throughout the world, with a particular emphasis on education, medicine, culture, the environment and Armenian causes.

At the time of making the gift, Manoukian said that he hoped his support would help UCLA “continue to be one of the foremost centers of medical excellence in the world and that it will allow UCLA to expand its research into human disease and how best to treat it.”

Under the direction of Eric Esrailian, MD (FEL ’06), MPH, chief of the UCLA Vatche and Tamar Manoukian Division of Digestive Diseases and The Lincy Foundation Chair in Clinical Gastroenterology, the division is advancing leading-edge research in areas such as brain-gut-microbiome interactions. It recently won four SCOPY Awards from the American College of Gastroenterology, honoring the division for its achievements in community engagement, education and colorectal cancer awareness efforts. In addition, UCLA gastroenterology and gastrointestinal (GI) surgery placed No. 5 in the nation in the 2020-21 annual U.S. News & World Report rankings.

Philanthropy has been key to the division’s ability to maintain excellence, as exemplified by another campaign gift. The Melvin and Bren Simon Digestive Diseases Center at UCLA, an umbrella structure for the clinical operations and centers of excellence in the division. Among other accomplishments, the gift enabled the division to create the Melvin and Bren Simon Gastroenterology Quality Improvement Program and annually fund a Melvin & Bren Simon GI Quality Improvement Program Scholar, who is committed to providing high-quality care and contributing to research in the field.

Bren Simon made the gift in honor of her late husband Melvin, a co-founder of the Simon Property Group, a commercial real estate company that is one of the largest shopping mall operators in the United States, and a co-owner of the NBA’s Indiana Pacers. He received The UCLA Medal in 1996. “Mel was an incredibly generous man,” said Simon at the time of making the gift. “He was a loving husband and father. He was brilliant,
kind and epitomized unselfishness. I am proud to carry his legacy and philanthropic priorities forward.”

The couple created the Melvin and Bren Simon Charitable Foundation in order to support causes that positively affect medical research and health, particularly among vulnerable populations. “We established the foundation to give back to the community and continue a legacy of respect, kindness and compassion for all,” Simon explained.

Similar principles inform the Manoukians’ giving. “My father always told me it was important that if you have been blessed with being successful, then you must help others,” Manoukian said. “If we can do good, then we should do good.”

— Maggie Flynn
COMMUNITY

Changing the Paradigm for the Treatment of Sports Concussion

"As the father of children who are athletes and as an NFL owner, I greatly value the positive role that sports play in people’s lives and am personally concerned about sports concussions. UCLA runs one of the best youth concussion programs in the nation, and I’m honored that my gift will allow the program to accelerate and expand its efforts to help kids, parents and coaches understand how to prevent and treat concussions and enjoy the sports that they love.”

—Steve Tisch, 2014

Steve Tisch’s landmark investment in 2014 established the UCLA Steve Tisch BrainSPORT Program, a sophisticated research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment program for concussions and brain injuries. His philanthropy — the single largest gift from an individual to a medical center for a concussion-related initiative — has enabled the program’s director Christopher C. Giza, MD (RES ’94, FEL ’96, ’00), and his team of experts in the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA to advance the understanding of the neurobiology of sports-related concussion, using the latest techniques in brain imaging, molecular biology and neuro-engineering. Their comprehension of the connection between concussions and long-term brain disease has enabled the team to devise innovative new treatments for those with concussion and promote safe sports participation for both the professional and nonprofessional athlete.

Over the past five years, the UCLA Steve Tisch BrainSPORT Program has brought public attention to the detrimental neurological effects of sports concussions. From President Obama’s Healthy Kids and Safe Sports Concussion Summit in 2014 to the roll-out of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)-United States Department of Defense (DoD) Concussion Assessment Research and Education (CARE) Grand Alliance project with all UCLA varsity sports, the team’s groundbreaking success was jump-started by Tisch’s crucial program funding. In addition, the multiple community partnerships that have been formed have helped the UCLA Steve Tisch BrainSPORT Program make significant progress in clinical outreach and research, define best practices, make contact sports safer and meet the demand for care that includes treatment of children, athletes and veterans. The UCLA Steve Tisch BrainSPORT Program continues to be the most advanced diagnostic and treatment program for sports concussion and brain health in the country.

Outreach in Armenia

BrainSPORT associate director and neuropsychology faculty member Talin Babikian, PhD (left), collaborated with colleagues in Armenia as a visiting professor at the Yerevan State Medical University. Through two visits, she lectured to groups of clinicians and medical students and met in smaller groups with local health care providers to address various clinical and treatment issues related to head injuries and concussions in youth.
The UCLA Steve Tisch BrainSPORT Program has partnered with more than 40 diverse organizations to expand this important work including:

**Founding member of the Four Corners Youth Consortium**, a national collaborative focused on pediatric concussions and safe sports participation in response to the Institute of Medicine’s call to action to better understand sports concussion in children and adolescents. More than 1,000 children are enrolled in this project that was started with seed funding from the UCLA Steve Tisch BrainSPORT Program.

**Member of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)** - United States Department of Defense (DoD) Concussion Assessment Research and Education (CARE) Grand Alliance project. This is the largest prospective sports concussion study ever undertaken and includes collegiate athletes and military service academy cadets. UCLA is one of four Advanced Research Core sites that use impact sensors, blood biomarkers and advanced brain imaging to gain a better understanding of the nature of concussive injury and recovery. The goal is to ultimately enhance the safety and health of student athletes, service members, youth sports participants and the broader public.

**Through UCLA Health Operation Mend**, a member of Warrior Care Network, a Wounded Warrior Project partnership that provides veterans living with post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury and related conditions with a path to long-term wellness.

**Partnerships with professional leagues and national/international sporting organizations:**

- National Basketball Association
- American Youth Soccer Organization
- National Hockey League; National Hockey League Players’ Association
- World Boxing Council
- Major League Soccer; U.S. Soccer Federation
- U.S.A. Swimming
- National Football League Neurological Care Program
- Concussion in Sport Group (Olympics, Fédération Equestre Internationale, FIFA, International Ice Hockey Federation, World Rugby)

**Community partnerships:**

- L.A. Lakers
- South Bay Lakers
- L.A. Dodgers
- L.A.U.S.D. + 5 additional area schools
A new generation of entrepreneurial and innovative donors is stepping forward to carry UCLA Health’s rich tradition of philanthropy into the future.

UCLA recently celebrated its centennial and again was named the No. 1 public university in the United States by *U.S. News & World Report*. Such milestones, however, do not acknowledge that UCLA has achieved such distinction in such a relatively short time when compared to other premier research universities here and elsewhere in the world. Likewise, a new generation of philanthropic leaders is emerging whose innovative approach to entrepreneurship and giving breaks with the traditions of the past. Sean Parker, Casey Wasserman and Eric Esrailian, MD (FEL ’06), MPH, are among them. Although they are young, Parker, founder of the Parker Institute for Cancer Immunotherapy, founding president of Facebook and co-founder of the music-sharing service Napster, and Wasserman, a sports marketing and talent entrepreneur and chair of LA28, which will bring the Olympics back to Los Angeles in 2028, have long histories of engagement with UCLA Health. Dr. Esrailian, chief of the UCLA Vatche and Tamar Manoukian Division of Digestive Diseases and The Lincy Foundation Chair in Clinical Gastroenterology, and a philanthropist in his own right who has contributed to and been instrumental in raising leadership gifts as part of the Centennial Campaign for UCLA, brought his friends Parker and Wasserman together to talk about the impact of philanthropy on the future of medicine and science, their passion for giving and commitment to making a difference. They spoke with Judy Fortin, executive director of communications for UCLA Health.

**Dr. Esrailian, tell me about your friendship with Mr. Parker and Mr. Wasserman.**

**Dr. Eric Esrailian:** In my life, I’ve been fortunate to have dear friends who care about our community and are committed to making a difference. Casey and I met through mutual friends and have worked together on numerous efforts, including the Motion Picture & Television Fund, and he also asked me to join the committee to bring the Olympics to Los Angeles in 2028. Sean and I also had a lot of friends in common. He asked me to join the board of the Parker Institute for Cancer Immunotherapy, founding president of Facebook and co-founder of the music-sharing service Napster, and Wasserman, a sports marketing and talent entrepreneur and chair of LA28, which will bring the Olympics back to Los Angeles, have long histories of engagement with UCLA Health. Dr. Esrailian, chief of the UCLA Vatche and Tamar Manoukian Division of Digestive Diseases and The Lincy Foundation Chair in Clinical Gastroenterology, and a philanthropist in his own right who has contributed to and been instrumental in raising leadership gifts as part of the Centennial Campaign for UCLA, brought his friends Parker and Wasserman together to talk about the impact of philanthropy on the future of medicine and science, their passion for giving and commitment to making a difference. They spoke with Judy Fortin, executive director of communications for UCLA Health.

**Mr. Parker, how did you first become interested in immunotherapy and immunology, and how did it become such a significant philanthropic priority for you?**

**Sean Parker:** It started with autoimmune issues like asthma and allergies that run in my family. That piqued my interest in the immune system,
Over time, it became clear to me that we needed to go further, to do something that was truly multisite. The Parker Institute for Cancer Immunotherapy emerged from that.

Mr. Wasserman, your turn. How did you become involved with UCLA?

Casey Wasserman: My family’s relationship with UCLA goes back to my grandfather Lew Wasserman, who was on the board of the Jules Stein Eye Institute. The institute was established by Jules Stein, who was an ophthalmologist and the founder of MCA, which my grandfather ran for 65 years, and it was a part of my life growing up. I attended
“The beauty of people giving what they can to help others is something that touches me deeply. ... During this pandemic, so many people have rallied to help the hospital, when they realized that the frontline workers potentially didn’t have enough resources to protect themselves as they cared for patients. So many people have called, emailed, texted to ask, ‘What can I do?’”

UCLA, and after I graduated, I took a seat on the board of the institute. Our family’s connection with the university goes back long before I was born, and hopefully it will continue long after I’m gone.

How do you measure success?

Dr. Esrailian: It is important to see a tangible impact from whatever it is one does. As a physician and administrator at UCLA, I know the scientists who are being funded by Sean’s support for immuno-oncology, and I can see the impact and how his support has enabled them to do great things and save lives. Casey mentioned his family’s history, and there is the Edie & Lew Wasserman Building that opened in 2014 and is the home of the UCLA Institute of Urologic Oncology as well as the Stein Eye Institute and the UCLA Global Neurosurgery Center. And for me, as a faculty member who works across many different areas on campus, I experience what it means to come up with an idea, fund it and then work with experts to implement those ideas to make a difference.

Parker: Gauging the actual impact of philanthropy can be very difficult because, unlike the for-profit world where you have very tangible measurability — making money, expanding the size of your company — that just doesn’t exist as directly in philanthropy. With the Parker Institute, our focus is not just on funding basic science, but also on playing a role to take that basic science and create companies or license technology, to see it all the way from bench to bedside to, hopefully, marketing a drug that will save lives. We’ve tried to create a model where our incentives as donors and our incentives as investors and the incentives of the pharmaceutical and biotech industry are closely aligned, and we have a very tight loop between the biotech-commercialization world and the research-and-development world, so we can double down on things that are working.

Is it more difficult to keep up the momentum during this time, with the pandemic and people isolating themselves from others?

Wasserman: COVID or the social-justice movement that we have seen over the past several months are things that I think move everybody pretty universally and spur people to act and be philanthropic. I don’t think the challenge is motivating people to give during difficult times; the challenge is making sure that money is used well and effectively to achieve what it is you are trying to achieve. The most important thing during a time like this is — whether you are giving time, money or other resources — to do it in a way that makes a difference. That’s the challenge. That is where communication and being able to leverage your network are really important to get the most benefit from shared ideas and shared resources.

Dr. Esrailian: The beauty of people giving what they can to help others is something that touches me deeply. Giving money is important to support the work that goes on here — I know that on a very personal level as a result of generous gifts such as the one made by the Melvin and Bren Simon Charitable Foundation to establish the Melvin and Bren Simon Digestive Diseases Center at UCLA — but it is not just about money. During this pandemic, so many people have rallied to help the hospital, when they realized that the frontline workers potentially didn’t have enough resources to protect themselves as they cared for patients. So many people have called, emailed, texted to ask, “What can I do?” These are not all people who have tremendous means; they are people who just want to help. As a wise friend, Vatche Manoukian, who, with his wife Tamar, was a significant donor during the Centennial Campaign, told me, “If you have money, give money; if you have time, give time; and if you have both, give both.”
With so much going on in your lives, how do you prioritize?

Wasserman: Obviously, there’s only so much time in the day, and everyone gets only so many days in his or her life, so you better make sure that the time you have is spent on things you care deeply about. I’m very passionate about what I do. The chance to lead the movement to bring the Olympics back to Los Angeles has been a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. And I love UCLA. If you are giving your time to the things you’re really passionate about, you can always make it work.

What makes you optimistic for the future?

Parker: Oh, man, it’s a tough year.

Dr. Esrailian: Be optimistic, Sean.

Parker: We live in a perilous time. But I think a reason to be optimistic is how quickly the pace of innovation is accelerating. It’s not just that we’re keeping up with innovation; it’s that the rate of innovation itself — how fast we make discoveries — is increasing. I think we have seen with COVID-19 that the science has progressed incredibly fast, and I think that, ultimately, we will emerge from this pandemic with an arsenal of weapons that will work against a variety of different viruses. With innovation and progress, I believe we are on the cusp of a series of revolutions in medicine that will enable people to live longer, happier, healthier and more productive lives.

Wasserman: You have to believe in the power of human beings and that they are generally good and that they strive to do good things. I believe that in my heart. It’s sometimes hard to see through the madness of the days we’re living in, but it probably will only make us appreciate the good more, and I look forward to each of those days.

Dr. Esrailian: I wholeheartedly agree with both of my friends. I think the future of science has never been brighter. It’s really encouraging to me. The pandemic, as Sean said, has really accelerated a lot of work, and particularly collaboration, breaking down barriers to facilitate discovery and innovation. And beyond health care and medicine, I’m an optimist, for sure. I think we’re all UCLA optimists here. I believe that we are living in a time when we see that people can make a difference when they work with each other toward a common cause. UCLA is entering its second century, and being a part of this place — at this time — is inspiring. I love being around students, faculty, volunteers and friends like Casey and Sean who are all pulling in the same direction. I’m excited for the future, and I know the second century is going to be better than the first.

“You have to believe in the power of human beings and that they are generally good and that they strive to do good things. I believe that in my heart.”
$2 Billion Total Gift/Pledges

53,808 Overall Donors

37,236 First-time Donors

107,216 Gifts in Total

$170 Million in Student Support

$1.2 Billion Pre-Campaign (2012)

$2.1 Billion End of Campaign (2019)

$900 Million in Growth

68 New endowed chairs funded and committed

13 Buildings, Centers and Plazas

17 Programs, Directorships and Divisions
The numbers are trending in the right direction: Philanthropy to UCLA Health and the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA during the Centennial Campaign for UCLA was stellar, resulting in increased student and faculty support; programs, directorships and divisions; an astounding number of first-time donations; an endowment and research rankings that more than doubled — and UCLA Health is still #1 in California and Los Angeles.

During the Centennial Campaign for UCLA, Shirley and Ralph Shapiro, along with their children Peter and Alison, supported an impressive breadth of areas in the health sciences, including medicine, dentistry, nursing and public health. Shirley and Ralph met at UCLA, formed their partnership here and have been committed to the university ever since. The Shapiro Family Charitable Foundation generously gave more than 230 health-focused gifts benefiting more than 30 departments during the campaign. Their philanthropy included 13 endowed chairs, six of which are within the health sciences.

The Shapiro Family Charitable Foundation’s encompassing approach to philanthropy is simple: “Contributing to different areas in research and education means that more faculty and students have the opportunity to make a difference in the world and change lives,” says Ralph Shapiro.

“Caring for others through our philanthropy has always been important to our family,” adds Shirley Shapiro. “What we do for UCLA brings us great pleasure and is our way of saying thank you to the university that made it all possible.”
The David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA is shaping a new generation of clinicians and researchers through interdisciplinary training that embeds them in the wider community, where real-world experiences encourage students to confront systemic challenges and foster collaborative solutions. Partnering with philanthropists such as David Geffen and Maxine and Eugene Rosenfeld enables the school to provide students with the best possible educational resources, including scholarship support and state-of-the-art training facilities. These outstanding educational opportunities attract applicants from all over the world, resulting in one of the most competitive acceptance rates among medical schools in the country.

“Roughly one-in-four aspiring medical students applies to UCLA,” says Clarence Braddock III, MD, MPH, vice dean for education of the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA and Maxine and Eugene Rosenfeld Endowed Chair in Medical Education. “It’s a phenomenally talented pool of applicants. From curing cancer, to joining labs at the forefront of biomedical discovery, to confronting injustice and inequity in health care delivery, today’s students have big ambitions to have an impact on the future of medicine. These are the things we want them to be thinking about, and scholarships such as the David Geffen Medical Scholarships make that possible.” In addition to robust scholarship support, top candidates are drawn to the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA thanks to its unparalleled training opportunities, including access to leading-edge surgical simulation technologies.

Donors to UCLA medical education are not only investing in the next generation of outstanding physician-scientists; ultimately, their generosity also benefits the countless patients who receive exceptional care from the health care leaders of tomorrow.
Entertainment executive and philanthropist David Geffen has shaped the landscape of the arts, education and medicine in profound ways. His landmark investments in the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA have been particularly transformational and include an unrestricted gift to the school in 2002, after which it was named in his honor, and a gift establishing the David Geffen Medical Scholarships in 2012. To date, the merit-based scholarships have covered the entire cost of education and living expenses for 314 UCLA medical students. In 2019, during the final year of the Centennial Campaign for UCLA, Geffen and the David Geffen Foundation made an additional reinvestment in the scholarships, enabling even more students to benefit. In total, 414 students are expected to receive awards by 2023.

According to the Association of American Medical Colleges, graduating medical students carry an average debt of $200,000. This tremendous burden can hinder new doctors’ efforts to pursue their passions and work in the communities that most need their services.

“The cost of a world-class medical education should not deter our future innovators, doctors and scientists from the path they hope to pursue,” Geffen said in 2012, after establishing the scholarships at UCLA. “We need the students at this world-class institution to be driven by determination and the desire to do their best work and not by the fear of crushing debt. I hope in doing this that others will be inspired to do the same.” Geffen received The UCLA Medal in 2014.

Geffen’s investments have shifted the paradigm for medical education by freeing students from the tethers of debt, empowering new physicians and researchers to perform pioneering work and assist under-resourced communities. As he hoped, Geffen’s generosity has inspired other universities and their supporters to provide significant or full-tuition medical scholarships. However, the David Geffen Medical Scholarships remain the most inclusive and farsighted award of this type, covering not only tuition, but also providing students with a stipend for room and board, books and supplies. This comprehensive support allows recipients to embrace their work throughout Los Angeles, a city that provides rich opportunities to care for diverse patient populations in numerous health care settings.

“I have seen how the David Geffen Medical Scholarships motivate recipients to push medicine forward,” says Kelsey C. Martin, MD, PhD, dean of the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA and Gerald S. Levey, MD, Endowed Chair. “David Geffen’s philanthropy is enabling them to pursue their diverse passions in fields such as global health, women’s health, infectious diseases and primary care without feeling pressure to take the most straightforward or lucrative path. The scholarships often give students the flexibility to complete additional training or conduct pioneering research, making them better physicians, scientists and advocates for their patients.”

There currently are 87 David Geffen Medical Scholarships graduates, some being close to finishing their residencies and entering into medical practice. Recipients of the David Geffen Medical Scholarships already are reinvesting the generous gift they have been given by spending their time and resources helping others. David Geffen Medical Scholarships recipient Mariama Runcie, MD ’19, made time during medical school to volunteer for HEAL Trafficking, helping the organization provide hospitals with anti-human-trafficking toolkits to protect vulnerable patients. She also collaborated with community health organizations in South Los Angeles to provide care for unhoused patients and other under-resourced populations as part of her training with the
Charles R. Drew/UCLA Medical Education Program. In addition, Dr. Runcie tutored and mentored incoming medical students.

“It’s beautiful to help others learn and to try to shape the medical community into people that you would want serving your family, friends and yourself in the future,” Dr. Runcie says of her volunteer work. “By providing support to [medical students] early on, it can inspire them to give back throughout their careers. [The scholarship] is a positive influence on the culture of medicine and on the field at large.”

Dr. Runcie currently is completing a Harvard-affiliated emergency medicine residency at Brigham and Women’s/Massachusetts General Hospital, on the frontline of the COVID-19 pandemic, and she credits her educational experience at UCLA for reinforcing her sense of resilience and compassion.

“I think the breadth of patients you see in Los Angeles makes you so much more informed about humanity,” she says. “That enables you to empathize, and it’s going to provide the greatest depth of knowledge as well.”

The reverberations of David Geffen’s generosity will continue to be felt by recipients of the scholarship, their patients and the medical community far into the future. Geffen’s partnership has enabled the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA to remain at the leading edge and has encouraged students to embrace multidisciplinary educational opportunities that capitalize on UCLA’s outstanding resources in myriad fields of study. Through David Geffen’s support, UCLA faculty and medical students can delve ever deeper into the unknown and revolutionize the medical sciences year after year.
Maxine and Eugene Rosenfeld met, fell in love and married in Los Angeles in the mid-1950s — the optimistic era of the ’57 Chevy and completion of the San Bernardino and Santa Ana freeways. A fantastical theme park called Disneyland had recently opened.

Eugene Rosenfeld, who everyone calls Gene, grew up in East Los Angeles, commuted to UCLA, which he attended on a scholarship, and graduated with a business degree — the first college graduate in his family. He was beginning a stint in the Army, and Maxine left her secretarial employment at Hughes Aircraft Company to marry and join him in 1956. Together, they imagined that anything was possible in booming Southern California.

Now, after years spent building a family, which includes two sons and five grandchildren, the Rosenfeld Library at the UCLA Anderson School of Management, a history of service that includes Rosenfeld’s leadership on the UCLA Anderson Board of Visitors, and a business, they still relish that feeling of wonder that comes from imagining all of life’s promise.

Rosenfeld credits his college education with showing him the possibilities of the future. “Attending UCLA made me a different person,” he says. After being raised by working-class Russian immigrants “in a world that seemed narrow, UCLA opened my mind to think in a wider fashion and to take in different concepts.”

After building a successful real estate development and investment business, the couple have demonstrated their appreciation for Rosenfeld’s alma mater over the past 50 years through generous and sustained support, including a commitment to renovate and expand the health sciences’ Learning Resource Center, which has been renamed Eugene & Maxine Rosenfeld Hall. In addition to housing the UCLA Simulation Center — known for its lifelike interactive manikins that help train the physicians of the future — Rosenfeld Hall will be the new home for the Center for Advanced Surgical and Interventional Technology and a state-of-the-art space for training medical students in advanced patient care. “When you put engineering and medicine together, we expect the results will be far-ranging,” Rosenfeld says.

Indeed, Rosenfeld Hall will be one of the few places in the nation to unite mock clinical experiences, surgical simulation and interprofessional hospital team training. It was the manikins, or “virtual patients,” that first triggered the Rosenfelds’ fascination with high-tech medical education. In 2005, Maxine Rosenfeld was invited to join the Board of Visitors for the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA and quickly became intrigued by new training advances that few laypeople knew about. “Doctors came to speak to us, and their work seemed so cutting-edge,” she says. She was particularly captivated by a presentation about a full-sized manikin that simulates a patient to better prepare students before they perform procedures on actual people. Buoyed by her enthusiasm, the couple decided they wanted to do something meaningful for the medical school. Thus began their support of the UCLA Simulation Center.

Over time, they also have learned how using virtual patients can help health care professionals work more collaboratively, understand rare conditions and, most recently, hone their skills without risk of infection from COVID-19 or other contagions. What first might seem like science fiction, Rosenfeld says, “is actually very practical.”

The couple continues to imagine big. As part of their ongoing dedication to the university, the Rosenfelds have contributed to numerous scholarships for students with disabilities and those in need of financial assistance. Beginning in the early 1980s, the Rosenfelds began giving support for undergraduate scholarships and have since made possible more than 140 awards. Rosenfeld — who in 2010 received The UCLA Medal — says he enjoys telling recipients that their college experience can “open up your world and give you the opportunity to be great at things you have never dreamed of.”

Testament to Imagination

By Joan Voight • Illustration by Jenny Kroik
Brain Health Initiatives

In 2009, investor and philanthropist Richard E. Rainwater was diagnosed with progressive supranuclear palsy (PSP), the neurodegenerative disease that would eventually take his life. That same year, the Rainwater Charitable Foundation established the Tau Consortium and began providing funding to accelerate translational research on neurodegenerative diseases involving the protein tau, including PSP and Alzheimer’s disease. Although the likelihood of discovering a cure for PSP during his lifetime was small, Rainwater was committed to laying the groundwork for better treatments for future generations through his philanthropy.

Rainwater passed away in 2015, but his legacy endures through the Rainwater Charitable Foundation and the Tau Consortium, which continue to foster remarkable discoveries at UCLA and other leading research institutions. In 2018, support from the Rainwater Charitable Foundation enabled a UCLA-led research team to identify genetic processes involved in the neurodegeneration that occurs in dementia — an important step on the path toward developing therapies that could slow or halt the course of the disease. This is just one of several recent investments from UCLA donors aimed at furthering brain health and providing new treatments for conditions such as Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s diseases.

According to S. Thomas Carmichael, MD (FEL ’01), PhD, chair of the UCLA Department of Neurology and Frances Stark Chair in Neurology, “Philanthropy has two key roles in driving innovation in biomedical research. First, it provides the resources to take bold new directions — the kind of action that can really move a field of research forward. Second, philanthropy establishes a partnership among the faculty working on the disease and the donor who is making the gift. This partnership brings an energy and personal engagement among all the people involved that are palpable and exciting.”

In the following pages, a few of these donor partners share their stories and vision for a world in which today’s devastating conditions are well-understood, curable and even preventable.
Laurie and Steven Gordon have a clear-eyed, passionate focus when it comes to their philanthropy. The couple, who both have been deeply affected by family loss due to brain illness, have targeted their resources on what they dub “revenge research.”

“We like to say we’re here to get even with these brain diseases,” says Steven Gordon, whose father died from Parkinson’s disease. “My father suffered for such a long period of time. It’s about finding purpose in defeat; my father’s illness gave me purpose.”

Laurie Gordon, who lost her 25-year-old son to suicide after his long battle with depression and anxiety, says: “The grief and tragedy of losing a child — there are no words. It’s about turning pain into passion; that’s where it began for me, really.”

The Gordons’ philanthropy is fueled by compassion and a desire to help as many other families as they can who are going through similar journeys until proven prevention methods, better treatments or cures arrive. And the couple are firm believers that improvements will be found and that the scientists at UCLA will play a central role in discovering those advances.

To accelerate that work, the Gordons have been generous donors to support UCLA’s research into Parkinson’s disease and mental illness. Steven Gordon, who attended UCLA in the late 1960s, is chairman and principal owner of Domino Realty, a real estate holding company and venture firm. Laurie Gordon is a former attorney for United Artists Communications and former vice president of Warner Bros. International Theatres.

In 2018, during the Centennial Campaign for UCLA, a gift from the Steven Gordon Family Foundation established the UCLA Laurie and Steven Gordon Commitment to Cure Parkinson’s Disease. The initiative furthers research into the disorder, which affects more than 10 million people worldwide. The gift also endowed five faculty chairs in areas related to Parkinson’s and financed a new lab with positron emission tomography and magnetic resonance imaging technology. In recognition of this contribution, the Neuroscience Research Building was renamed the UCLA Laurie and Steven C. Gordon Neuroscience Research Building.

“Parkinson’s is an illness that has had very little advancement over the years,” says Steven Gordon, who has served as a member of the executive committee of the Centennial Campaign for UCLA, and on boards for Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center, UCLA Health and the UCLA Ziman Center for Real Estate. “So many people have experienced Parkinson’s, in themselves or their families. We want people to get better — for researchers to find something that will make their lives better.”

Laurie Gordon chairs the UCLA Stewart and Lynda Resnick Neuropsychiatric Hospital Board of Advisors and is a member of the UCLA Depression Grand Challenge Leadership Council, the UCLA Operation Mend Advisory Board and the UCLA Health International Services Advisory Board, and she is a UCLA Health Innovation Advisor. In 2014, she established the Max Gray Fund for Treatment of Mood Disorders at the Jane and Terry Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior at UCLA in memory of her son Max Gray.

After Max’s death in 2013, Laurie Gordon says she consulted many resources, including therapists and her rabbi. But it wasn’t until she talked with Thomas B. Strouse, MD (RES ’91), medical director of the Stewart and Lynda Resnick Neuropsychiatric Hospital at UCLA and Maddie Katz Endowed Chair in Palliative Care Research and Education, that she found her footing. “Tom had a practical approach,” she recalls. “He said, ‘Come in and work with us and see what you can do to help.’ I talked with lots of parents and began to realize that it’s really painful for so many people and that one’s personal experience can sometimes help others through advice and hope. I know my son would be very proud of the work we’re doing.”

The Max Gray Fund has enabled the expansion of the mood-disorders clinics to recruit and train 15 psychiatry and postdoctoral psychology fellows, increasing their capacity to diagnose and treat patients and conduct innovative research in mood disorders.

Laurie Gordon continues to be a champion for the elimination of the stigma associated with mental illness and to make sure that high-quality mental health services are more broadly available. She also remains actively involved in helping others on a personal level, and she shared her experience in a 2019 TEDxUCLASalon talk, titled “Turning Your Pain into Purpose.”

The Gordons also hope to inspire other donors to become involved, at whatever level they can, with causes that move them. “We have a pool of genius that just needs to be financed to do their work,” Steven Gordon says.

“Tomorrow you could wake up and find something has been discovered that we weren’t expecting,” he says. “UCLA is filled with the kind of people who will find the cure or who will train the people who will find the cure.”
Wendy and Leonard Goldberg’s daughter was just 8 years old when the headaches first began. As the little girl endured episodes of crushing pain accompanied by a range of visual disturbances, two things quickly became clear: These were no ordinary headaches, and none of the many doctors whom the family visited could offer any relief. Even the diagnosis of migraine was difficult to come by.

“She was very stoic each time she had a migraine,” Wendy Goldberg said of her daughter Amanda, now an adult with children of her own. “She would say, ‘Mommy, I don’t feel good,’ and she would have such terrible pain and the aura, and we just felt helpless.”

The search for an effective treatment took Goldberg, a bestselling author and marketing consultant, and her late husband Leonard Goldberg, an award-winning film and television producer who had served as head of programming for ABC and president of 20th Century Fox, to New York, San Francisco and Los Angeles. It wasn’t until they came to UCLA in 2011 and met Andrew C. Charles, MD ’86 (RES ’90, FEL ’92), professor of neurology in the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA and the Meyer and Renee Luskin Chair in Migraine and Headache Studies, that they knew they had found the expertise they had sought for so long.

“He knew more and understood more about migraine than anyone we had met before,” Goldberg says. “He told us that what he and his team at UCLA do is not only treat people with migraine, but also do research.”

The funding gives UCLA scientists the flexibility to investigate the most innovative avenues and allows them to change course if new, exciting therapies emerge, enabling them to more quickly bring treatments from the bench to the bedside. News of the Goldbergs’ gift caught the attention of many experts in the field who have reached out to UCLA to learn more about new treatment modalities that are not available elsewhere.

Migraine is among the most common of all medical disorders, with more than 40 million sufferers in the United States and hundreds of millions worldwide. Far from being just a severe headache, it is a complex collection of neurological symptoms and is closely linked to other serious disorders, including stroke. In addition to debilitating pain, migraine sufferers experience a range of symptoms that include nausea; dizziness; neck pain; sensitivity to light, smell or sound; visual disturbances; sensory hallucinations; mental confusion; depression; difficulty speaking; and acute exhaustion. And despite centuries of research, the causes of the condition remain as much a mystery as an effective cure.

Leonard and I chose to give to UCLA because we are great admirers of UCLA and its work and because of Dr. Charles,” Goldberg says. “He’s a man of his word and is just so smart about this terrible condition. Migraine has always been treated as an orphan disease, and now, through UCLA and Dr. Charles and our program, it’s getting the attention it has always deserved. The work being done here is beyond my expectations.”

The Goldbergs’ visionary Centennial Campaign contribution named and endowed the UCLA Goldberg Migraine Program, of which Dr. Charles is director. “It’s the biggest-ever private gift for migraine research and is a remarkable act of generosity,” Dr. Charles says. “When it comes to the migraine field, there has been very little funding, and a gift like theirs makes an enormous difference.”

The work being done here is beyond my expectations.”

To read more about Dr. Andrew C. Charles’s work, go to: uclahealth.org/u-magazine/pain-like-no-other
When James (Jim) L. Easton received The UCLA Medal in 2014, the award recognized not only his extraordinary philanthropy, but also the role of his strategic guidance to accelerate crucial medical research.

Easton, a global business leader who, over a career spanning more than five decades, became a top manufacturer of athletic equipment, served as vice president of the International Olympic Committee, president of the World Archery Federation and, during the 1984 Olympics, as commissioner of archery, head of technology and mayor of the Olympic Village at UCLA. He has made seminal contributions to UCLA in the areas of athletics, management, technology and medicine.

His cross-campus commitment during the Centennial Campaign for UCLA established interdisciplinary research and educational programs that will benefit the departments of neurology and neurosurgery in the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, the UCLA Samueli School of Engineering, UCLA Anderson School of Management and UCLA Athletics. The health sciences portion of his gift established the Easton Labs for Neurodegeneration in the Department of Neurology and the Easton Clinic for Brain Health, the Easton Labs for Brain Health Research and the Easton Brain Health Fellows in the Department of Neurosurgery.

Beyond the financial resources it provides, Easton's gift is especially notable for the strategic vision that will enable partnerships among faculty from disparate fields across the UCLA campus, providing new energy and perspectives to the pursuit of common goals.

“Jim believes that because UCLA has such vast expertise in so many areas, it makes sense to leverage that strength by bringing faculty together to tackle big issues — whether it is collaborations involving faculty with different types of expertise or others who are looking at the same problem from different angles,” says Phyllis Easton, who helped facilitate the landmark gift.

Phyllis Easton traces her husband’s interest in cross-campus collaboration to his life experience. Easton grew up helping his parents with the family archery business, which flourished with his father’s creative application of leading-edge technology that led to the manufacture of aluminum arrows. He was poised to take a leadership role in the company after graduating from UCLA with a degree in engineering. Although he worried that he lacked sufficient business expertise, his drive for excellence led the company to manufacture other products — aluminum ski poles, baseball bats, hockey sticks and other sports equipment. One of the people he turned to for advice was his friend John E. Anderson, the successful businessman whose philanthropic support would lead to the naming of the UCLA Anderson School of Management in 1987. As Easton developed Easton Sports — taking the business international and moving it into realms beyond sports — he continued to have an attachment to the Anderson School, serving on its Board of Advisors. In 2015, a grant from Easton established the UCLA Easton Technology Management Center to connect technology experts across campus with the Anderson School’s faculty and student experts.

Under the guidance of Larry Carlson — a UCLA engineering faculty member and associate director of the Easton Technology Management Center, who previously had spent 20 years at Easton Sports as vice president for research and development — the UCLA Easton Labs for Engineering Innovation enabled engineering faculty to begin working with UCLA faculty in neurosurgery on the development of special helmets and other strategies to prevent traumatic brain injuries in young athletes — an issue of particular importance to Easton.

Cross-campus collaboration, via the Easton Labs, laid the foundation for the Easton Centennial Campaign gift to health sciences to fund programs in the departments of neurology and neurosurgery that examine the mechanisms and treatments for neurodegenerative diseases and further the science of memory loss, study the pathology of brain injury and disease and focus on the prevention and diagnosis of traumatic brain injury in order to develop new therapies and prevention strategies.

Always a supporter of UCLA Athletics, another part of the Easton Centennial Campaign gift was to women’s softball and the Easton Stadium. Easton’s son, Greg Easton, a UCLA Anderson graduate, carries on the family tradition and enthusiasm at Easton and Hoyt, the arrow and bow companies in Salt Lake City.

“Jim has always been motivated to provide support for anything he feels passionately about,” Phyllis Easton says. “He graduated from UCLA while working full time, and his drive for excellence launched him on a path to great success. It’s important for him to give back in ways that bring these great minds together to make advances that improve people’s lives.”
“Now more than ever, play is important. Play is normal. Play is safe. Play is how children communicate. Let’s make sure we are listening.”

— Kelli Carroll, MS, CCLS

Director, Chase Child Life and Expressive Arts Therapies
POWER

PLAY
Thanks to **Mattel's** vital partnership, **UCLA Mattel Children’s Hospital** serves pediatric patients and families with sophisticated, compassionate care in an environment that is both welcoming and healing.
“The COVID-19 pandemic is having an enormous impact on our day-to-day lives, causing an increase of stress, anxiety and fear. Children can sense that, and while they may not be able to share their feelings through traditional forms of communication, play can serve as that outlet.”

— Kelli Carroll
Fighting for a Cure for Cancer

Tremendous progress has been made over the past quarter-century in reducing cancer fatalities in the United States, with a decline of 29 percent between 1991 and 2017, according to the American Cancer Society. Yet cancer remains the second leading cause of death in the U.S., behind heart disease. For people living with cancer and their families, the disease and its treatments have wide-ranging effects on physical, emotional and financial well-being. The American Cancer Society estimates that by the end of 2020, more than 1.8 million new cancer cases will have been diagnosed this year.

With so many affected by cancer, the fight against it is personal and takes on many forms, from survivors counseling people with current diagnoses, to runners raising funds to honor loved ones in charity races. The following pages contain stories of people who have lost parents, spouses and beloved uncles, yet turned their personal pain into extraordinary actions. In partnership with UCLA, they have dedicated their careers and philanthropy to eradicating cancer and improving the lives of those coping with the disease.
I remember it like it was yesterday. In the 1970s, my mom went to see our family physician for a routine exam, and he found a lump. She was sent to the various subspecialists to figure out what the lump was. She got a biopsy. And I remember her coming home and being devastated, crying almost uncontrollably, because the biopsy showed she had cancer. I was 16 years old, and I really didn’t understand what cancer was. I felt helpless. What could I do?

Back then, we had nothing like the resources we have now to treat cancer. There weren’t immunotherapies or targeted therapies. There were only highly toxic treatments and disfiguring surgeries to extend your life, so that was what you had to do to try to survive.

Thankfully, my mother’s disease went into remission. She had been examined yearly since, and at her 10-year “you’re cancer-free” checkup, they found the cancer had recurred. Again, she was devastated. The therapies they gave following her initial diagnosis, and from her 10-year checkup on, were so toxic that she wondered if it was something that was worth going through. Not only did they make her nauseous, but she again lost her hair, she felt weak, and it took her days to recover after each chemotherapy session.

My mom lived with her cancer for 20 years before she died. This year will be the 25th anniversary of her passing. Watching my mom suffer during her cancer treatments and experiencing the stress her diagnosis brought to my family, inspired me to dedicate my life to cancer research. Knowing what I wanted to do for my career was one thing; understanding how my work could progress was a different journey.

As I have undertaken my own research and, moreover, during my tenure as director of the UCLA Jonsson Comprehensive Cancer Center, I have come to appreciate the pivotal role that philanthropy plays in accelerating research. Some of the greatest breakthroughs in cancer research at UCLA were initially funded by grateful patients or devoted family members. Just as my career was inspired by my mom, many of our donors are inspired by their devotion to family as well. The following pages contain some of their stories.

I think about my mom every day. I can still hear her voice. When I was in trouble, she would call me Michael. When I was on her good side, she would say, “Hey Butch, what’s going on?” And I know how proud she would be if I could show her the progress we’ve made, and will continue to make, so patients don’t have to suffer like she did.

Dr. Michael Teitell is director of the UCLA Jonsson Comprehensive Cancer Center, president of the UCLA Jonsson Cancer Center Foundation and Lya and Harrison Latta Endowed Chair in Pathology.
Top: Dr. Michael Teitell and his mother Phyllis in 1991, celebrating his PhD in molecular immunology from the UCLA-Caltech Medical Scientist Training Program.

Bottom: Phyllis Teitell at age 47, 11 years after her initial diagnosis of breast cancer, dressed for her 30th high school reunion in Belle Harbor, New York.

Photos: Courtesy of Dr. Michael Teitell
BATTLING CANCER

AGI HIRSHBERG

CENTER FOR PANCREATIC DISEASES
In the competitive wholesale apparel business, Agi and Ronald Hirshberg would implement a new business idea and give it 18 months to bear fruit. If it wasn’t successful, they would pull the plug and move on. After Ronald died of pancreatic cancer in 1997 at age 54, Hirshberg focused that same determination on the effort to find a cure for the ravaging illness that took her husband’s life. “I had that business mentality,” Hirshberg recalls. “You begin, build inventory and sell it. I figured I’d give a little donation, and 18 months later there would be a cure for pancreatic cancer.”

However, the world of medical research is vastly different than that of apparel, and the time it takes to reach a breakthrough is measured in years, not months. Patience and resolve are necessary to sustain the effort. More than two decades later, a cure for pancreatic cancer is closer but still not in hand.

Hirshberg never thought of abandoning the fight. Her philanthropy established the UCLA Agi Hirshberg Center for Pancreatic Diseases, one of the nation’s leading centers focused on the disease, and she has funded scores of research projects through the Hirshberg Foundation for Pancreatic Cancer Research. “I am pleased and happy we’ve helped so many patients, but I don’t have the satisfaction of finishing the job just yet,” she says. “With my business mindset, I can’t take credit until the job is done. But I do feel that, within the next five years, we’ll have an early detection test for pancreatic cancer.”

Pancreatic cancer is among the most devastating cancer diagnoses. About 57,000 Americans are diagnosed with the disease — often at a late stage — each year. The five-year survival rate is only nine percent, although the survival outlook for people diagnosed today is improving.

Agi and Ronald Hirshberg were in the small town of Portsmouth, N.H., when he became ill and was diagnosed with the disease. The couple returned to their home in Los Angeles and sought care at UCLA. Ronald had an inoperable tumor and, despite the best efforts of his physicians, he survived just eight months.

“My relationship with the doctors who took care of him was perfection,” Hirshberg says. “Their kindness, their caring was unforgettable. I felt UCLA really treated him so beautifully. After he passed, I called UCLA and said I wanted to support the pancreatic cancer program. They said they didn’t have a pancreatic cancer program. I said you have one now.”

Hirshberg’s efforts have helped fuel tangible progress in improving the care of patients with pancreatic cancer. She was an early advocate of seed grants, money to fund high-risk, high-reward research projects needed to find new and creative ways to crack the mysteries surrounding the disease. That research has resulted in a much better understanding of the molecular processes that steer the disease, promising work on early detection and improved surgical and chemotherapeutic treatments.

In choosing to direct her philanthropy to UCLA, Hirshberg says she “picked the right partner.” The UCLA Agi Hirshberg Center for Pancreatic Diseases has set the highest bar for contemporary pancreatic cancer care. The center is home to an integrative-practice unit, a groundbreaking program that allows patients to receive an extensive evaluation and personalized treatment plan in one visit. “My determination never wavered,” she says. “What sustained me is that we kept going and improving. There were so many baby steps. I felt if we could not find an early detection test right this second, my next concern was the patient experience. Today, UCLA is one of the few integrative-practice units that provide the kind of services patients need, including the psychosocial portion that helps not only patients, but also caregivers.”

She says she is especially heartened by the efforts of top pancreatic cancer clinicians and researchers at UCLA and elsewhere who are collaborating to accelerate the pace of progress. And when it feels like things are still moving too slowly, she thinks about the annual LA Cancer Challenge, a run/walk held on the UCLA campus that benefits the Hirshberg Foundation for Pancreatic Cancer Research. The event reinvigorates her, Hirshberg says. “On that day, with all those people gathered who have the same wish as I do, I know our loved ones are up there watching,” she says. “Ronald and I were partners in life. We had pancreatic cancer together. We were fighting it together. Although he is gone, it has never occurred to me that I could stop.”

Don’t Give Up the Fight

By Shari Roan • Illustration by Jenny Kroik
For decades, creating opportunities for patients to positively connect their mind, body and spirit when navigating a cancer diagnosis has been a passion of Victoria Mann Simms, PhD, and her husband Ronald Simms. When Dr. Simms’s father Ted Mann, who founded the Mann Theatres chain, was diagnosed with lymphoma in the 1990s, she was troubled by how she perceived doctors interacting with him. “The internists and oncologists didn’t address his feelings or emotions,” she says. “They talked to him as if he were a disease.”

She discovered that this approach was not only detrimental to her father’s mood and outlook, but it also affected his physical health. With the background and knowledge she gained after completing a PhD degree in psychology, Dr. Simms took it upon herself to supplement his medical care with alternatives to raise her father’s spirits. “I had to search deep within myself to find those pathways along which I could help my father live each day with quality of life, dignity and, most of all, meaning.”

Over the next decade, her father was in the hospital for more than 300 days, and Dr. Simms brought in yoga teachers, spiritual leaders and other practitioners to help him heal. She focused on his diet and suggested strategies to help him cope with the anxiety that came with the illness. Although medical professionals at the time put little stock in such approaches, she says, “How the mind influences the body and the body affects the mind are significant. They both influence each other.”

Dr. Simms’s intensely personal journey led her “to recognize a genuine need in medicine for a model that concentrates on the interconnection between the emotional, physical and spiritual aspects of patients, their families and caregivers.” To meet that need, the Simmses embarked upon a lifetime journey to promote integrative medicine, an approach to health care that treats the patient as a whole person.

After her father’s death in 2001, Dr. Simms and her husband met with UCLA cancer care leadership to promote an integrative approach to cancer treatment. Soon after, they heard from John Glaspy, MD ’79 (RES ’82, FEL ’83), an oncologist and hematologist who shared their innovative approach and vision. “Dr. Glaspy understands patients,” Dr. Simms says. “How to talk to a patient, how to make somebody feel like they’re heard.” Dr. Glaspy, who also leads major cancer research initiatives at UCLA, now holds the Simms/Mann Family Foundation Chair in Integrative Oncology.

Their philanthropy propelled the evolution of the Simms/Mann-UCLA Center for Integrative Oncology, which provides psychosocial care to patients and families dealing with cancer. Recognizing that each person manages their diagnosis differently, the center offers a broad range of healing programming — provided predominantly free of charge — including individual and group therapy; support groups for partners, bereavement, and patients with breast cancer; nutritional guidance; spiritual care; and mind/body workshops in qigong, mindfulness, journal writing and art therapy. The center also educates the next generation of clinicians, under the leadership of center director Kauser Ahmed, PhD (FEL ’01), through an award-winning competitive psychosocial-oncology training program that was supported by Dr. Simms. Graduates of the training program go on to work at other cancer institutions across the country, making the center’s whole-patient integrated care the national model.

Helping ensure that all cancer patients receive this healing team care is a next chapter in the Simmses’ vision. Thanks to a major gift from the Simms/Mann Family Foundation in December, during the Centennial Campaign for UCLA, the center’s integrative services are now expanding to all UCLA Health hematology/oncology care clinics throughout Southern California, as far north as Santa Barbara, as far south as Laguna Hills, and east to Pasadena. With center clinicians embedded in the cancer care clinics, patients will benefit from truly integrated team care and have an even more supportive and beneficial healing experience.

The Simms/Mann Family Foundation’s generous support also is the lead gift in a $50 million campaign to endow the center, so future patients and families can continue to benefit from the empowering whole-patient care. “The fact that this is a sustainable partnership and will live on — that’s very exciting to us,” Dr. Simms says. “We provided a match component to inspire others to participate in this important campaign for the center.”
Even as she watched her strong father physically decline, Dr. Simms recalls she was gratified that he still was able to enjoy a quality of life and connection to his loved ones up to the end. In addition to both Simmses’ years of devoted care for her father, the couple’s interest in supporting care for patients facing cancer stems from Ronald Simms’s experience losing his mother to cancer when she was just 42. “That deeply affected my life then, and it still deeply affects my life now,” says Ronald Simms, a national real estate developer. “It’s essential that we help individuals and families navigate through the consuming intensity and stress of a cancer diagnosis. With the center, patients and loved ones are able to look beyond the disease, thanks to the empowering holistic care that provides emotional support and coping strategies. We have become even more aware of the need for the center’s work as the baby-boomer generation ages.”

Dr. Simms and her husband credit their parents for inspiring their commitments to philanthropy. “Our parents grew up during the Great Depression, but they were able to be successful, and it was very important to them to give back to the community and country that had given them so much,” Ronald Simms says. “That made it important to us, too.”

Two decades after Dr. Simms worked so hard to find innovative ways to help her father cope, the Simms/Mann Center is a national model in advancing health and wellness approaches to oncology. “Both professionals and patients increasingly recognize the interconnectedness of mind, body and spirit,” Dr. Simms says. “And seeing that motivates Ron and me to do even more. We’re also excited to have other philanthropists, with gifts at any level, join us in helping others optimize their wellness during the challenging life experience that is cancer.”
ALI JASSIM FAMILY CANCER RESEARCH
For as long as he can remember, Ali Jassim has felt compelled to give back. It’s a core value that was instilled in him at an early age by his mother Heshmet. “She is very principled,” Jassim says. “She always taught me that we’re all equal as humans, regardless of financial or social status. ‘We are all made of the same cloth,’ she would say. ‘And we have an obligation to lend a helping hand.’ Out of that, I learned that I must always look to help others in need.”

Jassim says he took his mother’s lessons to heart as a child growing up in Los Angeles and knowing a number of families going through hard times. “As a kid, I vowed that I would grow up to be able to help people and to create a more balanced world,” he says.

As Jassim built his own private equity firm and established himself as a successful international businessman, he never forgot his mother’s teachings, giving regularly to organizations and individuals in need. “For me, nothing is more gratifying than contributing to improving people’s lives,” he says.

Cancer research is high on his list of philanthropic causes. Jassim’s uncle — Heshmet’s brother — died from brain cancer when Jassim was a child, and Heshmet helped raise her brother’s children along with her own. “Cancer is an awful disease that affected my family when I was very young,” Jassim says. “As I got older, I came to realize how many more families are devastated by losing someone to cancer, and I knew this was a problem that had to be solved.”

One of the people close to Jassim who had been touched by the disease was his mother’s close friend Manizheh Yomtoubian, a nurse who had worked at Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center for nearly two decades and had lost her brother to cancer. At a family wedding, Yomtoubian told Jassim about her foundation to increase awareness of and education about cancer in the Persian community.

“We talked about the people we had lost, and then she brought up the great work that’s going on at the cancer research center at UCLA,” Jassim recalls. “Immediately, I said, ‘I want in. Let me know how I can make an impact.’”

It didn’t take long after that conversation for Jassim to fully commit. Drawing on his mother’s teachings, Jassim stepped forward to become one of the leading donors of the Centennial Campaign for UCLA with a gift in honor of his family to the UCLA Jonsson Comprehensive Cancer Center (JCCC). The contribution funded a suite of research laboratories — the Ali Jassim Family Cancer Research Suite — in the refurbished UCLA Center for the Health Sciences. It also established the UCLA Ali Jassim Family Cancer Research Program to support high-priority cancer research, as determined by JCCC’s director, Dr. Michael Teitell, MD ’93, PhD ’91, president of the UCLA Jonsson Cancer Center Foundation and Lya and Harrison Latta Endowed Chair in Pathology at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA. In addition, Jassim joined the JCCC Foundation Board of Directors, of which Yomtoubian also is a member.

While Jassim’s contribution will have a profound impact on cancer research for generations to come, he insists that it is the JCCC scientists who deserve the accolades. “They’re the true heroes,” Jassim says. “I’ve sat with many of them, listened to their stories and seen their passion — in some cases, working 20-hour days in pursuit of better treatments and cures. I talked to one researcher who, as a child, had lost both of his parents to cancer. I immediately thought of my family. We were both in tears. I was so moved by his determination to make a difference so that other people wouldn’t have to experience what he did. Meeting all of these dedicated and talented individuals makes me proud to be involved. They give me hope.”

Jassim encourages others to follow his lead. “I’m hoping I can inspire others to give as well. It doesn’t have to be millions,” he says. “It can be $100,000 or $10,000 or $1,000 or $10 — whatever someone can afford. If everyone gave what they could, imagine what we would be able to achieve.”

Cut from His Mother’s Cloth

By Dan Gordon • Illustration by Jenny Kroik
Doing Good for the Community Is Good for Business

By Roberta G. Wax • Illustration by Jenny Kroik

When Lynda and Stewart Resnick see a need, they mobilize. Whether it is building schools for the children of workers at the couple’s Wonderful Company facilities in the San Joaquin Valley or securing N95 respirators for UCLA Health professionals on the frontline of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Resnicks rally.

The Wonderful Company produces a variety of agricultural products that include pomegranates, pistachios and mandarin oranges on some 100,000 acres of land in the California Central Valley. “The reason we were blessed with success in business is so we could use our business acumen to give back in a meaningful way,” says Lynda Resnick. “We treat our philanthropy as a business.”

The Resnicks’ ongoing philanthropic commitment to UCLA is a testament to their confidence in the university and its leadership. They are longtime donors — the Stewart and Lynda Resnick Neuropsychiatric Hospital at UCLA bears their name — and their generosity has established several endowed chairs and supported multiple areas across the campus, including the education of young artists and a lead gift to help launch the capital campaign at UCLA’s Hammer Museum. The couple together received The UCLA Medal in 2002.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the Resnicks quickly came to the aid of UCLA Health workers. “We’ve given a lot to UCLA,” says Resnick, “so I called Becky (Mancuso-Winding, executive director of UCLA Health Strategic Community and Business Relations) and asked, ‘How can I help?’”

Personal protective equipment was an immediate need, and Resnick reached out to her business connections in China to secure 50,000 N95 respirator masks when they were almost impossible to get. “We couldn’t be happier to help,” she says. “These are the people who are doing the frontline work.”

The skills the couple have acquired over decades in business inform their philanthropy, Resnick says. “You can’t run a business without data, without understanding your sales, without knowing marketing and communication. We are communication-driven in everything that we do.”

The Resnicks use those same skills to track the impact of their philanthropy. Which students are doing well in Resnick-supported programs? Who needs help? What kind of help is required? Is the need for better internet access or is it for a nutritious breakfast? “You have to measure results so you know what is working and what isn’t and how to repeat your successes,” Resnick says.

An important part of their philanthropic success is squarely planted in the Central Valley, where some 5,000 Wonderful employees live. Resnick’s engagement with the Central Valley spans more than a decade and is focused on what she calls community building, which, among other things, incorporates everything from building schools and community centers to offering scholarships, family physical and emotional wellness services and food provisions.

“Our work starts where our employees live and work,” she says. “They are the frontline of our business. We help first in their community. We don’t just do education; we do community building, we promote health and wellness. That’s the way you build a community.

“The cultural and financial divide (in the Central Valley) is tragic,” Resnick adds. “We are trying to create a level playing field so these families can get out of poverty, so their kids can go to college.”

As the novel coronavirus began to spread, the Resnicks knew that their workforce needed to be protected. “We immediately told our employees that they had to wear masks and reconfigured workstations to be at least six feet apart,” Resnick says. “We were constantly testing. We were on top of it; I think this is what saved us.”

When schools closed, the company established free internet hot spots across the valley so students could download homework, and Wonderful also provided more than 400,000 free grab-and-go meals for employees and their families. In addition, Lynda and Stewart Resnick recently established a $1 million pandemic relief fund for nonprofits and schools in the Central Valley.

Before they started community building in the Central Valley, the Resnicks sought input from local leaders and citizens to help guide them. “I’m not going to come in as a Beverly Hills matron and tell people how to run their lives,” Resnick says. “We don’t take a step without finding out if this is going to fly, if people will meet us halfway.”

Philanthropic giving, on its face, is the right thing to do, but making the choice to do so also is a sound business decision. “Workers are more likely to stay on the job when they know their employer cares about them, and that is good for business,” Resnick says. “That’s not why we do what we do, but it makes good sense.”

The Resnicks take their philanthropy as seriously as they take their business, and they work hard at both. “A passion for giving is good, but you have to know how to do it,” Resnick says. “Philanthropy is the hardest work I’ve ever done in my life.”
When Jane Semel was 23 years old, she was diagnosed with a chronic health condition. A doctor told her he could prescribe medication, but it would not cure her, so she embarked on a lifelong journey to find wellness through a balance of healthy foods, lifestyle and relationships.

She built that life with Terry, her husband of 42 years, and their children. Now, amid the milkweed, roses and vegetables of her garden in Los Angeles, Semel is visited by hummingbirds, butterflies and honeybees. “Every inch has my life in it,” she says. “To go out and pick my roses at night is the greatest luxury in the world.”

Semel, who learned gardening while growing up in England, has sown her philosophy of balance and wellness at UCLA. In 2004, she and Terry endowed the Jane and Terry Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior at UCLA. In 2011, they sponsored the Healthy Campus Initiative (HCI), a campus-wide effort drawing on UCLA’s world-renowned research and teaching to find new and innovative ways to promote living well on campus and to share that education and research with local communities and others throughout California. “UCLA and most universities do a fabulous job teaching us academics, but do they teach us enough about our own well-being?” Semel once asked UCLA Chancellor Gene D. Block. From that conversation, the idea for HCI coalesced: “Do it in one place. Prove that it works. The rest will follow.”

The HCI, which encourages the UCLA community to eat well, exercise and improve mental health in a tobacco-free environment, has, in fact, been so successful that it spawned broader efforts like the University of California (UC) Global Food Initiative and the UC Healthy Campus Network on all 10 UC campuses.

“I feel it was his last gift to society,” Semel says of Terry, who has lived with Alzheimer’s disease for several years. “HCI is about getting back to basics and living a life of meaning and purpose. You can be a brilliant student, but if you don’t have your health, you’re going to break down at the end of the day.”

Gardening is one way to find balance, and the Semels, who in 2005 received The UCLA Medal, have sponsored two gardens at UCLA: a traditional medicinal garden at Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center and a community garden for students at the Sunset Canyon Recreation Center Outdoor Amphitheater. “We need community, and a garden brings people together,” Semel says. “It starts with basic things: to enjoy being in the garden, to enjoy looking at a flower, to enjoy seeing a bird. All of those things ground.”

The Semels’ relationship with UCLA began with their support of the Jane and Terry Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior at UCLA. They insisted on changing the name from the UCLA Neuropsychiatric Institute to destigmatize mental health. “I want for mental illness — whether it is ADHD, schizophrenia, Alzheimer’s, whatever it is — to be spoken about and not to be feared,” Semel says. She hopes to help find a cure for Alzheimer’s, as well as to bring relief to caregivers who face untold stress.

The mind-body approaches to health care studied at the Semel Institute’s Mindful Awareness Research Center have benefited the UCLA community — and Semel. To cope with the stress of Terry’s diagnosis, she began meditating every night, as well as continuing her 30-year yoga practice. “It saved my life,” she says.

Semel also became interested in how cannabis can help people with Alzheimer’s and has supported the UCLA Cannabis Research Initiative. This is the latest in a long history of giving that demonstrates Semel’s determination to look beyond traditional medical approaches to bring innovative solutions to the community that will empower healthier lives. “I’m a bit of a rebel,” she says. “I don’t like being told I can’t do something.”
In addition to Jane and Terry Semel’s gift to establish the HCI, several other long-term philanthropic partnerships continued through the Centennial Campaign for UCLA and significantly furthered efforts to improve health for diverse communities and populations:

**American Heart Association**
The UCLA Cardiovascular Research Laboratory celebrated its 60-year partnership with the American Heart Association (AHA) in 2017. Says Gregg Fonarow, MD ’87 (RES ’90, FEL ’93), interim chief of the UCLA Division of Cardiology and Eliot Corday Chair in Cardiovascular Medicine and Science, “The AHA’s partnership with UCLA to fund innovative research in cardiovascular medicine has resulted in evidence-based solutions to reduce death and disability due to cardiovascular disease and to improve cardiovascular health.”

The AHA recently funded a UCLA-led project to develop a nationally representative database to improve the understanding of disparities in cardiovascular outcomes and improve the quality of stroke care using advanced statistical methods. Another AHA-supported project examines the impact of vaping on cardiovascular disease in humans, which had not been explored before this study. Investigators found that people who chronically vape electronic cigarettes (but who do not smoke tobacco cigarettes) have increased cardiac adrenaline activity and vulnerability to oxidative stress, both of which increase the risk of developing clinical cardiac disease.

**Conrad N. Hilton Foundation**
The Marilyn Hilton MS Achievement Center at UCLA, which was the only day center for people with multiple sclerosis (MS) when it opened in 2001, has become a national model. The center is home to a collaborative program offered by the UCLA Department of Neurology and the Southern California and Nevada Chapter of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. It promotes the philosophy that people with MS can be empowered to take control of their health and well-being with the help of educational and experiential programs.

Says Steven Hilton, Conrad N. Hilton Foundation board chair, “My mother, Marilyn Hilton, lived with the daily challenges of MS for many years. Seeing firsthand her daily struggles coping with this often debilitating disease, the Hilton family recognized the benefit of supporting the wellness services offered at the Marilyn Hilton MS Achievement Center at UCLA to others suffering from MS.”

**Robert Wood Johnson Foundation**
In 2015-16, UCLA marked its 40-year partnership with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) Clinical Scholars Program. Although the program has concluded, it trained generations of physician-leaders and emphasized community-based research.

“RWJF is proud of the original clinical scholars program, which has long been recognized as making an important contribution toward building the field of health services research, and we know it has influenced the design of many of the programs that followed it,” says Dr. Kaytura Felix, managing director of the RWJF Leadership for Better Health program.

One of those is the UCLA National Clinician Scholars Program (UCLA NCSP). Says Joann Elmore, MD, MPH, professor of medicine at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, UCLA NCSP program director and The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation Endowed Chair in Health Care Delivery, “After two years of intensive training, UCLA NCSP scholars are prepared to enter careers and leadership positions that address the challenges within our complex health system. This includes enduring issues with health care disparities, inequities and inefficiencies that drastically affect the outcomes of so many individuals.”

She notes that many alumni are leading teams, research or policy in large health systems, academia, government, private and nonprofit organizations and that program participants are becoming increasingly representative of the communities in which they collaborate and serve.

“The SARS-CoV-2 pandemic has laid bare underlying disparities,” says Dr. Elmore. “Our scholars are working in collaboration with our local communities on projects and also extracting and analyzing data from large health systems in their research, as they seek changes and resources for especially vulnerable communities and populations.”
WISH FULFILLMENT: The Power of Collective Philanthropy

By Julie Kirst

Philanthropy takes many forms, and regardless of the type or size of the gift, all are meaningful and have the potential to make a significant difference. During the Centennial Campaign for UCLA, more than $11 million was raised from donors who made contributions of under $1,000. Collectively, these donations provide a baseline of vital support for research, education, training and patient and family care across UCLA Health and the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA. No gift is too small to make a difference. In fact, the power of collective philanthropy is making an enormous difference for patients, families and staff through the UCLA Health 3 Wishes Program.

Initiated in 2017, the UCLA Health 3 Wishes Program brings dignity to dying patients. As the first program of its kind in the United States, 3 Wishes creates cherished memories for loved ones by fulfilling wishes for patients who are in the final days or hours of their lives. Wishes often are small — providing a patient’s favorite music in his or her final moments, making keepsakes for family members, allowing the patient to go outside and feel fresh air for the last time and personalizing the environment by decorating the room.

After nearly three years, the UCLA Health 3 Wishes Program has served more than 585 patients and their families and fulfilled more than 2,000 wishes — made possible by private philanthropy. Jodi and Greg Perlman, through their Perlman Family Foundation, provided a significant investment in the program, but it also has benefited from the collective giving of more than 330 gifts ranging in size from less than $25 to $150,000.

“When someone is trying to decide whether or not to give, it does not have to be a numbers game,” says Jodi Perlman. “It is nice if someone is able to give a lot of money, but people don’t
realize they can give a small amount, and that can make a huge
difference. People see others giving very large amounts of money,
and they don’t think their contribution will have an impact, so
they decide not to give anything at all. I firmly believe that any
amount you can give can make a difference. It may not fund a
program or a building, but it can have a direct and immediate
impact on the life of someone who really needs it.”

Although the wishes may seem simple, the program has had
a clear and powerful impact on both families and clinicians.
Interviews with family members have revealed that 3 Wishes is
reshaping the end-of-life process by creating a more humanistic,
personalized experience during the darkest moments of a
person’s life. For staff, this program epitomizes patient-centered
care and gives them a sense of purpose at a time when medicine
has reached its limits. Staff feel empowered to express their
compassion, provide individualized patient care and forge human
connections with patients and families in an environment that
was previously characterized only by sadness and grief.

The success of 3 Wishes has enabled UCLA to begin
expanding the program from the medical intensive care unit at

While the COVID-19 pandemic curtailed some activities of the UCLA Health 3 Wishes Program, others have resumed, such as creating hand molds (left, for non-COVID-19 patients) and printing and framing an EKG from the patient’s medical records (right) as a keepsake for the family.

Photos: Courtesy of the UCLA Health 3 Wishes Program
Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center in Westwood to include UCLA Health – Santa Monica Medical Center, so that all dying patients and their families in both hospitals can access the service. In addition, the team continues to collect detailed data to analyze and demonstrate the program’s impact on families, staff and the health care organization. Initial positive findings from analyses were published in the *Journal of Palliative Medicine*.

UCLA Health has received multiple requests from health systems across the country to help them implement a similar program. As funding grows, UCLA will develop written implementation guidelines, in-person training sessions and a 3 Wishes webpage that will include online webinars and other resources to enable hospitals across the nation to emulate the success of the UCLA Health 3 Wishes Program.

For more information about the UCLA Health 3 Wishes Program, go to: uclahealth.org/3wishes

To watch a UCLA Health 3 Wishes Program story filmed for the feature documentary *The Antidote*, go to: tinyurl.com/3-Wishes-The-Antidote
On a pre-COVID-19 afternoon, the three sisters giggle as they careen, side-by-side-by-side, down a wavy carnival slide. Seven-year-old fraternal twins Annabella and Evangelina sandwich their 5-year-old sister Gigi. The plastic mats the girls sit on as they descend, scuffed and dirt-stained, attest to their heavy usage by other delighted children.

Once, this carefree scene would have been unimaginable. Evangelina was born with a rare genetic disorder called adenosine deaminase (ADA) deficiency, which causes severe combined immunodeficiency (SCID). Her body lacked the adenosine deaminase enzyme that immune cells require to fight infection. SCID left her vulnerable to illnesses that healthy people shrug off easily. Even a minor cold could have been fatal.

Thanks to a novel gene therapy treatment Evangelina received from Donald B. Kohn, MD, professor of pediatrics and of microbiology, immunology and molecular genetics and a researcher in the Eli and Edythe Broad Center of Regenerative Medicine and Stem Cell Research at UCLA, Evangelina now has a fully functioning immune system. Today, she is no more vulnerable to illness than any other healthy child her age.

**Funding from The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation** has made work such as Dr. Kohn’s possible. In addition to UCLA, The Broad Foundation, which, with the Broads, received The UCLA Medal in 2006, has namesake stem cell research centers at UC San Francisco and the University of Southern California, elucidating their commitment to this important work.
“Stem cell research has advanced in significant ways since our initial investment over a decade ago, and we are encouraged by stories like Evangelina’s,” says Gerun Riley, president of The Broad Foundation. “We are proud of the scientists committed to research informing life-changing medical breakthroughs that will impact lives around the world.”

On another pre-COVID-19 afternoon, Evie — a nickname bestowed by Dr. Kohn — sat atop a horse, guiding the stately animal around orange cones under the watchful eye of her instructor. Evie and Annabella, who live in Corona, California, take weekly horseback riding lessons. “It’s nothing too fancy right now — just getting comfortable on the horse and controlling the horse on their own,” says mother Alysia Padilla-Vaccaro. “If you can control an animal that size, it builds confidence.”

The first-grader’s days brim with activities. In addition to riding, Evie takes piano (she’s currently working on “Let It Go” from Frozen) and tennis lessons. “She’s got a pretty good backhand,” her mother says. “And she’s very competitive.”

Because of their lack of immune-system function, babies with SCID must remain isolated in clean, germ-free environments until they can receive treatment. Once an invariably fatal condition, SCID is sometimes referred to as “bubble-baby disease,” recalling David Vetter, the “boy in the bubble” who spent his 12 years of life in plastic isolation before dying in 1984. Today, children with SCID have two treatment options. Bone marrow transplant, in which patients receive healthy stem cells from a matched donor, is the most common treatment. However, only a small percentage of infants find matches, and the transplant carries the risk of graft-versus-host disease. The alternative, twice weekly injections of ADA, fails to confer full levels of immunity.

Evangelina benefited from a third option offered by Dr. Kohn and the UCLA Broad Stem Cell Research Center, where a clinical trial was underway to genetically reprogram the immune system of babies with ADA-SCID. The procedure involved removing the baby’s own blood-forming stem cells, inserting the gene responsible for making the adenosine deaminase enzyme and then transplanting the corrected stem cells back into the baby.

The experimental procedure proved successful for Evie and more than 50 other infants who have now received this treatment at UCLA. “Science is such a gift,” Padilla-Vaccaro says. “I am so grateful to UCLA, to Dr. Kohn, to the Broads for funding the Stem Cell Research Center and to the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (which has funded some of Dr. Kohn’s research). UCLA has given me my daughter’s life. They’ve given my daughters their sister and my mom and dad their grandchild.” Her eyes begin to tear. “They’ve given me my everything.”

While the novel coronavirus pandemic halted her regular activities, Evie, who turned 8 in August, has kept busy during quarantine, walking with her mother and sisters to visit their grandparents, who live nearby and have a six-acre citrus grove. “It’s free-range for them to just walk around and explore and not have to be concerned about avoiding people. It’s really their own private park, so we’re very lucky,” Padilla-Vaccaro says.

While the Padilla-Vaccaros have remained vigilant about the novel coronavirus, they are grateful for Evie’s now-healthy immune system. “She was gifted a fighting chance against COVID-19,” her mother says.

Padilla-Vaccaro recalls how Evie’s condition more than prepared her and Christian to guard against the current viral threat. In the early months after Evie’s diagnosis, long before the pandemic, the couple required their few visitors to follow a strict cleanliness regimen: Wear only freshly laundered clothes; remove and clean watches and cell phones; don gowns, masks and gloves; no visiting within 10 days of traveling by plane or within three weeks of being sick. Now, even though no visitors are allowed in their home due to the pandemic, the family knows how to protect themselves.
Lt. Johnson’s Long Road Home

By Robin Keats

United States Navy Lt. Timothy Johnson was in a helicopter when it was downed by enemy fire in 2009 over Afghanistan. The injuries he sustained in the crash resulted in the loss of his right leg, extensive damage to his left ankle and crippling spinal pain. Over the ensuing years, he underwent nearly 30 surgeries and multiple therapies to try to alleviate his pain.

“I did what military guys always do — push forward and try to ignore it,” says Lt. Johnson, who now is retired.

But the implants and drugs had little effect, and the enduring pain — and the impact it had on every aspect of his life — was impossible to ignore. It took doses of fentanyl and Dilaudid just for him to get up in the morning. He became lethargic, disconnected and withdrawn. “It was like I just didn’t care,” he says.

Lt. Johnson’s wife was in despair. “You’re killing my husband,” she said to his doctors. Searching for help, she learned about UCLA Health Operation Mend, a project that began 13 years ago with a partnership between the U.S. military, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and UCLA Health to provide care to post-9/11 service members and veterans. Originally conceived to provide surgical services for wounded warriors, Operation Mend has expanded over the years and now includes comprehensive psychological and neurological evaluation and support and an Intensive Treatment Program for symptoms related to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury. All costs for treatment, transportation, housing, meals and other needs are underwritten by the program, which has been further bolstered by a $20.1 million grant from the Wounded Warrior Project to expand intensive surgical, medical and psychological services.

Finding Operation Mend, which was established in 2007 by philanthropists Maddie and Ronald Katz, has changed Lt. Johnson’s life. He and his wife were flown from their home in Florida to Los Angeles in March 2018, and during his first several weeks in the program, he was diagnosed and treated for PTSD — a condition Lt. Johnson didn’t even realize he had.

“No two days were the same,” Lt. Johnson says. “It was highly organized, with both a group of eight couples and individual therapy sessions. Wives and other caregivers were very much a part of the process.”

The sessions gave Lt. Johnson new tools to cope with his emotional issues. “I don’t get upset so much now,” he says. “We learned to stop, take a step back, then proceed. I use that a lot, and while it sounds simple, it really works to show you what you’re not emotionally doing right. They don’t judge anybody, and everything is confidential.”

Lt. Johnson continued to receive monthly follow-up calls after he and his wife returned home. This past February, he returned to UCLA to address his pain. Doctors discovered that wires from an electrical stimulator that had been implanted in his back and later removed had been left inside, close to the sciatic nerve. “That nerve was on fire until they pulled those wires out,” Lt. Johnson says. “Now I can walk fine, no pain from that area at all.” UCLA doctors also repaired multiple vertebrae.

Lt. Johnson now is free of opiates, and he has learned how to address his post-conflict emotional issues. “I was going down a dark road until I found these people,” Lt. Johnson says. UCLA Health Operation Mend, he says, “pretty much saved my life.”

To learn more about Operation Mend, go to: uclahealth.org/operationmend
I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN CHARITABLE, BUT MY MOST PROFOUND EXPERIENCES IN PHILANTHROPY BEGAN AT UCLA, in the basement of UCLA Medical Center. My husband and I had moved to Los Angeles from New York, and we wanted to establish a connection with a hospital. A friend brought us to meet Dr. Sherman Mellinkoff, the dean of the medical school at UCLA.

We spoke of possible donations that we could make, perhaps the purchase of a machine that the hospital wanted. But that didn’t enthuse me. Another donor could buy the machine; my desire was that our gift be for something more personally meaningful. Many years before, my sister died from breast cancer. She was just 29 years old, and her experience was horrible. The disease was not well-understood at the time, and she was not treated with compassion. I decided that I wanted to do something to benefit women’s health, which was, in my view, a sorrowfully neglected area of health care.

What about supporting UCLA’s mammography program, suggested someone in the UCLA development office. Bingo! That was what I would do. But when I went back to the hospital to see the facility, I was brought to a cheerless room in the basement.
“Oh my god, this is terrible,” I thought. The head of the program, Lawrence Bassett, MD (RES ’74), didn’t even have sufficient funding to train radiologists to read mammograms. Women deserve better than this. Why could this not be an environment of warmth and comfort for women?

That led to the creation of the Iris Cantor Center for Breast Imaging at UCLA and began my relationship with UCLA — a relationship that has been going on for more than 35 years. The Iris Cantor-UCLA Women’s Health Center, the Iris Cantor-UCLA Women’s Health Education and Research Center and, most recently, the Iris Cantor Endowed Chair in Women’s Health, held by Janet Pregler, MD, director of the Iris Cantor-UCLA Women’s Health Center, to support visionary teaching and research and funding to advance the training and education of clinicians and scientists in women’s health care followed.

My philosophy of philanthropy is simple: Make a difference. The cause must be something I feel passionate about and one in which I feel I can have a real impact to better — perhaps even to save — people’s lives.

At UCLA, I have primarily focused my attention on making a difference for women’s health. My choice to establish the Center for Breast Imaging flowed from the death of my sister; if she had been diagnosed earlier, perhaps things would have been different for her. Early detection is one of the best weapons we have to fight against breast cancer, and the breast-imaging center is designed as a space where state-of-the-art technology blends with a caring feminine ambiance to help diminish the anxiety many women feel about breast-cancer screening.

That spirit of body-and-soul extended to the Women’s Health Center, which we opened nine years later under the leadership of Dr. Pregler and which has pioneered a holistic, one-stop-shopping approach that combines diagnosis, treatment and patient education in an environment where women can feel comfortable and confident. It is about touching people at pivotal moments in their lives, often when they are at their most vulnerable and afraid — ensuring there are the resources to provide care and connecting people to that care.

My engagement with UCLA has led to the establishment of centers at other institutions, expanding the reach of high-quality health care for women, and also for men. I get calls and letters from people whose lives have been touched as a result. Some say, “Thank you — I am alive today because of what you have done.” That is enormously gratifying.

If someone has the good fortune in life to have resources that perhaps are not available to others, it is their duty to find ways to use those resources to make a difference in this world. But even if you don’t have extraordinary resources, you can do something. Being able to give a lot of money is terrific, but I believe that true philanthropy goes beyond just writing a check. It is about being engaged with a cause. Being a part of it, giving of yourself, body and soul, is what makes it so worthwhile and so satisfying. If someone says, “I don’t have the money to give at a level to really make a difference,” I say, “Give what you can and then get involved in it, and it will give you a passion in life to help other people, which will make you feel good.”

In addition to the direct impact on patients, one of the most gratifying aspects of my philanthropy is the relationships that have been built over the years with the men and women who are engaged in clinical practice and research. We have become great friends. I don’t hesitate to ask them a lot of questions — and they ask questions of me and they challenge my assumptions — and I learn so much from them.

The goal, always, is to do better.

Now is a unique and wonderful time in women’s health. With centers like ours that have been established at UCLA and other institutions, and the leadership of physicians like Dr. Pregler, more attention is being paid to women’s health, and more clinicians and researchers are being trained to address the issues that are specific to women. This is very different than in the past, when women didn’t factor into how illnesses were studied or treated.

That, thankfully, is no longer the world in which we live. Now it is understood that there are differences between men and women, and that if doctors don’t study women’s health, they will fail to deliver compassionate, comprehensive and appropriate care. The health concerns of women must be taken into account.

I hope that helping to make that change will be a part of my legacy. To have made a difference in somebody’s life — that really is all that I want.

For more information about the Iris Cantor-UCLA Women’s Health Center, go to: uclahealth.org/womenshealth

Iris Cantor is chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation. In addition to UCLA Health, the foundation has supported NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital and Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, as well as such cultural institutions as The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Brooklyn Museum, where Iris Cantor spent many hours with her family as a child growing up in Brooklyn. She has been a member of a variety of UCLA leadership boards, and in 2001 she received The UCLA Medal, the university’s highest honor bestowed upon those who have made “truly extraordinary and distinguished contributions to society, their professions, higher education and to UCLA.”

Photo: Courtesy of the Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation
David Geffen School of Medicine

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U.S. News & World Report’s Best Hospital Survey ranks UCLA #1 in California and #4 in the nation.

David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA ranks #6 in Research and #11 in Primary Care nationwide.

David Geffen Medical Scholarships recipient Mariama Runcie, MD ’19, made time during medical school to volunteer for HEAL Trafficking, helping the organization provide hospitals with anti-human-trafficking toolkits to protect vulnerable patients. She also collaborated with community-health organizations in South Los Angeles to provide care for unhoused patients and other under-resourced populations as part of her training with the Charles R. Drew/UCLA Medical Education Program. Read more about David Geffen Medical Scholarships on page 20.