

Chronicle of Giving



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LETTER FROM THE BOARD CHAIR
AND PRESIDENT & CEO

Dear friends,



Welcome to the fall 2023 issue of our *Chronicle of Giving* magazine. Sharing this publication with you is always incredibly gratifying because it is our opportunity to highlight the passion that donors have found for philanthropy and the real changes our supporters are making in the lives of people locally and around the world.

From grateful patients and alumni to conscientious community members, those who contribute through the MCV Foundation are helping educate the next generation of health care leaders, fuel the research that will inform clinical practice internationally, and ensure that the best possible care is available in Central Virginia for families, neighbors and anyone who needs it.

In this issue, we explore how the VCU Health Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center recently achieved the highest possible designation level from the NIH, why two donors have created a scholarship to address health care inequities they have been battling for decades, how a couple with young children is giving back to help others start their own families, and many more stories about the impact of philanthropy.

We also look back at time spent over the last few months with friends of the MCV Campus and honor four individuals who have made remarkable and significant changes for the benefit of others through contributions at VCU and VCU Health. Thank you for your passion, interest and advocacy for the MCV Campus.

Sincerely,

Darius A. Johnson
Board Chair

Margaret Ann Bollmeier
President and CEO

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MCV Foundation inspires, seeks, secures and stewards philanthropic resources for VCU Health.

The MCV Foundation supports the education, research and clinical care mission of our MCV Campus partners: *VCU College of Health Professions, VCU School of Dentistry, VCU School of Medicine, VCU School of Nursing, VCU School of Pharmacy, VCU School of Population Health, VCU Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center and VCU Medical Center.*

The foundation manages approximately \$900 million in assets to ensure the MCV Campus remains at the forefront of excellence and innovation in patient care, education and research. Through more than 2,000 funds, the MCV Foundation provides scholarships, professorships and funds for research and programs to support the lifesaving work occurring at VCU Health.

ON THE COVER | Robert A. Winn, M.D., director of VCU Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center, has emphasized community engagement and outreach as critical to Massey's work. PHOTO: TYLER TRUMBO, MCV FOUNDATION

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David and Lisa Cohen are supporting the VCU School of Medicine with an unrestricted gift through their will.



A summer social brought together five new trustees with leaders from the foundation who were excited to welcome them. **Front L to R:** Nupa Agarwal, J.D.; Darius Johnson, board chair; and Stephan Davis, D.N.P.

Back L to R: Nadine Marsh-Carter, J.D.; Danny Avula, M.D.; Ernesto Sampson; and Margaret Ann Bollmeier, president and CEO. Photo: Eric M. Peters, MCV Foundation

MCV Foundation Welcomes Five New Trustees

Lifesaving patient care and groundbreaking medical research do not happen without the dedication of those who understand it takes a community to drive an organization’s mission. The MCV Foundation is fortunate that these types of individuals volunteer their time and talent on its board of trustees to advance patient care, research and education.

The board elected five new trustees at its annual meeting in June, and each member brings impressive experience and expertise to the foundation’s leadership.

“These men and women are extraordinarily talented, and we are

excited to welcome them on our board,” said Margaret Ann Bollmeier, MCV Foundation president and CEO. “Our work will be strengthened on the MCV Campus and beyond, thanks to their willingness to share their expertise and advice.”

“These men and women are extraordinarily talented, and we are excited to welcome them on our board. Our work will be strengthened on the MCV Campus and beyond, thanks to their willingness to share their expertise and advice.”

MARGARET ANN BOLLMEIER, MCV FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND CEO

Trustees are essential to the foundation’s success. They help shine a light on the mission and vision of VCU Health to broader audiences and potential supporters. They also secure philanthropic gifts and commitments to support the academic health system’s goals of providing excellent patient care to all, finding new pathways to healing through research, and educating future generations of health care professionals.

“We cannot thank them enough for their willingness to take on these important issues that impact our local communities here in Richmond and globally,” said Darius Johnson, chair of the MCV Foundation Board of Trustees. “VCU Health and the MCV Campus health sciences schools are renowned around the world, and our trustees play an important role in sustaining the work that drives that reputation.”

New MCV Foundation trustees:
NUPA AGARWAL, J.D., is the founder and lead attorney at the Agarwal Law Firm. She serves as vice chair of the Economic Development

Authority for the City of Richmond, as a member of the board of directors for VPM, and on the Canvas Advisory Committee at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

DANNY AVULA, M.D., is commissioner of the Virginia Department of Social Services and previously served as director of the Richmond City and Henrico County Health Districts. In January 2021, the VCU School of Medicine alum was also tapped to oversee the state’s COVID-19 vaccination efforts. He was board chair for the State Board of Social Services from 2017 to 2019.

STEPHAN DAVIS, D.N.P., is associate dean of inclusive excellence and belonging for the VCU School of Nursing and the College of Health Professions. He serves as the inaugural executive director of Inclusive Leadership Education for the Department of Health Administration at the college. Davis is a fellow and national faculty member for the American College of Healthcare Executives and a fellow of the American Academy of Nursing.

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NADINE MARSH-CARTER, J.D., is president of the Cameron Foundation, which is committed to serving the Tri-Cities area and improving access to health care. She previously was president and CEO of Children's Home Society of Virginia, a nonprofit committed to building permanent families and lifelong relationships

for Virginia's at-risk children. She also serves on several advisory boards and councils, including at Longwood University.

ERNESTO SAMPSON is a financial advisor with Ameriprise Financial, specializing in women's financial strategies, executive compensation and benefit strategies, small business,

investments and retirement planning strategies, and wealth preservation strategies. He has served as president of the board of trustees for the Virginia Military Institute Foundation, as well as vice president for the Commonwealth Catholic Charities Board of Directors.



New Chair for Foundation's Leadership Council

Lifetime honorary trustee **ROGER BOEVÉ** is the new chair of the foundation's Leadership Council, a group formed in 2017 to keep former trustees engaged after their board service ends. Boevé succeeds former MCV Foundation board chair Gail Johnson in the position after her six years as chair of the Leadership Council.

"We're incredibly thankful to Gail for her leadership of this group," said Margaret Ann Bollmeier, the

foundation's president and CEO. "Staying connected with former trustees so they can continue to advocate for the care, research and education happening here is an important and rewarding part of the foundation's work."

This year, the Leadership Council welcomed three new members: Charles F. Bryan, Ph.D.; Charles F. Crone and James H. Starkey III.

Dinner With the Docs

A new event format brings together Discovery Society members with leading VCU Health physicians and researchers.



LEFT: Discovery Society members enjoyed lively discussions during dinner with leading health care providers and researchers from VCU Health. **RIGHT:** Bob and Margaret Hershberger spoke with VCU Health Pauley Heart Center Director Greg Hundley, M.D., at the inaugural Dinner With the Docs event in Williamsburg. Bob Hershberger suffered a cardiac arrest in 2017 and received lifesaving care at VCU Health. Photos: CSI Studios

More than 125 of the MCV Foundation's close friends celebrated the Discovery Society's impact at the inaugural "Dinner With the Docs" event in late April.

The Discovery Society unites people from the greater Williamsburg, Va., area who share a common goal of saving and improving lives through philanthropy at VCU Health.

Society members and other friends of the foundation gathered at The Maine of Williamsburg to enjoy a reception and dinner with leading health care providers and researchers from the MCV Campus at VCU Health.

Attendees ranked their health care interests ahead of time, then were assigned to dinner tables hosted by experts in fields ranging from cardiology and oncology to orthopaedics and psychiatry.

The Discovery Society arose from the similarly named Discovery Series, which began a decade ago and continues to feature panel discussions with renowned VCU Health researchers and care providers. The society began in 2016 to recognize and thank Discovery Series attendees for their financial support.

To learn more about the Discovery Society or the Discovery Series, contact Brian Thomas, the MCV Foundation's executive vice president and chief development officer, at 804-828-0067 or brian.thomas@vcuhealth.org.



DISCOVERY SOCIETY
MEMBERS

275

RAISED IN 2023

\$2.8
million

RAISED SINCE 2016

\$8.5+
million

MCV Society Celebrates a Record Year of Planned Giving



Peggy Brockenbrough (left), Judith Forehand Starkey and Gail Johnson connect during the MCV Society reception. Photos: CSI Studios

On a crisp spring evening in late April, more than 100 guests gathered at Maymont’s Westover House to celebrate the generosity and impact of donors who have made a planned gift in support of the MCV Campus.

“This is among our favorite events of the year,” said Ellen E. Spong, immediate past chair of the MCV Foundation Board of Trustees.

“We always look forward to the opportunity to

celebrate with and thank our MCV Society donors for their commitment to the MCV Campus. This is a group of friends notable in number, huge in heart and incredible in impact.”

Membership in the MCV Society continues to grow. Spong shared she is proud to be among the 43 new members the foundation welcomed this year into the society. Total MCV Society membership has reached 640

NEW PLANNED GIFTS IN
FISCAL YEAR 2023

\$29.8 million

TOTAL EXPECTANCIES
FOR THE MCV CAMPUS

\$100 million+

MCV SOCIETY
MEMBERS

640

individuals, making it the single largest giving society to benefit the MCV Campus.

The society was founded in 1994 to recognize and thank those who have expressed their loyalty and gratitude to any of the MCV Campus schools or units by including them in their estate plans.

The impact of planned giving for the MCV Campus is truly remarkable. This year alone, new documented planned gifts reached nearly \$30 million. These generous gifts will provide future support to a wide range of causes across the MCV Campus. The total value of planned gifts documented for the MCV Campus exceeds an astounding \$100 million.

“Our MCV Society planned giving donors are some of our most loyal and devoted supporters,” Spong said.

“Through their generosity, they have made a significant investment in the future of health care that will touch every area of this campus. Because of them, the MCV Campus will continue to flourish, and we cannot thank them enough for all that they do.”

If you would like to learn more about how to make a planned gift to support the MCV Campus, please contact Ann Deppman, J.D., assistant vice president of planned giving for Virginia Commonwealth University, at deppmana@vcu.edu.



ABOVE: MCV Foundation trustee Gir Qureshi, M.D. (left), and his wife, Mary Jo, meet Art Saavedra, M.D., Ph.D., the new dean of the VCU School of Medicine. **BELOW:** MCV Society members Sydney Fleischer, M.D. (left); Wyatt Beazley III, M.D.; Mason Beazley and Kay Clary enjoyed catching up in person during the event.



Health in History

Exploring space's effects on human health.

“We are going back to the moon ... and we *are* going to Mars,” Henry Donahue, Ph.D., said in June at the fifth Health in History series event co-hosted by the MCV Foundation and the Virginia Museum of History & Culture.

Dr. Donahue is the Alice T. and William H. Goodwin Jr. Endowed Professor and Chair in the Department of Biomedical Engineering at the VCU College of Engineering. He has worked with NASA since 2011 studying the health effects of space travel, which was a topic that complemented the museum’s exhibit “Apollo: When We Went to the Moon.”

Dr. Donahue’s work is critical to understanding how bone and muscle disuse, microgravity, space radiation and other factors affect humans. He shared that the effects of space travel on the body are strikingly similar to aging but occur at a faster rate.

Research has shown that spending time in space causes immune system dysfunction, stiffening of arteries, cognitive decline, loss of skeletal muscle mass and strength, and loss of bone mass.

“If we can understand, prevent or slow down these effects in astronauts,” Dr. Donahue told guests, “the same



L to R: James Dill, director of leadership giving at the Virginia Museum of History & Culture; Susan Kornstein, M.D., VCU professor and MCV Foundation trustee; Henry Donahue, Ph.D., guest speaker; Margaret Ann Bollmeier, president and CEO of the MCV Foundation; and Austin Brockenbrough III, a trustee of the museum and a lifetime honorary trustee of the foundation. Photo: Tyler Trumbo, MCV Foundation

interventions could make significant impacts on the health of people around the world.”

The event was made possible by a grant from the Virginia Sargeant Reynolds Foundation. The partnership between the MCV Foundation and the Virginia Museum of History & Culture was initiated in 2017 by Austin Brockenbrough III, a trustee of the museum and a lifetime honorary trustee of the foundation.

Henry Donahue, Ph.D., discussed research about the effects of space travel on human health at the June Health in History event. Photo: Tyler Trumbo, MCV Foundation





Photo: CSI Studios

MCV Foundation Awards 2023

By Holly Prestidge
Photos by Tyler Trumbo

On June 5, the MCV Foundation recognized individuals who serve VCU Health through giving hearts and selfless devotion — visionaries who lead quietly but with monumental fortitude.

The foundation's four annual awards, given in honor of people who have left indelible marks across the health system's MCV Campus, recognize deserving administrators, faculty, staff and volunteers for their relentless fundraising pursuits and broad impact that uplift and support patient care, research and education in our community and beyond.



JAY BONFILI

2023 JEROME F. STRAUSS III AWARD

Jay Bonfili has been called a connector, a brilliant problem solver and a conduit for organizational effectiveness. As senior associate vice president for health sciences, Bonfili provides financial management leadership and frequently connects the six health sciences school deans and their respective chief business officers, VCU Health leadership and others on big institutional projects. He is a tireless advocate for all, and he keeps the organizational mission at the heart of every decision.

Bonfili's expertise spans from finance and governance to collaboration and team building. With an innate ability to listen and care about people, he is often called

to provide invaluable institutional knowledge and steady guidance to leadership when decisions are made about everything from large capital projects and programming to faculty recruitment.

"Jay has been the cornerstone of stability and consistency for over a decade," said Margaret Ann Bollmeier, MCV Foundation president and CEO. "He exemplifies the importance of the award through his support and close interaction with leaders within the VCU Health System and across the university.

"Of all the people I've met in my career," Bollmeier said, "it would be hard for me to identify someone that I respect or admire more than Jay."

Established in honor of Jerry Strauss, M.D., Ph.D., former dean of the VCU School of Medicine, this award is presented to a VCU administrator, faculty or staff member who has demonstrated extraordinary service and stewardship to MCV Campus alumni, donors or other members of the community.

CHARLES F. CRONE

2023 DR. EUGENE P. TRANI AWARD

Few associations run as deep as that of VCU Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center and Charles Crone.

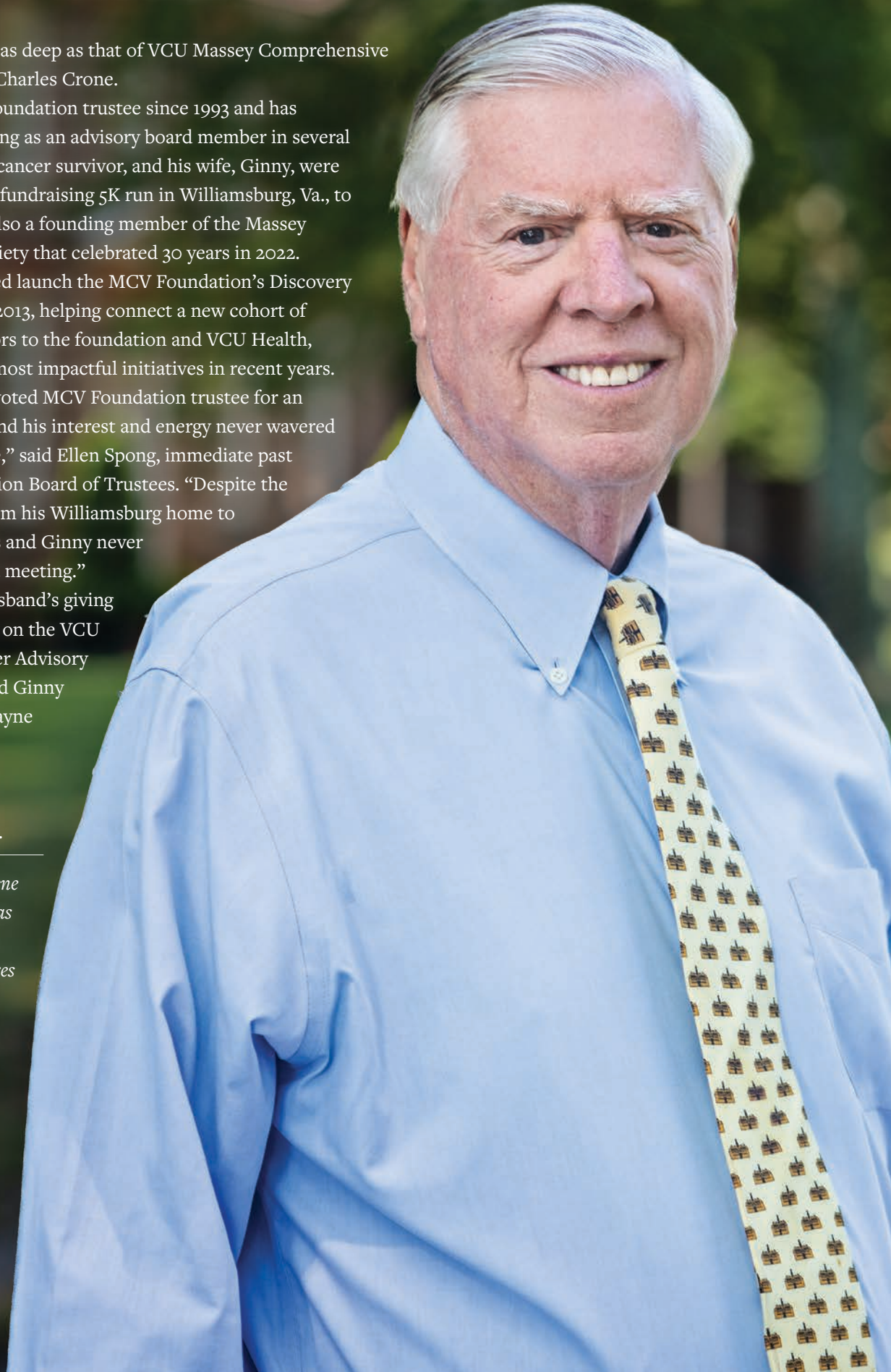
He has been an MCV Foundation trustee since 1993 and has served Massey nearly as long as an advisory board member in several leadership roles. Crone, a cancer survivor, and his wife, Ginny, were instrumental in creating a fundraising 5K run in Williamsburg, Va., to benefit Massey. Crone is also a founding member of the Massey Club, an annual donor society that celebrated 30 years in 2022.

He conceived and helped launch the MCV Foundation's Discovery Series in Williamsburg in 2013, helping connect a new cohort of friends, partners and donors to the foundation and VCU Health, and making it among the most impactful initiatives in recent years.

"Charles has been a devoted MCV Foundation trustee for an unprecedented 30 years, and his interest and energy never wavered over his decades of service," said Ellen Spong, immediate past chair of the MCV Foundation Board of Trustees. "Despite the nearly 60-minute drive from his Williamsburg home to the MCV Campus, Charles and Ginny never seem to miss an event or a meeting."

Complementing her husband's giving spirit, Ginny Crone serves on the VCU Health Pauley Heart Center Advisory Board. In 2018, Charles and Ginny received the Edward A. Wayne Medal from VCU during commencement exercises in recognition of their outstanding contributions.

Established in honor of Eugene P. Trani, Ph.D., who served as president of VCU from 1990 to 2009, this award recognizes exceptional dedication to and support of the MCV Campus.



CHARLES F. BRYAN JR., PH.D.

2023 MICHAEL B. DOWDY AWARD

For more than 12 years, the dedicated efforts of foundation trustee Charlie “Charlie” Bryan, Ph.D., served as a catalyst for changing the landscape of neurological care and research at VCU Health.

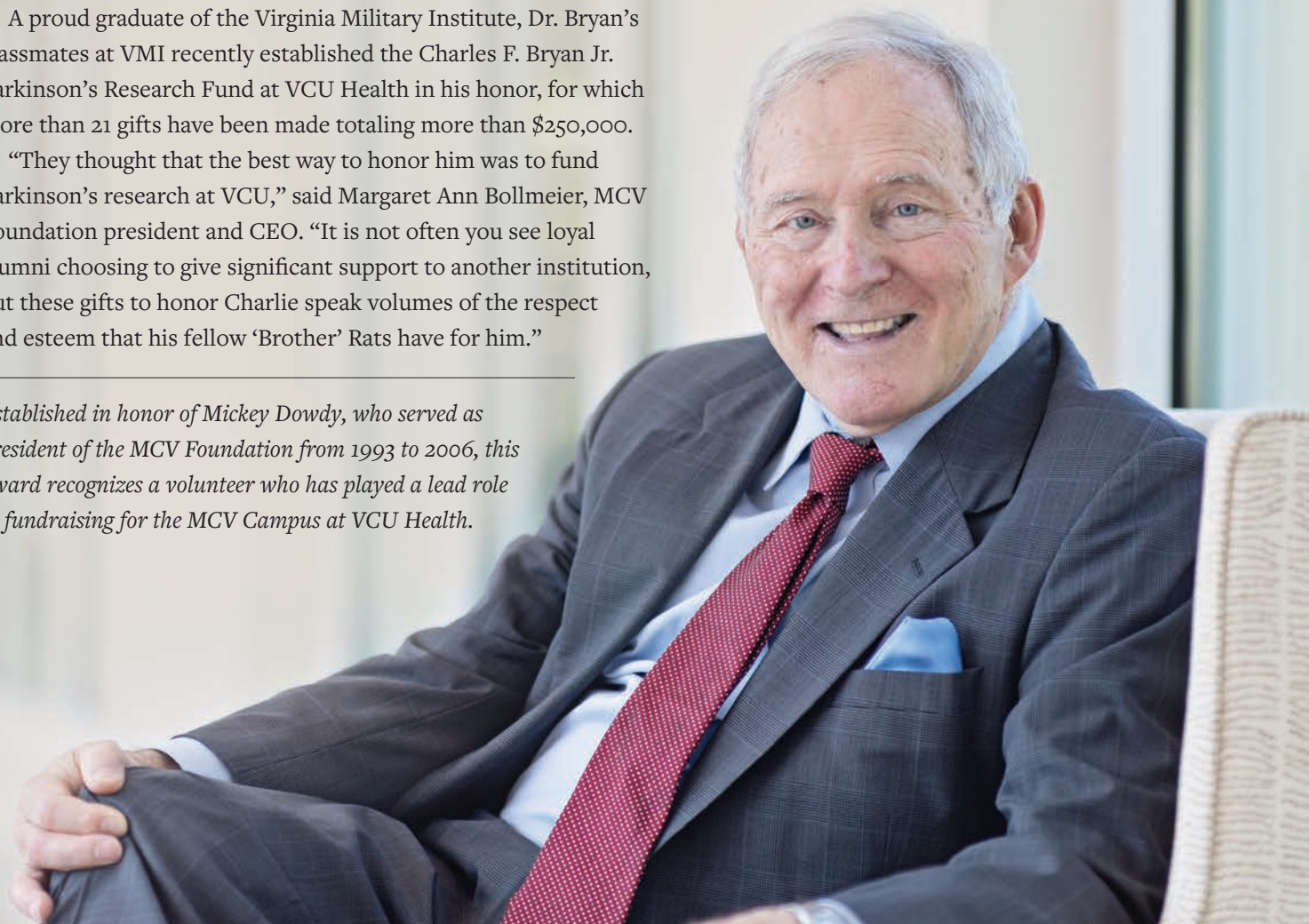
Dr. Bryan was instrumental in raising \$5 million — which was matched with another \$5 million from the VCU School of Medicine — to establish the VCU Parkinson’s and Movement Disorders Center in 2011.

Dr. Bryan, who lives with Parkinson’s disease, remains the founder and nucleus of the Movers and Shakers, a group of community partners and donors who share his vision and who collectively have raised millions of dollars to drive life-changing neurological research and patient-focused care at VCU Health. He credits his VA physician Vincent Calabrese, M.D., who helped make his initial diagnosis, with inspiring Dr. Bryan to raise support to fund a comprehensive Parkinson’s center for civilian access in Central Virginia.

A proud graduate of the Virginia Military Institute, Dr. Bryan’s classmates at VMI recently established the Charles F. Bryan Jr. Parkinson’s Research Fund at VCU Health in his honor, for which more than 21 gifts have been made totaling more than \$250,000.

“They thought that the best way to honor him was to fund Parkinson’s research at VCU,” said Margaret Ann Bollmeier, MCV Foundation president and CEO. “It is not often you see loyal alumni choosing to give significant support to another institution, but these gifts to honor Charlie speak volumes of the respect and esteem that his fellow ‘Brother’ Rats have for him.”

Established in honor of Mickey Dowdy, who served as president of the MCV Foundation from 1993 to 2006, this award recognizes a volunteer who has played a lead role in fundraising for the MCV Campus at VCU Health.





ROBERT A. WINN, M.D.

2023 W. ROBERT IRBY, M.D., AWARD

Arriving just ahead of a worldwide pandemic in 2020, Robert “Rob” Winn, M.D., took the helm of VCU Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center with a flourish, immediately instituting changes that helped the center achieve something it had been seeking for decades — designation as a comprehensive cancer center from the National Cancer Institute.

Dr. Winn is Massey’s director and holds the Lipman Chair in Oncology. He also serves as senior associate dean for cancer innovation and professor of pulmonary disease and critical care medicine at the VCU School of Medicine. He is the first African American to lead a cancer center to achieve comprehensive status.

Dr. Winn’s efforts have led to more recruitment of talented researchers and physicians from all over the country, more opportunities to participate in clinical trials and significant increases in grants and funding — all with

an eye toward dismantling health disparities through creating a community-focused health care system that seeks out and treats the most vulnerable patients.

“From the moment that Dr. Winn arrived at Massey, he has had a profound and positive impact on the center, its programs, and most importantly, the lives of those living with cancer,” said Ellen Spong, immediate past chair of the MCV Foundation Board of Trustees.

“Faced with the challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, he deftly led the cancer center as it adapted critical functions and research initiatives to ensure patients receive new care in a safe environment, while incorporating his vision for a new brand of cancer center that significantly impacts the patients and communities it serves,” Spong said. “In a remarkably short period of time, these ambitious initiatives have resulted in impressive outcomes.”

Established in memory of Robert Irby, M.D., an MCV Campus rheumatologist who was devoted to securing financial support for campus, this award is presented to a faculty member who has assisted with major fundraising efforts.

People-Driven

Remembering those served by the mission of VCU Health is the foundation of Darius A. Johnson's approach to leadership as board chair.

By Holly Prestidge



A health system as vast as VCU Health is complex and daunting, with many moving parts.

Yet people are at its heart, and keeping that simple truth in mind is a key part of what Darius A. Johnson brings to the table as the new chair of the MCV Foundation Board of Trustees.

Johnson became chair in July following a term as chair-elect and previous service as the treasurer. He's been a trustee since 2013 and has served on various committees, including finance and audit, investment and governance.

"The role of the foundation is to be a good steward of the resources raised for the MCV Campus and to have the right people in place to be able to do that in a responsible manner," Johnson said. "VCU Health touches many people here in Richmond, but also globally, and we have a duty, on behalf of those who contribute, to instill and maintain confidence in the organization to ultimately support healthy outcomes for all patients."

Johnson, who was born in Richmond but grew up in New Jersey, said he is honored to join a board that always keeps its stewardship mission at the forefront.

"We have a dedicated, accomplished board who is forward-thinking, can come together and debate in a healthy way and deliberate on issues that are really important in terms of making sure the foundation is sustainable for the long term," he said.

Johnson is continually impressed by the efforts of VCU Health to reach deep into the community. He noted the medical-legal partnership program, known as MLP at VCU Health, which offers free civil legal aid to low-income patients who have historically faced barriers to health.

"There are just so many ways that we illustrate that we're open to everybody," he said. "It's important that we have representation on our board that has some connection to all communities because we do serve all communities."

Johnson is no stranger to VCU Health. On a personal note, he recalled a family member who was treated in the ICU for a gunshot wound, calling the emergency room staff "phenomenal."

"We talk about the grateful patients — I have several friends who've shared with me their stories," he said. "While those stories can send chills down your spine, they also give the confidence of our 'why' — that what we're doing is the right thing."

Johnson said he will continue working with the board and staff in leading the upward trajectory of the foundation's growing endowment and impact on campus, as a means of reaching as many patients and their families as possible.

"There are a lot of moving pieces but, at the end of the day, underlying it all is people," Johnson said. "As long as we are focused on people, we'll be successful."



A 'Comprehensive' Win

Massey's elite designation by the National Cancer Institute is a testament to the cancer center's philanthropic support and community engagement.

By Annie Harris and Paul Brockwell Jr.

Since 1975, the MCV Campus has been home to a cancer center considered among the top 4% of its peers in the U.S. A year after its founding, the new center at VCU received one of the earliest designations from the National Cancer Institute (NCI). Nearly a decade later, it was named VCU Massey Cancer Center to honor William and Evan Massey for their transformative gift.

The center has been continuously NCI-designated since 1975. Now, nearly 50 years later, a new word is being added to its name: Comprehensive. In June, Massey received designation as a Comprehensive Cancer Center, which is the highest level of recognition from the NCI, the country's authority on cancer research and training at the National Institutes of Health.

Receiving this designation places Massey among an elite group of cancer centers influencing a new standard of care through research, education and community engagement. The center's director, Robert A. Winn, M.D., is the first African American to lead a cancer center to comprehensive status.

Under Dr. Winn's leadership, Massey has effectively championed a community-centered approach, recognizing community members as equal experts and strategic partners in its research efforts. With the support of philanthropic investment from the community, VCU Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center is better positioned

than ever to provide lifesaving care, conduct innovative research on new treatments and engage patients across its catchment area in education, outreach and clinical trials.

"We are so proud to reach this milestone and to be leading the charge, not just in research but in building trust and breaking down barriers between medical institutions and communities," said Dr. Winn, who holds the Lipman Chair in Oncology at Massey. "We are truly the first of a new generation of community-focused cancer centers, where world-class science and research are informed by the people we serve, and accessible for all."

COMMUNITY-ENGAGED SCIENCE

Since he arrived at Massey in December 2019, Dr. Winn has helped the cancer center adapt during the pandemic to continue serving patients and expanded efforts to bring Massey's mission into the 66 contiguous localities in Central, Eastern and Southside Virginia that make up its catchment area.

With the community's involvement, Massey has successfully increased its clinical trial enrollment, expanded its research collaboration across disciplines and strengthened its training for cancer researchers.

The NCI commended Massey for its significant strengths in the full spectrum of cancer research, creating a robust pathway for cancer research training and education, and

Robert Winn, M.D., director of VCU Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center, has been working hard to broaden access to cancer care through a community-engaged approach. Photo: Tyler Trumbo, MCV Foundation





Massey Director Robert A. Winn, M.D., has worked hand in hand with advisory board members including Becky Massey (center) and Amy Williams to advance the cancer center's goals in the community. Photo courtesy of Massey

plans to further enhance the diversity of its trainees and faculty. The renewal of Massey's Cancer Center Support Grant provides it with funding for cancer research programs over five years.

PHILANTHROPY FUELING EXCELLENCE

Gifts to support research, care and education at Massey have made possible the cancer center's progress.

In its earliest years, a small, dedicated group of volunteers built a formidable constituency of supporters — known today as Massey Nation — who give generously to advance research and care. Last year, the Massey Club celebrated its 30th anniversary. Today the group is more than 500 members strong, each

of whom gives \$1,000 or more to support the cancer center. Collectively, they raise more than \$1.8 million in unrestricted funds each year to help Massey recruit and retain top researchers, fund critical early-stage research and expand access to clinical trials for patients.

Over its history, individuals have made tens of thousands of gifts to support Massey. Grateful patients are among Massey's most steadfast supporters. Attorney and endurance athlete Amy Williams received treatment at Massey after receiving a breast cancer diagnosis.

“ We are so proud to reach this milestone. We are truly the first of a new generation of community-focused cancer centers, where world-class science and research are informed by the people we serve, and accessible for all. ”

**ROBERT A. WINN, M.D., DIRECTOR
VCU MASSEY COMPREHENSIVE CANCER CENTER**

“This is an incredibly exciting moment for Massey and VCU Health and for the patients and families who come through our doors.”

PAULA FRACASSO, M.D., PH.D., DEPUTY DIRECTOR
VCU MASSEY COMPREHENSIVE CANCER CENTER

Her experience inspired her to be an advocate for the cancer center.

“As a patient, you fully see the inside of an organization,” said Williams, who is vice chair of the Massey Advisory Board. “My experience with all the doctors and nurses was so incredible. Massey truly is a place where every member of the team is passionate about care and research that is truly saving lives.”

Philanthropy also expands Massey’s health equity efforts, enabling education, outreach and research in partnership with communities underrepresented in clinical trials or who have experienced disparities in screening, treatment and outcomes. Williams shared she is also proud to support Massey because it is part of a safety-net institution that offers leading-edge care and makes it available to everyone, regardless of their ability to pay. Ultimately, that diversity of patients ensures progress in Richmond that generates impact across the country.

“It’s so great that Massey has achieved this designation,” Williams said. “Massey is such a unique place — delivering care and finding research results for everybody. They are at the forefront of finding treatments for everyone. I’m hopeful that all gifts to support Massey will help save and improve lives.”

A RICH HISTORY AND A BRIGHTER FUTURE

Massey’s latest comprehensive designation was earned through a peer-review process demonstrating excellence in laboratory research, population science and clinical research. Comprehensive cancer centers must conduct transdisciplinary research that bridges three scientific areas. They also must demonstrate their effectiveness in addressing cancer concerns in their catchment area through community outreach and engagement. Most

importantly, comprehensive centers also integrate cancer training and education of tomorrow’s leading biomedical scientists and community health care professionals.

“We celebrate Massey’s achievement as a huge win for our entire institution and one that will help us continue to raise the bar for excellence at VCU Health,” said Marlon Levy, M.D., interim senior vice president of VCU Health Sciences and CEO of VCU Health. “The dedication to innovative research and education and to advancing health equity is a clear reflection of our health system’s core values.”

With Massey’s new comprehensive status, those living in its catchment area are promised even greater access to lifesaving cancer screenings and clinical trials offering leading-edge treatments, more resources for critical education about cancer risk and prevention, and care informed by the top scientific minds brought to Massey through recruitment as well as its training of the next generation of physician-scientists.

“This is an incredibly exciting moment for Massey and VCU Health, and for the patients and families who come through our doors,” said Paula Fracasso, M.D., Ph.D., deputy director of Massey and senior vice president of the cancer service line at VCU Health. “With the increased funding from our Cancer Center Support Grant, we will have additional research dollars to extend our reach into the forefront of science and translational work that will provide better ways to predict, prevent, diagnose and treat our patients with cancer.”

If you would like to support VCU Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center, please contact Jasmine Davis, director of development, at 804-828-4812 or jjdavis3@vcu.edu.



Jared Christopher, RN (left), and Merle C. McCann, M.D., created a scholarship at the VCU School of Medicine to support students who demonstrate a commitment to advancing the LGBTQIA+ community at large or addressing issues experienced by that community. Photos: Penelope M. Carrington, MCV Foundation

Enduring Activism

The urgency of advocating for change brought together VCU School of Medicine alum Merle C. McCann, M.D., and his husband, Jared Christopher, RN, when AIDS ravaged the gay community. Today, they are continuing their activism by creating one of the first scholarships in the country to support students who want to advance the LGBTQIA+ community and address its health care issues.

By Paul Brockwell Jr.

Merle McCann's deep connections to the MCV Campus started at a young age. He and his twin sister, Cheryle, were born at MCV, and he later attended the VCU School of Medicine and graduated in 1981.

Along the way, he came to accept his identity as a gay man.

"I didn't come out until the very end of medical school," Dr. McCann said. "It turned out that several of our classmates were all quietly going through the same process of coming out to one another."

Dr. McCann recalls his medical school experience with fondness. He found the support of friends gratifying and was excited to enter a profession he loved.

"It was a very positive time in my life," Dr. McCann said. "We got really great training."

But the world Dr. McCann graduated into was about to be upended by a generation-defining tragedy. He completed a residency in psychiatry at George Washington University during the earliest and most challenging days of the AIDS epidemic. From 1981 through 1990, the CDC documented more than 100,000 deaths among individuals with acquired immunodeficiency syndrome.

For several years, the response to the crisis could be

described as indifferent, often hostile and sluggish. The country's president did not publicly say the word AIDS until 1985, four years after the earliest signs of the epidemic. The crisis overwhelmingly affected gay men who felt society had ignored or avoided addressing the urgent need for research, care and prevention education.

"We were seeing how the system failed us as gay men," said Jared Christopher, RN, Dr. McCann's husband. "No one was paying attention to the epidemic for so many years. Our hope is that our community will never be in that position again and that we'll have providers who are sensitive and can deal with the issues before they become huge."

Dr. McCann met his husband through a clinical study that Mr. Christopher was helping run at the University of Maryland. Dr. McCann's partner had recently died from AIDS, and he was volunteering to serve as a representative to the study's advisory board on behalf of ACT UP, an activist group started to help address the AIDS crisis. Mr. Christopher and Dr. McCann connected amid the tragedy, and both continued to work hard to support the gay community through some of its darkest hours.

"When Jared and I look back, our careers were informed by AIDS," Dr. McCann said. "We were in the

trenches. Jared was working at one of the first dedicated AIDS units in the country. We really felt like it was war, and we don't want people to see that happen again."

Dr. McCann retired after a 25-year career as an inpatient psychiatrist at Sheppard Pratt Hospital. He and Mr. Christopher decided to make a gift last year to create a first-of-its-kind scholarship at the VCU School of Medicine. For both of them, the scholarship is an important continuation of their activism — an investment in future generations of health care providers who are committed to understanding and addressing the health needs of vulnerable and underrepresented populations.

"Health care in general has been slow to catch up to serving our community," Dr. McCann said. "Patients may not feel comfortable sharing their full identity. It's changing for sure, but I still think our profession has a long way to go."

Dr. McCann and Mr. Christopher have made additional gifts through qualified charitable distributions from their retirement account to grow the Merle C. McCann, M.D., and Jared Christopher, RN, Scholarship Fund in a way that allows the scholarship to be awarded sooner. They also have documented their intent to increase the fund's impact through their estate plans. The scholarship will support students who have a demonstrated commitment to advancing the LGBTQIA+ community at large or addressing health issues experienced by that community, with preference for students with demonstrated financial need.

"Coming out as gay was a really important part of my life journey and professional identity," Dr. McCann said. "I wanted to give back to people who may be in a similar place as I was as a student."

Both Dr. McCann and Mr. Christopher are happy to see that people are much more open now and willing to talk

about their private lives. On a recent campus visit, they learned about the School of Medicine's OUTlist. Developed in 2021, the list welcomes participation from faculty, staff and students who publicly identify as members of the LGBTQIA+ community or as allies to encourage their peers and destigmatize conversations about personal identity.

"There are special needs for our population, our community," Dr. McCann said. "If we can help make somebody's journey easier as they seek to become doctors, especially if someone ends up with greater sympathy for the needs of LGBTQIA+ patients, then it will have been

more than worth it."

Earlier this spring, Michael Keiter, M.D., a 2023 graduate of the School of Medicine, learned he was the inaugural recipient of the McCann-Christopher scholarship after submitting an essay

that discussed his personal story and responded to prompts about the profession's impact on LGBTQIA+ individuals.

"I was amazed and humbled that I got this scholarship," said Dr. Keiter, who identifies as gay. "Representation matters, and when any population is more visible, more good can come from that."

Dr. Keiter is entering his residency in psychiatry this summer at VCU Health and hopes to practice as a hospital-based psychiatrist.

"As a first-generation student, none of my family has gone to college or medical school. It meant a lot to have this support. This scholarship truly did make a difference in my ability to financially move through medical school," Dr. Keiter said. "It's also amazing to see there are alumni similar to me who are able to provide for those in our community pursuing medicine. At the end of the day, I am eager to find ways to pay it forward through the ways I mentor other professionals and care for patients."

“Our hope is that our community will never be in that position again and that we’ll have providers who are sensitive and can deal with the issues before they become huge.”

JARED CHRISTOPHER, RN



Michael Keiter, M.D. (center), Class of 2023, had the opportunity to meet Jared Christopher, RN (left), and Merle C. McCann, M.D., Class of 1981, who created the endowed scholarship Dr. Keiter received during his final semester of medical school. Following graduation, Dr. Keiter is completing a psychiatry residency at VCU Health.

Dr. McCann and Mr. Christopher hope the future recipients of this scholarship will help make it easier for the profession to understand the specific needs of the LGBTQIA+ community and to create an environment where folks feel comfortable accessing the care they need.

“This is the first time a scholarship like this has been established,” Dr. McCann said. “Our hope is that this won’t be the last one, and that other people might follow through and do similar things.”

If you would like to support this scholarship at the VCU School of Medicine, please contact Jodi T. Smith, interim senior director of development in the Office of Medical Philanthropy and Alumni Relations, at 804-628-2248 or jodi.smith@vcuhealth.org.

TOTAL RAISED THIS YEAR
ON THE MCV CAMPUS

\$163.4
million

MCV CAMPUS TOTAL IS

60.3%
of total raised
for VCU

NEW PLANNED
GIVING EXPECTANCIES

\$29.8
million

Financial Commentary

For the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2023, contributions across the MCV Campus totaled \$163.4 million, representing 60% of funds raised across all of VCU. New planned gift expectancies account for \$29.8 million of the total campus fundraising. The MCV Foundation's endowment portfolio return of 7.1% outperformed the custom benchmark's return of 6.5% and lagged the 11.2% return from the benchmark constructed of passive index strategies invested 70% in global equities and 30% in fixed income. The foundation's outperformance relative to the custom benchmark during the fiscal year was primarily due to strong

manager selection in the absolute strategies private investments asset classes. Asset allocation was a modest detractor, largely due to the portfolio being modestly underweight long-only equity and overweight private investments. Through the MCV Foundation, donors have established more than 2,000 funds in support of the health sciences programs, health care professionals and patients of VCU Health. Now, more than ever, the foundation is honored to partner with you in supporting the leading care, transformational research and formative education that are saving lives around the world today and in the future.

Statement of Financial Position

For the year ended June 30, 2023 | Amounts in thousands

Assets

Operating investments

Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 10,088
Short-term investments	120,655

Total operating investments **130,743**

Endowment long-term investments 742,754

Funds held for others 2,196

Other assets 17,578

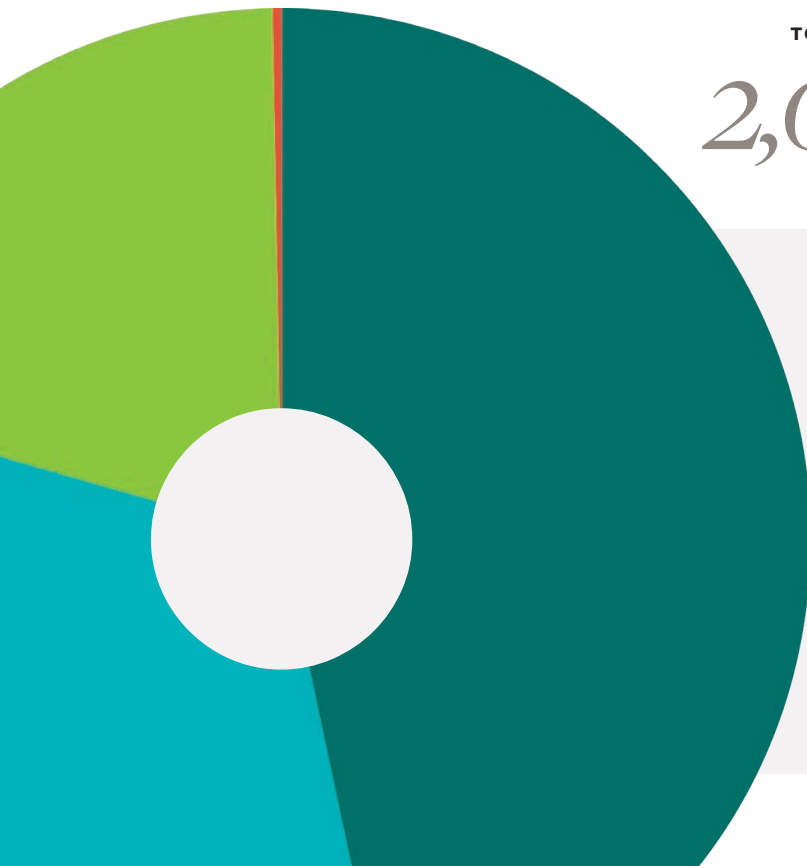
Total assets **\$893,271**

SCHOLARSHIP, RESEARCH, PATIENT PROGRAMS AND OTHER FUNDS

As of June 30, donors had accounted for **530 endowed scholarships**. Through these endowed scholarships, students from the five schools and one college on the MCV Campus had access to **\$3.1 million** in funding and support that ranges from full tuition to modest support to help with expenses. In addition, **49 current fund scholarships** allowed the foundation to provide more than **\$2.5 million** in financial assistance to students on the MCV Campus last academic year.



TOTAL FUNDS	TOTAL ENDOWED FUNDS	NEW ENDOWED FUNDS IN FY23
2,000+	1,210	25



Financial Highlights

For the year ended June 30, 2023 | Amounts in thousands

Disbursements totaling \$30 million by program

46.6%	Education, research and general	\$ 14,058
32.9%	Faculty salaries and support	9,911
20.0%	Scholarships and awards	6,030
0.5%	Other programs and services	114

This is a condensed version of the MCV Foundation's FY23 audited financial statement. Our independent auditor issued an Unmodified Opinion on the complete financial statements, which can be obtained by writing or calling the MCV Foundation office, or by visiting our website.

Sharing the Blessings of Fertility

Four-year-old Ava Jefferson loves chocolate pudding, can just about spell her name and shows off her goofy side when the cameras are on. She's also a doting big sister to 9-month-old Brooke.

Taylor and Sarah Jefferson's bustling family of four could be considered miraculous. After two years of trying to have children, they were told they would not be able to conceive without medical intervention.

They turned to VCU Health for in-vitro fertilization.

Their experience before and during the process led them to seek out ways to help individuals who cannot conceive without medical intervention or those who've gone through one unsuccessful round of IVF and cannot afford a second round. To provide this help, the Jeffersons donated this year to the OB-GYN Development Fund at the VCU School of Medicine.

These days, the Jeffersons, who together founded a real estate brokerage firm after leaving the health care field, are blessed to be busy working parents.

"The IVF process is emotionally trying," Sarah said, "not to mention costly." When their first attempt at IVF failed, the Jeffersons decided to find a way to navigate the process a second time.

In a twist of fate, however, Sarah found out she was pregnant just as they began the second round. While it happened naturally for them, they know many others

aren't as lucky.

"We know so many people who've had to go through IVF or who struggle with fertility," said Taylor, who graduated from the VCU School of Pharmacy.

The Jeffersons reached a point in

their careers when they wanted to give back, and they started with holiday children's toy drives.

"But then we thought – what could we do that's bigger," Taylor said. "That's when our minds went to IVF, and our goal is to do this every year."

Sarah thinks back to that day when she got the news that the first round of IVF hadn't worked. She sat on her front porch steps and cried.

“I imagine if we were in those shoes, and what it would mean to have someone call us and tell us a stranger is helping us pay for it.”



Taylor and Sarah Jefferson, pictured here with Ava, 4, and 9-month-old Brooke, are helping others facing fertility issues through annual giving to the VCU School of Medicine's OB-GYN Development Fund. Photo: Tyler Trumbo, MCV Foundation

“It’s such an emotional ordeal. If you want a baby, you have to pay thousands of dollars and then, even after that, there’s no guarantee that IVF will work,” Sarah said. “I imagine if we were in those shoes, and what it would mean to have someone call us and tell us a stranger is helping us pay for it.”

If you are interested in supporting the OB-GYN Development Fund at the VCU School of Medicine, please contact Nathan Bick, senior director of development in the Office of Medical Philanthropy and Alumni Relations, at 804-827-0387 or ngbick@vcu.edu.



Arun J. Sanyal, M.D. (left), director of the Stravitz-Sanyal Institute and Todd Stravitz, M.D., say this historic gift brings to life ideas that will transform the standard of care for metabolic health. Photo: Allen Jones, VCU

Liver Institute Gift Creates Two Endowed Chairs

Two newly endowed chairs will advance metabolic health and research.

VCU Health is poised to dramatically improve treatment options for liver research and care as it continues putting a historic \$104 million gift to use.

The gift from Todd Stravitz, M.D., through his family's Barbara Brunckhorst Foundation, was announced in February 2022 and laid the foundation for the Stravitz-Sanyal Institute for Liver Disease & Metabolic Health. A portion of the gift is funding two endowed chairs. The Phillip B. Hylemon Endowed Chair of Medicine and Microbiology, created this fall, will fund the institute's chief scientific officer. The second chair, the Arun J. Sanyal Endowed Chair of Medicine, will be created in 2024 and endow a chair in honor of the institute's director. The new endowed chairs will support faculty who oversee research activities and translational investigations, mentor researchers and clinical fellows, apply for grants and seek collaborative opportunities with outside funding sources, including the National Institutes of Health.

"We are deeply grateful for the vision of the Barbara Brunckhorst Foundation to include funding for a pair of endowed chairs as part of their historic gift," said Art Saavedra, M.D., Ph.D., dean of the VCU School of Medicine. "The institute's faculty have been world leaders in advancing our understanding and treatment of liver and metabolic diseases. With the benefit of philanthropic support, the physician-scientists who will hold these endowed chairs will build on that foundation and explore ideas and innovations that will ultimately transform today's standard of care."

The Stravitz-Sanyal Institute will align existing research and programs, including hepatology and research teams within the School of Medicine's Department of Internal Medicine, VCU Health Hume-Lee Transplant Center, VCU Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center and VCU Health Pauley Heart Center. It will also grow research and health care teams for liver-related clinical specialties, such as metabolic dysfunction-associated steatohepatitis, end-stage liver disease, liver transplantation, liver cancer, women's liver health issues and rare hepatology diseases.

"These endowed chairs are an essential step to growing and expanding our clinical footprint and the dynamic research and training in liver disease and metabolic health happening within VCU programs," Dr. Sanyal said. "The time is now for patients with liver disease both locally and around the world to benefit from these advancements in care."

If you are interested in supporting the Stravitz-Sanyal Institute at VCU, please contact Niles Eggleston, VCU's senior associate vice president for medical philanthropy and alumni relations, at 804-828-2112 or egglestonn@vcu.edu.



Ryan Mitchell and Angela Middleton, M.D., are generously supporting several causes on the MCV Campus and involving their children in the decision-making process for gifts.

Family Traditions

An alumna and her family developed intentional practices around giving.

Generational wealth is complicated and nuanced, and no two families see it the same way.

Angela Middleton, M.D., and her husband, Ryan Mitchell, were never comfortable with the idea that their wealth should be spread only among their four children. They worked hard and earned their way to their success, they said. Now they would like to demonstrate for their children that finding causes worthy of that hard-earned wealth is a legacy that endures.

The couple have provided several gifts to support a variety of causes on the MCV Campus. This year, they created the Dr. Angie Middleton and Ryan Mitchell Scholarship at the VCU School of Medicine to provide support for incoming students with financial need. They also gave to the School of Medicine's Neuroimmunology Research Fund and the Heart Health in Women Symposium, as well as various funds within the VCU Health Pauley Heart Center.

Along the way, they have sought to involve their children, who are ages 21, 19, 15 and 10, in the discussions and process.

"We've sat down with our children and tried to explain our thought process," Dr. Middleton said. "I think they are starting to comprehend what we've told them and, over time, we'll give them more and more responsibility. They have to be involved, and I've already seen the excitement in them."

Mitchell said he was raised to do for others.

"Our society is incredibly unfair," he said. "You get stuck in this bubble, but it's good to get out in the real world. There are a lot of people who really struggle, and I think you have a richer life experience when you appreciate that and see it with your own eyes."

The couple acknowledge that many of the financial discussions go over the heads of their youngest two children for now, but as everyone ages, all four will be expected to pick up where their mom and dad leave off.

"The goal for our family's philanthropy is to have meaningful, long-term relationships that make an impact, and then see that impact," Mitchell said. "Hopefully, 35 years from now, we're having a family meeting about our giving and the kids will be running it."



The Mitchell family recently visited the MCV Campus to hear about how their gifts are making an impact. Photos: Tyler Trumbo, MCV Foundation

If you would like to support the causes you care most about on the MCV Campus, please contact Brian Thomas, executive vice president and chief development officer of the MCV Foundation, at 804-828-0067 or brian.thomas@vcuhealth.org.

Honoring Our Mentors

Physical therapy alum creates scholarship to celebrate the importance of mentors.

The late Dan Kahsar was a natural teacher, a gifted mentor with a contagious thirst for learning who had a knack for inspiring his physical therapy students and peers to challenge themselves.

“His clinical excellence, his ability to challenge and bring out the best in a person — he had an innate sense for seeing the potential in those around him,” said Ann Dunbar, D.P.T., who benefited from Kahsar’s guidance.

Kahsar died in 2021 after contracting COVID-19, and in writing a remembrance of him, Dr. Dunbar realized how much his early career mentorship inspired and shaped her career path for the next four decades.

This year, she established the Honoring Our Mentors Physical Therapy Scholarship at the VCU College of Health Professions to provide support for physical therapy students who demonstrate financial need. Her hope is that this fund will inspire other donors to give and share stories of the mentors like Dan Kahsar.

“After considering other options, a scholarship really made the most sense to me in terms of giving back to help students and to honor his legacy,” Dr. Dunbar said.

She first met Kahsar in 1978 when she joined

Richmond Rehabilitation Services, where Kahsar was co-owner. At the time, Kahsar had just finished his master’s degree at VCU and began taking all the joint mobilization courses offered. Whatever he learned, she said, he passed along to her, which in turn sparked her interest in orthopaedics.

“I was grateful and receptive and eager to learn,” Dr. Dunbar said. She went on to assist Kahsar in orthopaedics labs on the MCV Campus, which turned out to be a wonderful introduction to the university.

Kahsar’s mentorship inspired Dr. Dunbar to earn her master’s degree at VCU, followed by a doctorate in physical therapy. Increasingly, she focused on women’s and pelvic health, working in private practice and at VCU Health, where she helped with efforts to establish the pelvic health program at VCU Health’s Stony Point Campus. Additionally, she served as adjunct faculty and taught women’s and pelvic health courses in the College of Health Professions from 1988 to 2017.

“Spending those years with Dan set the trajectory for what my career would become,” Dr. Dunbar said. “He touched so many lives in his career, and this gift will allow his passion for education and learning to live on.”

If you would like to recognize your mentor by making a gift to the Honoring Our Mentors Physical Therapy Scholarship, please contact T. Greg Prince, Ed.D., senior director of development at the VCU College of Health Professions, at 804- 828-7247, or tgprince@vcu.edu.



Ann Dunbar, D.P.T., created a scholarship fund at the VCU College of Health Professions to honor mentors. Photo: Penelope M. Carrington, MCV Foundation

Dentistry Unlocks Matching Funds for Oral Cancer Research

Head and neck cancers are the sixth most common type of cancer globally, and they are among the types of cancer becoming more prevalent in developed countries.

Research and treatment options have stagnated for decades, but researchers at the Philips Institute for Oral Health Research at the VCU School of Dentistry are on the cusp of a breakthrough.

They just need help to fund research and trials that could push them to the next level of care.

This fall, alumni and other supporters helped the School of Dentistry reach a goal of \$250,000 to support a novel therapy for head and neck cancers.

The campaign kicked off in February and has successfully unlocked matching funds from alumnus John F. Philips, D.D.S., who agreed to double the impact of gifts by up to \$250,000. In 1999, Dr. Philips established the institute in honor of his father, who died of throat cancer.

All of the funds raised for the Philips Institute will support continued research into a new type of targeted cancer therapy called SHP2 inhibitors

— and their potential success in blocking the signaling in cancerous cells that ultimately fuel tumor growth in the oral cavity.

“We’re in an epidemic,” said Iain Morgan, Ph.D., director of the Philips Institute. “Many head and neck cancers remain resistant to current standards of care, leaving those patients with no therapeutic alternatives to prolong their lives.”

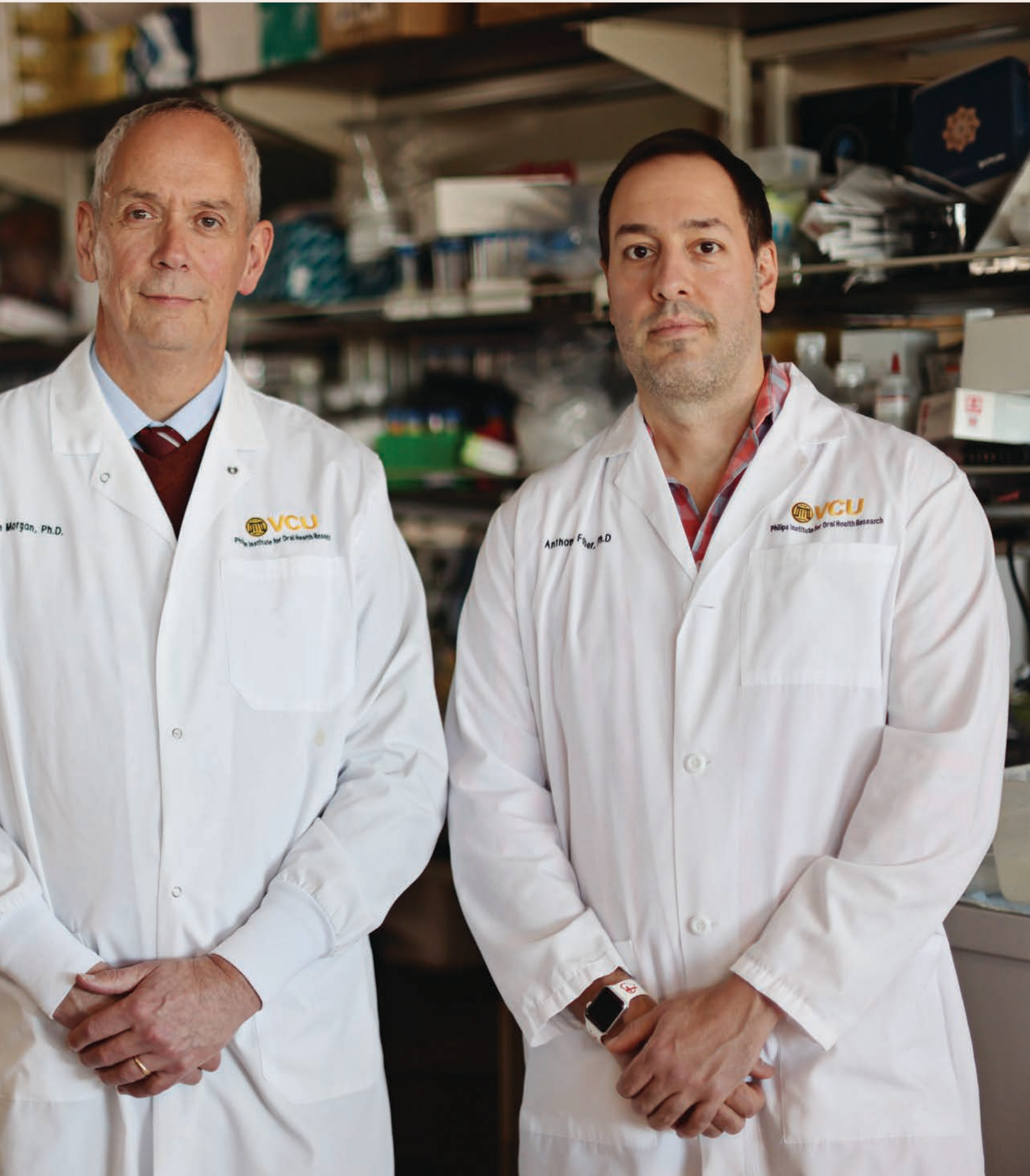
Dr. Morgan and his colleague Tony Faber, Ph.D., hope to develop clinical trials to test SHP2 inhibitors in combination with the current standard of care in clinical trials. Patients who have relapsed or have exhausted current treatment approaches would be recruited to these trials.

“Targeted therapies that were traditionally developed for other cancers like lung or blood cancers do not work in the head and neck because the biology is different — the drugs just don’t match what’s going on in these cancers,” Dr. Faber said. “But things are changing — the chemistry has gotten more sophisticated, and the drugs are able to do things they weren’t able to do 10 or 15 years ago. We’re hoping to continue that exciting progress.”

If you would like to support oral health research at the School of Dentistry, please contact Gloria Callihan, the school’s associate dean for development and alumni relations, at 804-828-8101 or gfcallihan@vcu.edu.



Iain Morgan, Ph.D. (left), director of the Philips Institute for Oral Health Research at the VCU School of Dentistry, and Tony Faber, Ph.D., associate professor, are working toward a breakthrough in research and care for head and neck cancers. Photo: Tyler Trumbo, MCV Foundation



Morgan, Ph.D.

Anthony Ferrer, M.D.

Inaugural Rolfe Awards Celebrate Pharmacy Trailblazer



Alexis Crawford, Pharm.D. (left), and Chanda Ambrose received the inaugural Rolfe Awards to honor outstanding faculty and staff at the VCU School of Pharmacy. Photo: Penelope M. Carrington, MCV Foundation

The VCU School of Pharmacy honored outstanding faculty and staff with the inaugural Bertha Rolfe Awards during its fall convocation.

Bertha Rolfe will always be remembered as one of the most notable graduates and the first woman to serve on the VCU School of Pharmacy's faculty.

"I think she blazed the trail for women to realize this was a great profession to go into," recalled her daughter, Robin Partin. "She always believed in education, and she always knew that women were as capable as men."

A 1947 alumna, Rolfe became one of very few women

pharmacists practicing in Richmond. Two years later, she joined the school's faculty and was a lab instructor and mentor to generations of future pharmacists. She also served on the MCV Foundation board for 18 years and was active in the MCV Alumni Association.

"Bertha's teaching career at the school spanned 30 years, and she continued to give back beyond that time through service on various alumni boards and councils," said K.C.

Ogbonna, Pharm.D., dean of the VCU School of Pharmacy. “She leaves behind a wonderful legacy of service, mentorship and work ethic.”

Following Rolfe’s death at 96 in March 2022, her friend Kathy Bobbitt, Ed.D., a VCU School of Nursing alumna, led an effort to honor her legacy with a teaching award at the school. The initiative inspired more than 40 gifts from family, former colleagues, students and friends.

After soaring past its original goal, the effort’s leaders began discussing the idea of creating two awards to recognize both an outstanding faculty and staff member each year. Rolfe’s family noted how appropriate the second award would be as she always championed the work of staff and their role in keeping the university running.

The School of Pharmacy awarded the inaugural Rolfe Awards during its fall convocation in August. Alexis Crawford, Pharm.D., an assistant professor in the Department of Pharmacotherapy and Outcomes Science, received the Rolfe Teacher of the Year Award. The school also honored Chanda Ambrose, executive administrative assistant and office manager in the department, with the Rolfe Outstanding Staff Award.

Award recipients are selected by peer faculty and students who review nominations received for the honor. Both awards come with a \$1,000 honorarium and a reminder of the inspirational life and career of Rolfe.

“Bertha’s legacy is one that I hope will continue to inspire generations of faculty and staff at the School of Pharmacy,” Dr. Bobbitt said. “Not only did she leave an impact on the pharmacy profession in Virginia, but her devotion to the school and to her students as they practiced their profession are worth celebrating and aspiring to each day.”

If you would like to support the Rolfe Awards at the VCU School of Pharmacy, please contact Louie Correa, the school’s senior director of development, at 804-828-3016 or lacorrea@vcu.edu



Bertha Rolfe, R.Ph. (left) inspired an effort led by her friend Kathy Bobbitt, Ed.D., to create and name faculty and staff awards in her honor at the VCU School of Pharmacy. Photo: Eric M. Peters, MCV Foundation

The Achievable Dream

A Joanne and William Conway Nursing Scholarship is helping one student become the first in her Mexican American family to graduate from a university and become a nurse.

VCU School of Nursing senior Jasmin Blanco Vargas is a whirlwind of ambition. A first-generation student, she juggles working 30 hours a week in restaurant management, studying for classes, going through her clinical rotations, and somehow fitting in volunteer work twice a month with Collective Corazon, a nonprofit promoting Latinx health equity.

The tenacity she shows in working to become a nurse is inspired by a desire to support her mother, grandmother and three siblings — the youngest of whom is 3 years old. She's also driven by a realization that much of the health care system in America often fails to notice or understand the needs of the Hispanic community.

"There's so much more to being Hispanic than just speaking Spanish," said Vargas, whose grandmother immigrated to the U.S. from Mexico. "There are values and culture and religion that are overlooked, and I want to help bridge that gap in understanding for health care providers."

For Vargas, coming from a single-parent family in Northern Virginia made attending university challenging at times. As the eldest daughter she has often worked extra shifts to help build not only her future but also her siblings' futures back home in Woodbridge, Va.

"I wanted to be the first in the family to achieve what two generations before me have been trying to achieve," Vargas said. "I wanted to set an example for my siblings, but I didn't have the financial resources."

Now, thanks to a life-changing scholarship at the School of Nursing, she is closer to reaching her dreams. The Joanne and William Conway Nursing Scholarships provide

more than \$2.5 million in scholarships each year to support prelicensure students in the traditional or accelerated B.S. programs and the RN to B.S. programs at the School of Nursing as well as doctoral students. For Vargas, the scholarship provides welcome relief from the stress of school finances.

"Instead of working four days a week to help pay for tuition, I can work for extra financial security and groceries, or take a day off if I have a test," Vargas said. "And that's a lot less stressful."

Funding for the program was made possible thanks to a recent \$13 million gift to the School of Nursing from philanthropists Joanne and William Conway. The Conways made the gift through their Bedford Falls Foundation-DAF. Collectively, they have committed \$18.5 million to support scholarships for nursing students at VCU, which has enabled the school to reduce the cost of nursing education for undergraduate and doctoral students for the next five years.

The scholarship has allowed Vargas the freedom to explore her options as she considers working in community-based nursing and to gain experience before contemplating a master's degree. The gift also sends the important signal that there is a group of people eager to support and inspire nursing students on the MCV Campus.

"It's nice to know that there's someone out there supporting you — that they have your back and care about you to see your progress through to the end," Vargas said. "They believe in us and want to drive health care in a better direction."

If you would like to support student scholarships at the VCU School of Nursing, please contact Pam Lowe, the school's senior director of development, at 804-827-0020 or plowe@vcu.edu.

Jasmin Blanco Vargas is one of more than 500 students at the VCU School of Nursing who have benefited from Joanne and William Conway Nursing Scholarships since 2019. Photo: Tyler Trumbo, MCV Foundation



Grateful Giving

Alumni couple make unrestricted gift to benefit future generations.



David Cohen, M.D., and his wife, Lisa. Photo: Tyler Trumbo, MCV Foundation

David Cohen, M.D., and his wife, Lisa, look back on their time on the MCV Campus as students, faculty — and even as patients — with reverence akin to extended family.

Dr. Cohen's ties are to the VCU School of Medicine Department of Radiology, and Lisa Cohen graduated from the VCU School of Nursing. For nearly a decade, the MCV Campus was a big part of their lives, and they have cherished the fulfilling careers their time on campus has allowed them to create.

"MCV gave us so much — it sculpted us into better people," said Lisa Cohen, who studied on campus

and worked in several areas, from critical care nursing and working with burn patients, to the intensive care unit.

For that reason, when the Cohens decided to give back, rather than split their gift into several segments for various departments, they instead kept it simple.

The Cohens have included an unrestricted gift to the School of Medicine in their estate plans that will enrich the lives of future students and their families.

Unrestricted funds allow the school to use the funding where it is needed most.

"We kept the gift unrestricted because we didn't have strong feelings about where the money needed to go, and the School of Medicine will find a good use for it," said Dr. Cohen, who began his career on the MCV Campus and is now a general radiologist at Chesapeake Regional Medical Center. "We felt like one unrestricted gift would be the best course of action for both of us to give back."

Lisa Cohen echoed her husband.

"We felt like we needed to give back so that other people and other students will have the same experience we did in the future," she said. "If we don't give back, those experiences won't be there, and we should be striving to make our communities better for future students."

The Cohens hope the gift through their will can ensure that future students, faculty and patients benefit from the excellent education and care available on the MCV Campus at VCU Health.

"We wanted to leave some type of mark on the university as an acknowledgement of the gift it gave us," Dr. Cohen said. "We wanted something that we knew would benefit the population in a larger way with more impact."

GIFT PLANNING: HOW TO MAKE AN ESTATE GIFT

Making an estate gift is an act of generosity that can provide significant benefits to the areas that have been important in your life.

1. IDENTIFY YOUR INTENT

Begin by understanding what matters to you. Many people choose to support a cause close to their heart, such as education or medical research, or wish to create a tribute to a mentor or loved one.

2. DECIDE WHAT TO GIVE

Evaluate your assets and decide what you would like to give. Some gifts may offer more tax advantages than others.

3. CONSULT A PROFESSIONAL

Planned giving, legal and financial professionals can help ensure your gift is structured correctly, optimizing tax benefits while ensuring your wishes are met.

4. PREPARE YOUR DOCUMENT

Depending on how you structure your gift, you may update your will or trust, a beneficiary designation form or another planning tool. Be sure to use your beneficiary's legal name and tax ID number in your planning documents.

5. NOTIFY THE BENEFICIARY

Inform the intended beneficiary of your gift. This ensures the beneficiary can plan for the gift and also enables them to express their gratitude.

6. MAINTAIN THE PLAN

Circumstances change. Review your estate plan regularly to ensure it continues to reflect your intent. If you decide to change your estate gift, make sure to inform the beneficiary.



TO INCLUDE A GIFT for the VCU College of Health Professions, VCU School of Dentistry, VCU School of Medicine, VCU School of Nursing, VCU School of Pharmacy, VCU School of Population Health, VCU Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center or VCU Health in your estate, use the following information:

Legal Name: MCV Foundation

Tax ID: 54-6053660

Address: 1228 E. Broad St.,
Box 980234, Richmond, VA 23298

If you would like to learn more about how to make a gift through your estate or will, please contact Ann Deppman, J.D., VCU's assistant vice president of planned giving, at 804-828-7370 or deppmana@vcu.edu.

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