

SPRING 2021

MCV Foundation  
VCUHealth.

# CHRONICLE *of* GIVING

STORIES OF HOW YOUR GIFTS  
CHANGE LIVES AT VCU HEALTH



## **The Wright Stuff**

*Ken Wright's Legacy Continues to Unfold*

Dear Friends:

It has been more than a year since the ways in which we work, spend time with loved ones and even buy food to feed our families changed dramatically. And, tragically, many of us have lost loved ones or battled COVID-19 ourselves during these past months.

Things are by no means back to the way they once were, but we've learned to adapt, just as Americans have done in the past during our most trying times. Collectively, we've worked hard to continue moving our communities forward through this pandemic, and thanks to the work of many special individuals who have cared for the sick and worked to develop and distribute vaccines, a return to normal is within sight.

In our last issue of *Chronicle of Giving*, we explored how donors supported researchers and front-line health care workers in the earliest days of this public health emergency. In this issue, we're excited to explore the role chaplains have played in the health care ecosystem during and before the pandemic. You can also find in this issue exciting news about MEDARVA Foundation's support for a nationwide survey of COVID-19 patients who experienced loss of smell or taste as one of their symptoms.

The past year hasn't only been a time to fight COVID-19. It has also been an important moment for all of us to examine the way we see the world and how we can be mindful of incorporating diversity, equity and inclusion into our lives and our work. We're honored to share a conversation with Sheryl Garland, MCV Foundation board member and VCU Health chief of health impact, who leads initiatives to build programs and partnerships that improve access to care and advance the health of all communities we serve. We also share a story about VCU Health's medical-legal partnership, exploring how inclusion of attorneys on medical teams can impact the health of underserved individuals and communities.

Whether we face a pandemic, social justice challenges or other hurdles, we remain inspired by you, our friends and neighbors. We are assured that our community and country are moving forward together and learning from the past, because our better days always lie ahead.

Sincerely,

Wyatt S. Beazley IV  
Board Chair

Margaret Ann Bollmeier  
President and CEO

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The MCV Foundation was established in 1949 to inspire and steward philanthropy that supports the MCV Campus of Virginia Commonwealth University.

We support the clinical care, research and education 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 Massey Cancer Center and VCU Medical Center.*

We manage approximately \$800 million in assets to ensure the MCV Campus remains at the forefront of excellence and innovation in patient care, research and education. Through more than 1,800 funds, we provide scholarships, professorships, research and program funds to support the lifesaving work occurring at VCU Health every day. These funds allow VCU students, health care providers and researchers to be on the cutting edge of health care delivery, offering patients the most exciting treatments and medical technology available. We honor the history of the Medical College of Virginia and the value of philanthropy to health care education, research and service.

**ON THE COVER** / Ken Wright visits the lab of Alpha “Berry” Fowler III, M.D., on the MCV Campus, a lab with a layout to encourage interaction among researchers across disciplines. *Art concept: Eric Peters; Photo: Kevin Schindler*

**GOING GREEN** / If you would prefer to receive a digital copy of this magazine, please contact [info@mcvfoundation.org](mailto:info@mcvfoundation.org) to be added to the email distribution list.

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C. Kenneth Wright (left) with F. Gerard Moeller, M.D., director of the C. Kenneth and Dianne Wright Center for Clinical and Translational Research. *Photo: Kevin Schindler*



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# The Wright Stuff

*The C. Kenneth and Dianne Wright Foundation made an extraordinary \$24 million gift in December 2020.*



Ken Wright in front of the C. Kenneth and Dianne Wright Center for Clinical and Translational Research during a visit to the MCV Campus in 2016.  
Photo: Kevin Schindler

**IN 2015**, Ken Wright made a \$16 million gift to the MCV Foundation to support clinical and translational research on the MCV Campus and across the entire university. In recognition of this gift, VCU created the C. Kenneth and Dianne Wright Center for Clinical and Translational Research.

Mr. Wright's neighbors at Westminster Canterbury and other friends saw the announcement of this transformational gift in the newspaper and in a

variety of MCV Campus and VCU publications. They would often express their gratitude and ask him, "What exactly is clinical and translational research?"

To assist Mr. Wright with his response, the MCV Foundation produced small, laminated cards that provide a brief overview of the Wright Center's mission and how clinical and translational research helps improve and save lives. Each card offered a succinct explanation of the center's mission to trans-



Ken Wright never missed an opportunity to interact with recipients of the scholarships he funded. Above, he stands with the C. Kenneth and Dianne Wright Physician-Scientist Scholars at the 2019 MCV Campus Endowed Scholarship Brunch. The scholars are (L to R) Teja Devarakond, Graeme Murray and Eric Kwong. *Photo: CSI Studios*



C. Kenneth and Dianne Wright. *Photo: Fran Householder*

form important basic science research into effective lifesaving treatments for patients at VCU Health and at hospitals around the world. In other words, the center was translating research “from bench to bedside.”

Mr. Wright kept a stack of these cards in his coat pocket and would beam with pride at each opportunity to share them. For him, it was not about the gift but rather it was about the important research, innovation, discovery and care that helped patients. He continued to advance that important work in 2018 through a gift of \$5 million to the Wright Center to support its biomedical informatics program.

Mr. Wright passed away in August 2019, but his passion for the transformational work being done across VCU showed that it lives on this past December when the C. Kenneth and Dianne Wright Foundation announced a \$24 million gift for VCU and VCU Health.

Through his estate, Mr. Wright has supported some of the university’s endeavors and goals that the Wrights held most dear.

“I know Mr. Wright would be very pleased about this gift,” said Audrey Pape, president of the Wright Foundation. “It supports three areas that were very important to him – innovative research at the Wright Center, patient care in the new Adult Outpatient Pavilion and scholarships at the College of Engineering.”

– Continued on next page



The Massey Cancer Center entryway and patient gallery in the new Adult Outpatient Pavilion will be named for C. Kenneth and Dianne Wright. *Photo: Eric Peters*



Michael Rao, Ph.D., president of VCU and VCU Health, visits with Ken Wright. Photo: Kevin Schindler

– Continued from previous page

The new gift provides \$16 million for the Wright Center for Clinical and Translational Research.

“We’re humbled by and grateful for the generosity that the Wrights and their foundation have shown our center,” said F. Gerard Moeller, M.D., director of the Wright Center. “This past year has shown us how important clinical research is for the health of our community. And this gift will help the Wright Center promote important collaborative, community engaged research.”

The Wright Center gift will fund priorities like strategic faculty recruitment and retention, including hiring diverse junior faculty and supporting them in their research.

The estate gift provides an additional \$4 million to support the VCU Health Adult Outpatient Pavilion, which is expected to be completed at the end of 2021 and will offer an array of outpatient clinics. The contribution will name a public entryway and gallery for patients arriving to receive care at Massey Cancer Center.

“The Adult Outpatient Pavilion is being constructed with patient experience as a top priority,” said Arthur Kellermann, professor and senior vice president for VCU health sciences and CEO of VCU Health System. “Based on all that I’ve heard about the charm and warmth Mr. Wright extended to everyone, it is only fitting that the space named for him and his wife be the point through which we welcome neighbors and families from across the region. This 17-story facility, which includes a dedicated tower for outpatient oncology care, will change the way we treat patients. Mr. Wright’s generosity to our institution, of which this gift is the latest example, will make an impact on every patient we touch for decades to come.”

The remaining \$4 million of the Wright Foundation’s \$24 million gift will support the Wright Engineering Access Scholarship Program to provide need- and merit-based awards to students in the College of Engineering, which was one of the first VCU entities to benefit from the Wrights’ philanthropy.

## A Legacy of Leadership

When he retired in 1999 from a business he built, Mr. Wright focused much of his time and energy on helping others through his philanthropy. The Wrights’ relationship with VCU began in 1999 when they donated the building that had been Mr. Wright’s business headquarters to the VCU College of Engineering Foundation. That building later became home to the VCU Brandcenter. Mr. Wright joined the College of Engineering Foundation Board and

*With the latest gift, the Wrights’ contributions to VCU total more than \$70 million and place them among the top donors in the university’s history.*

would make gifts totaling more than \$11 million to support students and facilities. The microelectronics lab bears the Wrights’ names. The Wrights also gave the initial \$1 million gift to create the Eugene P. Trani Scholars Program to provide support to undergraduate students.

On the MCV Campus, the Wrights were stalwart supporters of Massey Cancer Center, the Pauley Heart Center, the Division of Pulmonary Disease and Critical Care Medicine, and other clinical programs. Dianne, who preceded her husband in death in 2013, was among Massey Cancer Center’s greatest ambassadors and was a member of its advisory board.

The first gift to what would become the Wright Center for Clinical and Translational Research came in 2015. That contribution established six C. Kenneth and Dianne Wright Distinguished Chairs in Clinical and Translational Research and the C. Kenneth and Dianne Wright Physician-

## The Wright Stuff



F. Gerard Moeller, M.D., is director of the C. Kenneth and Dianne Wright Center for Clinical and Translational Research.  
*Photo: VCU University Marketing*



The C. Kenneth and Dianne Wright Center for Clinical and Translational Research's Collaborative Advanced Research Imaging program uses this advanced research-dedicated MRI scanner. Information from the scanner about brain injuries, addiction and other medical challenges will be combined with other data using biomedical informatics to find subtle signatures that will help health care providers better diagnose and treat diseases and injuries. *Photo: Eric Peters*

Scientist Scholars program. Thanks in large part to the support that Ken and Dianne provided, the Wright Center became the first federally funded center of its kind in Virginia and today is renowned nationally for turning groundbreaking science into lifesaving care.

“Not only have the Wright gifts directly funded research that improves outcomes for patients, but they’ve helped the center leverage the support of the National Institutes of Health, who renewed our Clinical and Translational Science Award in 2018,” Dr. Moeller said. “The Wrights’ dedication to our work is a driving force for much of what we’ve accomplished.”

With the latest gift, the Wrights’ contributions to VCU total more than \$70 million and place them among the top donors in the university’s history. The legacy that will live on, however, is not the number, but rather the direct impact in advancing research, developing students and improving the community’s health.

“Like VCU itself, Ken Wright was dedicated to the grand questions and solving the problems that have perplexed humanity for years. He always believed in what we did best, and these final gifts through his foundation represent his intentions for continued support of One VCU in order to advance research, education and clinical care,” said Michael Rao, Ph.D., president of VCU and VCU Health.

“I admire Ken as one of the kindest, most generous and strategic donors I have ever known in my service to institutions committed to these critical missions that shape society and serve the public – particularly those most in need. His investment in the Wright Center for Clinical and Translational Research and his support to the College of Engineering and the Adult Outpatient Pavilion is transformational, saving and making lives better. VCU remains eternally grateful to the Wrights and to their beloved team, all of whom do so much to fulfill the Wrights’ wishes,” Dr. Rao said.

*To learn more about how you can support the Wright Center or the Adult Outpatient Pavilion, please contact Brian Thomas, MCV Foundation’s vice president and chief development officer, at [brian.thomas@vcuhealth.org](mailto:brian.thomas@vcuhealth.org) or 804-828-0067. ●*

# IN MEMORIAM

## Stanley Frank Pauley

Philanthropist and Namesake of the VCU Health Pauley Heart Center  
1927-2020



**THE MCV CAMPUS** lost a visionary and generous friend last fall. Stanley Frank Pauley, a longtime champion of advancing engineering and medical innovations, passed away on Nov. 20 at age 93.

Pauley was an integral part of the VCU and VCU Health community for decades. His legacy lives on through his family and the profound impact of the Pauley Family Foundation, which he and his wife Dorothy founded in 2011. A stalwart supporter of the university, he helped lay the foundation for the VCU College of Engineering, and Pauley and his family made an indelible mark on the MCV Campus, committing more than \$28 million in private philanthropy to VCU, placing them among the most generous benefactors in the institution's history.

Pauley and his family's devotion to advancing medical research and patient care extended to VCU Massey Cancer Center. Over the years, the family has contributed about \$160,000 to the center to advance critical research conducted by various Massey physician-scientists.

Pauley will be most remembered for the vision and philanthropic connection he made with VCU Health's cardiology practice in 2006. As a patient of Kenneth Ellenbogen, M.D., director of clinical cardiac electrophysiology and pacing at VCU Health, Pauley was impressed by the staff and by the treatment he received. He directed his family foundation to make a \$5 million gift to VCU Health's heart center to support a variety of research initiatives and educational programs. In recognition of the gift, the center was named the VCU Health Pauley Heart Center, a designation that placed it among only a few named major heart centers in the country.

"Stan Pauley is synonymous with the VCU Health Pauley Heart Center. Over the last few years, we have grown into one of the top heart centers in the country because of Stan," Dr. Ellenbogen said. "To me, he is a true VIP. I am thankful to have known Stan and his wonderful family."

The gift began a long history of supporting VCU Health and advancing its world-class cardiology program. In



Stan Pauley at the 2018 ribbon cutting for a new cardiac imaging suite at VCU Health.  
Photos: Kevin Morley, VCU University Marketing

Stan Pauley and VCU Health leaders cut the ribbon on a new cardiac imaging suite at the Pauley Heart Center in 2018.

2012, the Pauley Family Foundation gave another \$5 million to recruit the heart center’s first director and five new research faculty members, along with startup funds for research staff, lab costs and equipment. The funds also created new research programs in cardiovascular disease prevention, women’s cardiovascular health and congenital heart disease. Cardio-oncology expert Gregory Hundley, M.D., was recruited from Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center as the Pauley Heart Center’s inaugural director in 2018. To provide Dr. Hundley with the appropriate equipment to continue his high-caliber research on preventive heart care for patients undergoing chemotherapy, the Pauley family contributed \$4 million to build an 8,000-square-foot cardiovascular imaging suite with echocardiography and MRI technology.

“These are phenomenal tools that allow us to see what’s going on inside the body, look at the effects of new therapies we’re testing and see if the therapies are working,” Dr. Hundley said. “This technology is critically

important because it doesn’t use any ionizing radiation, so we can obtain relevant information about the body with the same effect as an X-ray but without the potentially harmful exposure.”

In 2020, the Pauley Family Foundation pledged an additional \$5 million to support the research of comprehensive treatments for patients with cardiac arrhythmia – a condition that affects more than 4 million Americans and manifests in harmful irregular heartbeats. This recent gift will help VCU Health researchers perfect their diagnoses and deliver innovative therapies to treat the condition in an effective, cost-efficient manner.

VCU Health’s new CEO, Arthur Kellermann, M.D., expressed sadness at the news. “My only regret since moving to Richmond is that I did not get to meet Mr. Pauley before his passing. I will always honor him by committing my support and that of VCU Health to keeping the Pauley Center at the forefront of cardiac care in the Commonwealth and United States.” ●

# Celebrating Scholarships ... Virtually



Deepak and Mareen Thomas spoke with the foundation about what inspired them to create an endowed scholarship. The couple graduated from the School of Medicine in 2007, and Mareen completed her undergraduate degree at VCU. Photo: Paul Brockwell Jr.



**ONE** of our most beloved traditions looked a little different this spring. The COVID-19 pandemic once again made it impossible to host an in-person event for our celebration of endowed scholarship donors and recipients on the MCV Campus, but the foundation team could not let another year go by without providing an opportunity for scholarship donors and recipients to share their stories, say thank you, and remind everyone of how critical scholarship support is for health sciences students.

Resources Available to Students on the MCV Campus in the 2020-21 Academic Year

**463**  
Scholarships

**\$3.3**  
Million

On March 7, the foundation broadcasted a virtual event to celebrate the donors and recipients of endowed scholarship funds and featured donors and recipients from the College of Health Professions, the School of Dentistry, the School of Medicine, the School of Nursing, and the School of Pharmacy.

“Everyone eagerly awaits the day we can gather again in person to celebrate the tremendous generosity of donors to endowed scholarships and to toast the great potential of the students who receive this support and whose stories inspire us and remind us of why scholarships are so important,” said Margaret Ann Bollmeier, president and CEO of the MCV Foundation. “Until then, we are adapting to safely celebrate and want all of our friends to stay healthy.”

This year, donors accounted for 463 scholarships. Through these endowed scholarships, students from the four schools and one college on the MCV Campus had access to \$3.3 million in funding and support that ranges from full tuition to modest support to help students. In addition, 35 current fund scholarships allowed the foundation to provide more than \$415,000 in financial assistance to students on the MCV Campus this academic year.

*Donors can establish their own endowments or contribute to existing funds. To learn more about the various ways to establish a scholarship or grow an existing one, contact Brian Thomas, vice president and chief development officer, at 804-828-0067 or [brian.thomas@vcuhealth.org](mailto:brian.thomas@vcuhealth.org).* ●

## Foundation’s Silver Receives Top CFO Honor From Virginia Business

**I**n uncertain times, people crave a steady hand at the helm, especially when it comes to financial management.

Last fall, *Virginia Business* magazine named David Silver, chief financial officer for the foundation, one of four outstanding CFOs in Virginia. Silver was recognized as the best chief financial officer of a small nonprofit. Honorees were nominated by their peers and chosen by the magazine’s editorial staff and previous CFO award recipients.

“We’re excited to see this recognition for what we have always known about Dave and his work,” said Margaret Ann Bollmeier, the foundation’s president and CEO. “He’s highly respected and really well-liked by our team, and I personally appreciate his ability to build relationships in a way that instills confidence in the foundation.”

Silver joined the foundation as CFO in 2018 and has overseen a transformation and modernization of the finance team’s efforts over the past three years. In addition to building out his team, he also manages information technology needs of staff and the maintenance needs of the foundation’s historic headquarters.

“The board felt incredibly fortunate to recruit Dave to this critical leadership role at the foundation after a competitive national search,” said Keith Middleton, foundation trustee and chair of the board’s Fi-



David Silver joined the MCV Foundation in 2018. He entered the world of finance by chance after discovering a knack for accounting while managing the back office business operations in the hospitality industry. A Russian history major in college, he earned an M.B.A. from Johns Hopkins University. In his spare time, he enjoys taking to the skies as a licensed private pilot. *Photo: Shandell Taylor, Broken Fan Productions*

nance and Audit Committee. “His performance has been exceptional, especially as it comes to positioning the foundation for the future.”

Silver, for his part, is very quick to share the credit for this honor with his colleagues in the finance department.

“You’re only as good as your team,” he told *Virginia Business*. “It’s so important to focus on developing your people. It’s super important as a manager to help your staff develop their skill set and be a resource and a mentor so they can grow.” ●

# Trustee's Corner

*This regular feature highlights the stories and diverse talents of the leaders who serve on our board of trustees.*



**SHERYL GARLAND** has worked at VCU Health for more than 30 years. She serves as chief of health impact at the health system and has served since 2016 on the MCV Foundation Board of Trustees, making key contributions on the Personnel and Compensation and the Finance and Audit committees.

One of her achievements at VCU Health of which she is most proud is the Virginia Coordinated Care Program, which took nearly three years to build before launching in 2000. For 19 years, the program connected uninsured patients with primary care resources in their communities so those patients would have a medical home and not need to seek care in emergency rooms. Among participants, emergency department visits dropped by 52 percent over the program's lifespan, while inpatient admissions dropped by 49 percent. The program ended in 2019 following the state's expansion of Medicaid.

At VCU Health, Sheryl has served as vice president for health policy and community relations, director of community outreach for the VCU Institute for Women's Health, administrative director of the VCU Center on Health Disparities, and director of the VCU Office of Health Innovation.

## **As chief of health impact, what is your role at VCU Health?**

It's a very unique role. I have not personally met anyone else with this title yet, so it's a great conversation piece among my colleagues. About four years ago I was asked to focus our health system's initiatives around building pro-

grams and partnerships to look at ways we could improve the health of communities we serve. There is no question that VCU Health and our partners across the university are focused on providing high-quality and safe care for all patients in the region and state, but what we don't spend enough time talking about is the role our organization plays in improving the overall health of the communities we touch across all of Virginia.

We can't do it by ourselves because many issues go beyond clinical or medical care. It's important for us to think about our patients, the populations we serve and the communities they live in, in a more holistic way.

## **Can you share examples of partnerships that help address patients or communities in a holistic way?**

VCU Health does not build houses or own apartments, but we realize housing is a major issue for many of our patients. We have developed very intentional partnerships with organizations such as Homeward and Virginia Supportive Housing so we can connect people who don't have stable housing with resources in the community.

We also have a longstanding partnership with the Medical Respite, which is run by the Daily Planet Health Services. For up to 45 days, they provide a place to recuperate for people who are discharged from the hospital but have unstable housing. We have negotiated to have beds designated for our patients at that facility because we acknowledge if patients don't have anywhere to recuperate, they're likely to end up back in the hospital.



Photo: VCU University Marketing

### **After 30 years on campus, what continues to motivate you each morning?**

It's very interesting, because for 32 years the answer has been the same: There are people who need help.

While I don't deliver care, I have the opportunity to work with incredible teams to develop new ways of providing support to our patients. We find new processes that make it easier for patients to access the services they need. We find new and innovative opportunities to work with community partners to help people be as healthy as they can be. We remove barriers so patients can achieve the health outcomes that we wish for them when they are discharged from our hospital, leave our Emergency Department or receive care in our clinics.

That's what keeps me coming back and keeps me excited. VCU Health is an organization that believes in continuous quality improvement, and until we get it perfect on all fronts, there's a need to keep coming back.

### **Are there any proud moments in your time on the MCV Campus you'd like to share?**

My father is from Church Hill. When he was a little boy, his mom would pack a lunch for them to come to the A.D. Williams Clinic here on campus. It was one of the only clinics where African Americans could receive care.

Patients would come in and sign their names on a list,

and they had to get there early in the morning and hope to be called before noon. If not, the clinics would go to lunch and patients would go out in the A.D. Williams Clinic courtyard to eat. After lunch, they would go back in, wait, and hope that they were called before clinics closed at the end of the day. My dad shared that he never wanted that kind of experience for his family if he ever had insurance. So, I never came here for care as a child.

When I became director over our clinics in the early '90s, I was shocked when the operations director explained the details of what was, 50 years later, the same appointment scheduling system. The first thing I asked the operations team to do was implement an appointment scheduling system that was patient-centered, respected people's time, gave them the opportunity to choose when to come for their appointments, and shared clearer ideas about when they might be seen.

As soon as the new system was implemented, I called my father and said, "I just want to let you know that we've put in an appointment scheduling system. I just want you to know it's done."

His response was, "Thank you. Thank you on behalf of a lot of people."

When I think about my accomplishments, as little as that change was, all I can think about are the generations of people who lived with that previous system. It was just a simple change in a process that I think has made a huge difference in a lot of people's lives. ●

# Helping Others Breathe Easier

*A transformational gift for advanced lung disease*



Despite suffering from pulmonary fibrosis, Bill Belanich walks four miles every day and continues to add to the list of more than 80 countries he's visited in his lifetime. To thank VCU Health and his pulmonologist Dr. Berry Fowler, Belanich recently made a \$5 million commitment that will help others manage and heal from lung conditions for years to come. *Photo: Kevin Schindler*

Alpha A. “Berry” Fowler III, M.D., professor of medicine in the Division of Pulmonary Disease and Critical Care Medicine, has treated Bill Belanich for pulmonary fibrosis since 2017. Photo: VCU University Marketing



**TO GET TO** the U.S. in the late 1950s, Bill Belanich escaped Yugoslavia with his parents and two brothers, crossing the Adriatic Sea under cover of dark and spending two years in Italian refugee camps. Still a teenager at the time, he eventually made it to New York City with his family.

“When you come to this country, you see the endless opportunities that it has to offer,” he said recently.

With that mindset, it was within just two days of arriving on U.S. soil that Belanich began his decades-long career in the construction industry.

He installed asbestos in commercial and industrial sites for 10 years in New York, and in 1969 he found employment as an insulation journeyman in Richmond at Waco Inc. The rest of his career was spent growing with the company and working to abate toxic building material from offices, hospitals, schools and industrial sites.

In 2017, when a CT scan revealed the inevitable lung damage from asbestos exposure, the former Waco president knew exactly where he was going.

“People often go to the doctor and they hear a referral and don’t do any further research,” Belanich said. “If I am going to do anything with doctors when I need specialists, I do some research. I always have and I always will, and I follow wherever that takes me. In Richmond, all the good doctors are at VCU.”

Belanich reconnected with Alpha A. “Berry” Fowler III, M.D., whom he had first met in 1997 due to a previous lung scare. In the interim, he had also seen VCU Health’s Harold Young, M.D., for sciatica and acoustic neuroma, and George Vetrovec, M.D., for cardiovascular issues.

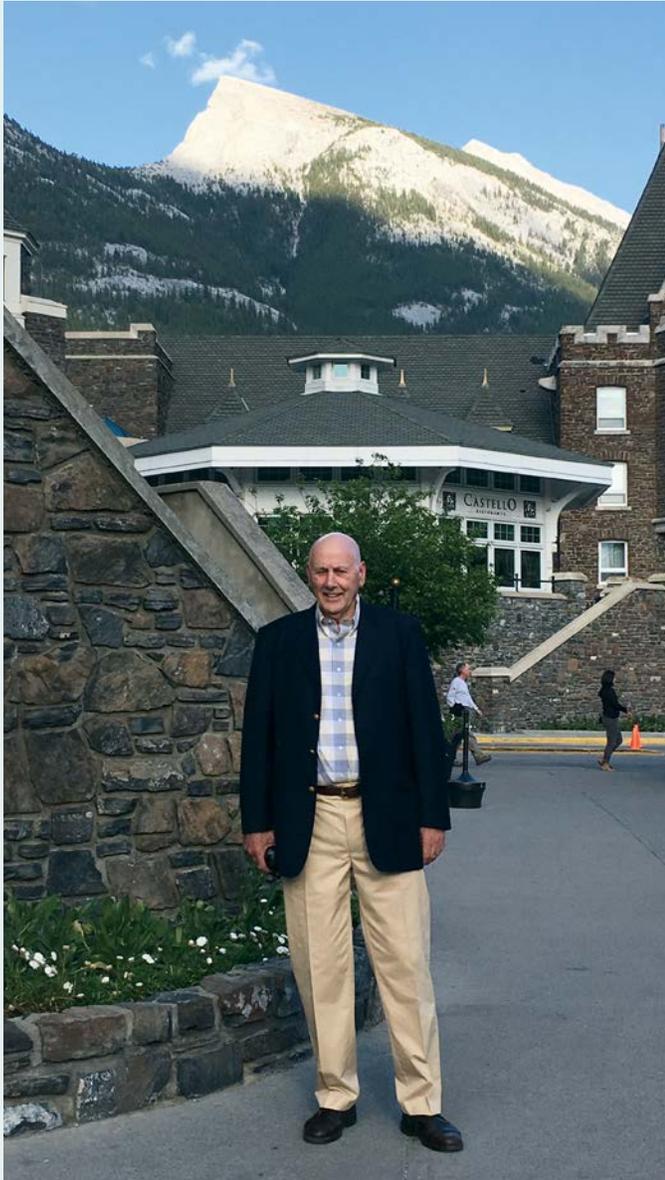
Since reconnecting with Dr. Fowler in 2017, Belanich has been working with the professor and former chair of the Division of Pulmonary Disease and Critical Care Medicine to fight pulmonary fibrosis. The disease occurs when lung tissue becomes damaged and scarred, making it more difficult for the lungs to work properly and causing shortness of breath that worsens over time.

Despite his fibrosis, Belanich, who is 80 years old, walks four miles every day when the weather allows, and he continues to add to the list of more than 80 countries he’s visited in his lifetime.

“I trust Dr. Fowler, and he’s helped me keep some of my freedom to be active,” Belanich said.

It’s because of this continued freedom — and the belief that Dr. Fowler and VCU Health can further help people battling all types of lung conditions — that Belanich made a \$5 million commitment in 2020 to establish the William Belanich Endowment Fund at the VCU School of Medicine. A portion of his gift will provide current use funds as well. The fund will support specialty care for patients with interstitial lung disease, pulmonary hypertension, cystic fibrosis, lung transplant, lung cancer, COPD, asthma and other lung diseases. It will also support faculty development, recruitment and retention, education and research in the Division of Pulmonary Disease and Critical Care Medicine.

– Continued on next page



Bill Belanich, shown here in Canada's Banff National Park. Photo courtesy of Bill Belanich

– Continued from previous page

“I’ve told Mr. Belanich this several times to make sure he understands,” Dr. Fowler said. “His gift is going to make an enormous impact on improving the health of hundreds, maybe thousands of individuals. It’s truly going to enable us to grow the pulmonary division into a program that spreads throughout Central Virginia and cares for some of the sickest individuals in the state.”

## A Gift That Was a Lifetime in the Making

“I was 29 when I arrived at Waco in 1969,” Belanich said. “It was a growing company, and I grew with it. I bought stock when it was available and participated in profit sharing. And, of course, over the years, the stock value increased.”

Belanich worked his way from journeyman to president. Thanks to his hard work and good fortunes, he was able to make a significant commitment to what he believes is a worthy cause and a team with unlimited potential to save and improve lives.

“Here at VCU Health we advance cutting-edge clinical care, complete trials of new therapies to treat severe lung disease, and help educate our physicians who will provide outstanding care for patients and families in Richmond and far beyond in the years ahead,” said Patricia Sime, M.D., chair of the Department of Internal Medicine at VCU Health. “Support from generous donors like Mr. Belanich and others will help us save lives, develop the research needed to find cures and enable us to provide care for ever more patients in need.”

To maximize his giving power and impact, Belanich chose to offer a blended gift, meaning he gave outright what he could for now, and designated the MCV Foundation as the beneficiary of his IRA to complete the gift.

“Mr. Belanich did not put many restrictions on his gift, so we will be able to allocate resources where needed,” Dr. Fowler said. “We can use it to recruit new physicians, participate in the initiation of a new lung transplant center at the hospital, or grow some of the incredible services we already offer, including an interstitial lung disease clinic, an adult cystic fibrosis center, the state’s largest interventional pulmonology program, pulmonary hypertension services and others.”

The myriad of ways Belanich will impact the community here in Central Virginia are yet to be written, but they are guaranteed to improve lives thanks to his generosity. He played an important role in society for decades, sacrificing his own health. Now, he’s giving back to help ensure others have the continued freedom he has experienced.

*If you are interested in supporting the Pulmonology and Critical Care Division at VCU Health, contact Niles Eggleston, assistant vice president for development, VCU School of Medicine and VCU Health, at 804-828-2112 or [niles.eggleston@vcuhealth.org](mailto:niles.eggleston@vcuhealth.org).* ●

# MEDARVA Foundation Gives Lifeline to COVID-19 Smell Research



Smell loss, a key symptom of many COVID-19 patients, is being studied by a national project based on the MCV Campus. Recent support from the MEDARVA Foundation has enabled this important research to continue.

**LOSS** of smell and/or taste was quickly identified in the early days of the pandemic as a symptom commonly reported in patients who contract the novel coronavirus. What scientists did not have a clear picture of at the time was how long this symptom might endure, and that's where one VCU Health research team has been focused.

"Our initial research saw, among other things, that almost 40 percent of people presented with loss of smell as their first or only symptom of COVID," said Evan Reiter, M.D., professor of otolaryngology and medical director of the VCU Health Smell and Taste Disorders Center. "That underscored the need to incorporate smell loss as a hallmark symptom of COVID."

VCU Health's Smell and Taste Disorders Center, one of few centers of its kind in the U.S., was uniquely positioned to raise awareness and evaluate long-term effects of the virus on sense of smell and taste. Early in the pandemic, Dr. Reiter led a team to design a patient survey and enroll participants so they could create a better understanding of smell and taste changes associated with coronavirus disease.

"We wanted to watch people through the whole process and see what they went through and how they're recovering," Dr. Reiter said. "We're seeing the vast majority of people who experience losses are recovering within a few weeks – but not all of them. That's one of the things we continue to watch."

The group recently received \$25,000 in funding through the MEDARVA Foundation, which allowed them to continue the nationwide longitudinal survey of COVID-19 patients who experienced smell loss as one of their symptoms.

"We thought Dr. Reiter's study was very timely," said Bruce Kupper, CEO of the MEDARVA Foundation. "It's important to focus on the long-term effects of COVID-19 on the patient, and we've found that smell and taste have a huge impact on a person's quality of life."

The *American Journal of Otolaryngology* published initial findings from this research in its November issue, and the survey project continues thanks to MEDARVA's support. The study continues to welcome participants who have noticed a change in their sense of smell or taste due to a COVID-19 diagnosis. If you or a loved one is interested, enroll by visiting [go.vcu.edu/covidsmell](https://go.vcu.edu/covidsmell).

*If you would like to support this research, please contact Brian Thomas, MCV Foundation vice president and chief development officer, at [brian.thomas@vcuhealth.org](mailto:brian.thomas@vcuhealth.org) or 804-828-0067. ●*

# Reflecting on Life's Biggest Questions

*Pastoral care scholarship prepares chaplains to play invaluable role in health care.*

**SOMETIMES** science hits a wall.

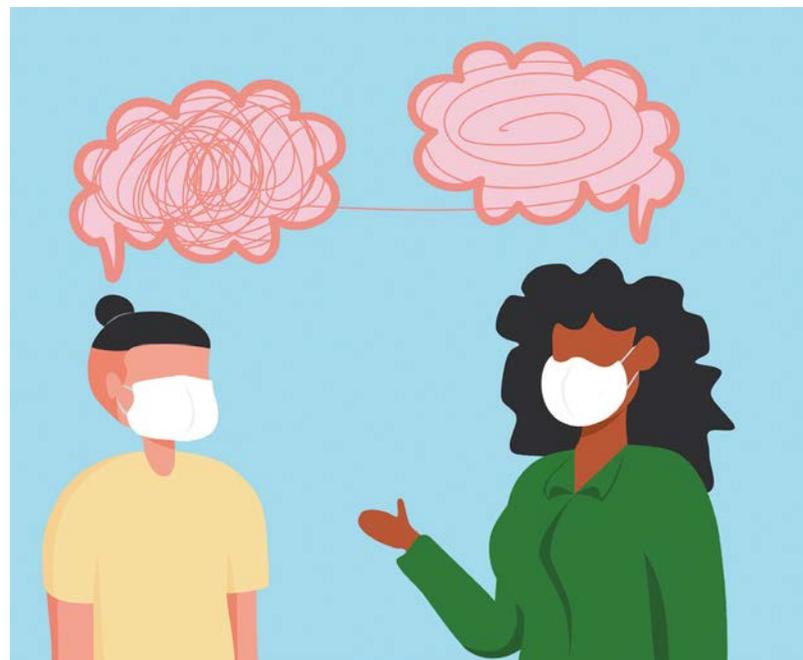
That's where Caitlyn Bailey says her chaplain colleagues, trainees and students step in to help people face the most enormous challenges of their lives.

"When the doctor says the last cancer treatment didn't work, or when they tell the mother her baby isn't going to survive, that's where we come in," said Bailey, who is affiliate faculty in the Department of Patient Counseling at the College of Health Professions and a pastoral care supervisor at VCU Health. "People go to the spiritual, they go to the existential. They ask the big questions about life, and the world, and why we're here."

These questions come up more often and carry more weight during a global pandemic, which is why, for those who must be there, VCU Health has been as comforting a place as possible as COVID-19 impacted the region.

"Compared to other health systems, chaplains and spiritual care providers are extremely well integrated into VCU Health," Bailey said. "In a time of unprecedented crisis, our chaplains, students and residents are heroes. They've been entrusted with the spiritual and existential care of staff, patients and families."

This care over the past year has included sitting outside during visitor restrictions with families who have learned their loved ones passed away inside, praying with those of



all religions who want an extra voice, creating meditation resources for staff, playing guitar in nursing stations of the hardest-hit units, setting up video conferences to put patients as close to their families as possible, and helping people reflect on some of the big questions that often don't have answers.

The unbelievably strong, compassionate chaplains, trainees and students who provide this care at VCU Health are part of the Department of Patient Counseling at the College of Health Professions and the Department of Pastoral Care at the hospital.

The college's department is one of the leading patient counseling and pastoral care programs in the country. Accredited by the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education Inc., it is the only accredited program in the country to offer academic credit for all clinical pastoral education. It created one of the nation's first master's degrees in patient counseling, produced some of the first African American and first female training supervisors and is one of only two programs in the country housed in a college of health professions. In addition, as Bailey pointed out, it is uniquely and tightly integrated into the health system through its sister department in pastoral care.

Much of where the department stands today is thanks to the visionary leadership of Lex Tartaglia, D.Min., who served as chair from 1996 to 2008 and as director of pastoral care from 1996 to 2007. He then served as senior associate dean for the College of Health Professions for 12 years.

When Dr. Tartaglia retired in 2020, colleagues asked how he would like to be honored. Among other lofty suggestions, they offered named spaces in the college's new 154,000-square-foot education and research facility that Dr. Tartaglia helped make possible. He made it clear, however, that any gift recognizing his time at the school should be made to the student scholarship fund that had been named for him several years earlier.

"To be honest, it never occurred to me to think of anything else," he said of the decision. "You can give students the words to say, but you can never fully prepare them for this role. We support them as they process their own feelings and guide them as they grow personally and professionally. I am inspired by the courage of our students to meet the challenge."

He adds that scholarships help students meet the demands of increasingly rigorous chaplaincy education.

"While being an effective listener and advocate for patients and families has always been part of training, the complexity of the current and future health care environment requires more," he explained. "Chaplaincy students must develop skills that allow them as spiritual care providers to collaborate with the entire health care team. They learn to utilize spiritual care pathways, evidence-based practice and research literacy to achieve improved patient outcomes."



A scholarship named for Lex Tartaglia, D.Min., is awarded to patient counseling students who are participating in the program's yearlong or semester-long internship components. Photo: Allen Jones, VCU University Marketing

The Alexander F. Tartaglia Student Scholarship is awarded to patient counseling students who are participating in the program's yearlong or semester-long internship components. Russell Davis, Ph.D., who holds the department's Rev. Robert B. Lantz Endowed Chair, said the goal is to reach a point at which the fund can provide full tuition benefits each year for its five to six interns.

"It is essential to our future to have a strong scholarship base," Dr. Davis said. "Theological students and graduates sometimes have a rough time making ends meet, so any help they receive strengthens their ability to provide this important care."

That help in the form of scholarships and other support for pastoral care education produces graduates who move into our communities across the world as more people ask hard questions. So, in the scariest times of their lives, patients, families and care providers will have strong people ready to hold their hands and help them process the enormity of it all.

*If you are interested in learning more about supporting the Department of Patient Counseling at the College of Health Professions, contact T. Greg Prince, Ed.D., senior director of development, at 804-828-7247 or [tgprince@vcu.edu](mailto:tgprince@vcu.edu). ●*

# Trailblazing Pediatric Dental Residents Fund Space for Future Generations



Randy Adams, D.D.S., teamed up with his friend and fellow housestaff alum Marsha Adler Gordon, D.D.S., to fund a lounge space for pediatric dental residents. Drs. Adams and Gordon were the inaugural residents when the MCV Campus relaunched its pediatric dentistry residency program in 1978.  
*Photo: Kevin Schindler*

**WHEN** the residency program for pediatric dentistry relaunched on the MCV Campus in 1978, the first two residents were trailblazers.

Randy Adams, D.D.S., came to the program after practicing general dentistry and teaching as affiliated faculty with the VCU School of Dentistry. The Danville, Virginia, native earned his doctor of dental surgery degree from Howard University. Dr. Adams worked with RCAP, a Richmond antipoverty program through which he established a dental care program for adults and children in Richmond's Fulton neighborhood. For Dr. Adams,

the relaunched pediatric dental residency was a way to hone his skills and help him serve neighborhood kids in need. To this day, he maintains his private pediatric dental practice in Richmond's Jackson Ward neighborhood.

Marsha Adler Gordon, D.D.S., arrived on campus eager to prove people wrong after often facing discouraging remarks about women pursuing dentistry.

"If you tell me I can't do something, it makes me want to do it even more," said Dr. Gordon. "At the time, there were mixed feelings about women being in dentistry. My class had 10 women, and faculty and staff were supportive. Our sense of camaraderie was very strong."

After graduating, Dr. Gordon entered the pediatric dentistry residency and credits the program for supporting her and Dr. Adams. The two were quick to form a friendship as the first residents of the new program for a profession that had been overwhelmingly white and male-dominated.

"We were certainly an odd couple for the time," Dr. Gordon recalls. "We had different skill sets and both really respected one another. It was a very cordial environment, and we really had to work hard together and learn together as the first two residents."

Dr. Adams agrees. "Since we were the first two, we had to cover a lot of services. We supported and did cases at the School of Dentistry, the Children's Hospital and Richmond Eye and Ear Hospital. It was a lot of work, but it was a good chance to get experience and exposure."

Today Dr. Gordon practices pediatric dentistry and teaches in a residency program in Pennsylvania, but her connection to the MCV Campus has always been strong throughout the years. It was here she met her husband David, who graduated from the VCU School of Medicine. And their middle son Steven – despite his mother's hopes he'd pursue dentistry – also graduated from the School of Medicine. They were generous supporters of the medical school's McGlothlin Medical Education Center.

"It feels wonderful giving back," Dr. Gordon said. "And I was excited that there were now three of us in the family



Marsha Adler Gordon, D.D.S., is teaming up with Randy Adams, D.D.S., her former co-resident in pediatric dentistry, to fund a new area for pediatric dental residents to gather, study and hold conferences. *Photo courtesy of Marsha Gordon*

with ties to the MCV Campus. MCV was a place that made a lot of my life come full circle."

But Dr. Gordon felt the tiniest bit guilty, she said, for not supporting her own school. An introduction to Barbara Payton at the School of Dentistry development office helped set the stage to team up with her former colleague Dr. Adams to make an impact. The two reconnected, and she was sad to learn that Dr. Adams's wife Rose had passed away in the intervening years. Rose Adams was also a VCU alum and faithful supporter of the School of Education and VCU Athletics.

"He's such a very kind man. He really made us all proud in his abilities to give back to the school and the community," Dr. Gordon said. "It felt like a wonderful opportunity to bring our lives back together, and I'm very proud and excited to be a part of the new space."

The pair thought it would be especially meaningful to support a space for pediatric dental residents to study and hold conferences. This gathering space will be part of the new Children's Hospital Wonder Tower.

"We were in the first class, and both wanted to do something to acknowledge and support the school," Dr. Adams said. "The school had been so good to us, and we both believe in the program. This will be something to remember us by and to support future generations."

*If you would like to support dentistry on the MCV Campus, please contact Gloria Greiner-Callihan, associate dean and director of development and alumni relations for the School of Dentistry, at 804-828-8101 or [gfcallihan@vcu.edu](mailto:gfcallihan@vcu.edu). ●*

# Adam Abubaker Memorial Lectureship to Spotlight Addiction Research and Training



Adam Abubaker (left) with his father Omar Abubaker, D.M.D., Ph.D. Dr. Abubaker is helping memorialize his son with an endowed lectureship on addiction care and research.

*Photos courtesy of Dr. Omar Abubaker*

**A MINOR** high school football injury is what Omar Abubaker, D.M.D., Ph.D., believes ultimately led to his late son Adam’s opioid addiction. In 2013, Adam had surgery to repair the injury and received a prescription of 90 Vicodin pills to manage his postoperative pain.

“He didn’t get addicted at the time,” Dr. Abubaker said, “but gradually he kept coming back seeking more opioid prescriptions.”

Adam began to struggle with prescription opioid medications, and like many who are prescribed



opioids, he later transitioned to using heroin, the illicit drug that is cheap, widely available, highly addictive and deadly. Adam's active heroin addiction lasted four months before his family helped him enter treatment. He would spend approximately 10 months in recovery before tragically dying of an overdose at age 21. All told, his battle against addiction spanned less than a year from his first prescription to his untimely death. Adam's death is a grim reminder of how intractable the opioid epidemic has become in the U.S.

Since then, Dr. Abubaker has been devoted to teaching safe prescribing practices to students in the VCU schools of Dentistry and Medicine. As a practicing professor of oral and maxillofacial surgery, Dr. Abubaker knows the medical profession has a moral imperative to deepen its understanding of addiction and to reform standards and practices to guard against future tragedies.

"No parent should have to endure the hardship of a loss this great," Dr. Abubaker said. "Doctors, including myself, were part of this opioid epidemic. I have made it my personal mission to be a part of the solution and to educate other health care providers on the dangers that opioid prescriptions pose and safe prescribing practices."

After losing his son, Dr. Abubaker earned a graduate certificate in addiction studies to train for his work helping others increase their knowledge of addiction issues.

In October 2020, Dr. Abubaker and his wife Rebecca made a lead gift to establish the Adam Abubaker Memorial Lectureship in the VCU School of Medicine. The goal is to raise

a minimum of \$100,000 to fully endow the lectureship. To date, more than \$80,000 has been raised. The lectureship will highlight topics related to addiction medicine, including prevention, treatment and improving the health of the community, as well as enhancing understanding of addiction and substance use disorders.

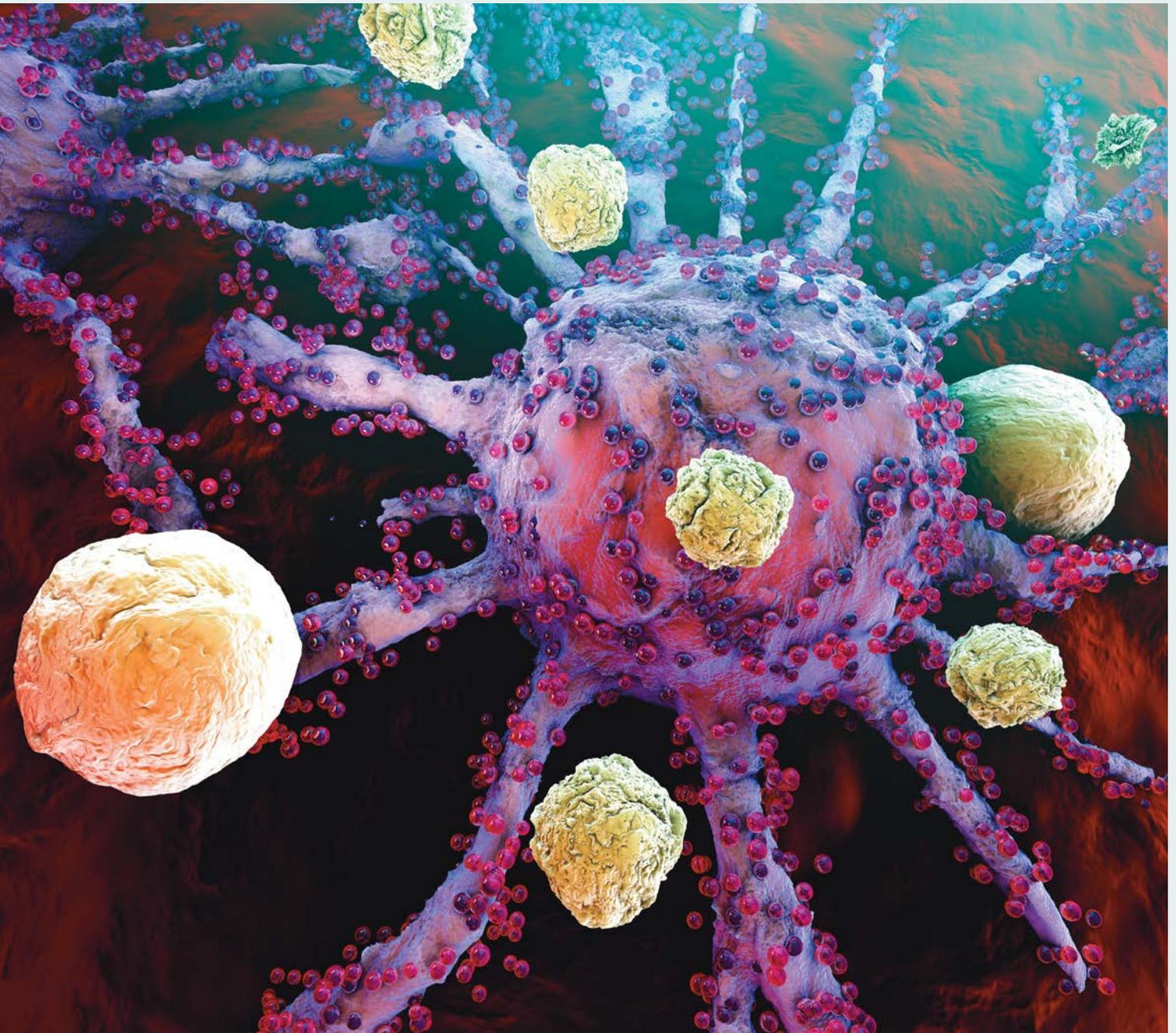
"My studies confirmed my previous lack of scientific and medical knowledge about addiction," Dr. Abubaker said. "Not surprisingly, many of my colleagues in medicine and dentistry shared these profound deficiencies."

Dr. Abubaker has been using his personal and professional experience with the opioid epidemic to lecture on the dangers of these narcotics whenever possible. With this lectureship fund, he hopes to create an annual opportunity to ensure faculty and students on the MCV Campus can learn from the latest research on addiction and how practitioners across the health sciences can work to be part of a solution to the opioid crisis.

*If you would like to support Dr. Abubaker's work to honor his son's memory by advocating for changes that save lives and improve care for people struggling with addiction, you may send your check, payable to MCV Foundation, to MCV Foundation, Box 980234, Richmond, VA 23298, or visit [mcvfoundation.org](http://mcvfoundation.org) to make a gift online. For more information, contact Brian Thomas, vice president and chief development officer for the MCV Foundation, at 804-828-0067 or [brian.thomas@vcuhealth.org](mailto:brian.thomas@vcuhealth.org). ●*

Omar Abubaker, D.M.D., Ph.D., is leading efforts to endow a lectureship at the VCU School of Medicine in memory of his son Adam Abubaker (right), who tragically died after less than a year struggling with opioid addiction. Dr. Abubaker has made it his personal mission to help educate doctors on safe prescribing practices and the dangers posed by opioids.

# Giving a Boost to Massey's Immuno-Oncology Program



Philanthropic leadership has given Massey Cancer Center more than \$6.6 million to support immuno-oncology research, clinical trials and the recruitment and retention of talented physician-scientists.



Kathy Pearson (front row, second from left) and her colleagues from East West Communities visited the floor their company supported in the Massey Pavilion of the McGlothlin Medical Education Center. On the visit, they also learned about ongoing needs and opportunities at the cancer center. *Photo courtesy of Massey Cancer Center*

**ADVANCES** in cancer research have generated excitement around the promise of immunotherapy. Using this innovative treatment, doctors train a patient’s immune system to target cancer cells with the body’s natural defenses.

Thanks to philanthropic leadership, VCU Massey Cancer Center’s immunotherapy research program received a booster shot of more than \$6.6 million to support the cancer center’s immuno-oncology efforts through research, clinical trials and the recruitment and retention of talented physician-scientists working to advance treatment options.

The support for immuno-oncology came at a critical moment to help Massey expand its research on immunotherapies in Central Virginia and inspired additional support from community members.

### Flexible Support for Early Research

Kathy Pearson and residential development company East West Communities have always recognized the importance of giving back to support the community and encouraged employees to support fundraising efforts for Massey, whether through volunteering at events or making an automated gift through payroll withholding. The company first connected with Massey after working with charity houses and Streets of Hope in their developments and has become a proud supporter amazed at the power of everyday people in the community coming together for a good cause.

“We’ve always been geared toward philanthropy,” said Pearson, chief financial officer of East West Communities. “To be able to help make a difference through immuno-oncology is a vision that we are passionate about supporting, especially when you see how many of our employees have been affected by cancer.”

Pearson and East West were exploring whether to take advantage of a matching fund to create an endowment when Gordon Ginder, M.D., Massey’s former director, explained how important current funds are for kickstarting early research projects in immuno-oncology. Hearing directly from him what was most needed helped guide their decision to commit to significant funding that will be used at the director’s discretion to help advance the most promising and strategic efforts related to immuno-oncology.

“When you hear that your gifts could help researchers at Massey teach the body to fight cancer itself,” Pearson said, “that’s amazing!”

### Retaining Renowned Faculty

Both Judy and Harry Wason know the heartache that comes when close family members receive a cancer diagnosis. The couple came to know about Massey Cancer Center through their friend Becky Massey, a longtime supporter and volunteer leader for the center.

– Continued on next page



Above: George Emerson receives the MCV Foundation's Dowdy Award in recognition of his fundraising leadership in a volunteer capacity. He and his wife Darlene created the Emerson Head and Neck Cancer Research Fund at VCU Massey Cancer Center and the Darlene and George P. Emerson Jr. Professorship in Cancer Research to advance research and treatment of head and neck cancers on the MCV Campus. *Photo: Kevin Schindler*

Below: Judy and Harry Wason of Williamsburg, Virginia, endowed the Harry and Judy Wason Distinguished Professorship at VCU Massey Cancer Center. The professorship helped Massey retain an immuno-oncology expert to ensure VCU Health's continued strength in this promising area of treatment. *Photo courtesy of VCU Office of Development and Alumni Relations*



– Continued from previous page

On a tour of the cancer center, they were particularly impressed by the vision of leaders to grow Massey's strength in immuno-oncology, and thanks to Judy and Harry's generosity, Massey's immunotherapy program received a much-needed booster shot. The Wasons were able to double the impact of their donation through a 1:1 gift match from the Glasgow Fund. Their goal was to create an endowed professorship on the MCV Campus, and they were inspired to fully fund it when a need arose.

Because immunotherapy remains such a promising area, researchers and experts in the field are in high demand across the country. The Harry and Judy Wason Distinguished Professorship was established at an opportune time for Massey and helped the cancer center retain one of their top immunotherapy researchers who was actively being recruited to another institution.

### Paying It Forward

George Emerson, a longtime advocate for Massey, was inspired to support the area and help improve Massey's strength through another major gift. Several years back, Massey treated Emerson for squamous cell carcinoma in his

throat. Doctors had given him a 50-50 chance of survival, but his treatment here in Richmond made all the difference in allowing him to be present for a growing number of grandchildren.

"I've been lucky in life," Emerson added. "My wife and I support a number of good causes, but the one I'm most passionate about is trying to find a cure for cancer. They're doing research now that will move the needle on giving people options for treatment of head and neck cancers and giving them hope, and I want to be part of that."

Emerson hopes the research fund and the professorship will advance promising research on CAR T-cell therapy, a type of immunotherapy that enlists the body's immune system in attacking cancer cells.

"Somebody helped fund the research that came up with the therapy that saved my life," Emerson said. "The people we're going to treat in the future need someone to give on their behalf."

*If you'd like to learn more about how you can support Massey's lifesaving work in immuno-oncology, please contact Martha Quinn, executive director of development for Massey Cancer Center, at 410-274-7871 or [mquinn3@vcu.edu](mailto:mquinn3@vcu.edu). ●*

# Reynolds Foundation Pushes Young Chair Past Goal

Just months after MCV Foundation board members helped reignite a campaign to fully fund the M. Theresa and Harold F. Young Endowed Chair in Neurosurgery, the Richard S. Reynolds Foundation provided the gift that accomplishes that goal.

The Reynolds Foundation's \$300,000 commitment pushed the fund past the \$1.5 million needed to establish the Young Chair. Now valued at more than \$1.6 million, the fund has received generous support from many of Dr. Young's grateful patients and their families, as well as faculty and alumni.

Two of the most fervent supporters have been MCV Foundation board members Charles Crone and Harry Thalhimer, who helped lead to the effort to complete the funding for the endowed chair.

"Harry Young is one of the top historical figures in health care on the MCV Campus," Thalhimer said. "He's a great human being and he's done so much to help people. Everybody has stories about Harry Young calling at midnight to check up on them. He's a healing guy and everyone we've approached wants to be a part of this."

Dr. Young, a renowned neurosurgeon known for his bedside manner and ability to relate to patients, served as chair of VCU School of Medicine's Department of Neurosurgery from 1985 to 2015. He continues to see patients since stepping down as department chair.

The endowed chair named for him will enable the school to attract or retain a world-class faculty member who will pursue neurosurgical clinical care, research and education in the tradition that Dr. Young personified.

"Through his exceptional care, professionalism and leadership, Dr. Young established a



Harry F. Young, M.D., is a professor in the Department of Neurosurgery and holds the James W. and Francis G. McGlothlin Endowed Chair. In November, after many grateful patients and friends contributed, a chair was endowed honoring Theresa and Harry Young for their decades of influence across the field and in countless individuals' lives. *Photo: Kevin Schindler*

culture of excellence in the Department of Neurosurgery, and this newly endowed chair serves to cement that legacy thanks to the foundation Dr. Young established," said Peter Buckley, M.D., dean of the VCU School of Medicine. "Because of this generosity, our neurosurgery team has the opportunity to grow to treat more tumors and other neurological issues, conduct more research that uncovers additional pathways to healing and train more neurosurgeons to deliver care across the world."

Even though the chair is fully funded, fundraising will continue to strengthen the new chair's impact.

*If you're interested in contributing, please contact Brian Thomas, MCV Foundation vice president and chief development officer, at 804-828-0067 or [brian.thomas@vcuhealth.org](mailto:brian.thomas@vcuhealth.org), or Joy Sanders Malkin, assistant dean for development at VCU School of Medicine and VCU Health, at 804-827-4939 or [joy.sanders@vcuhealth.org](mailto:joy.sanders@vcuhealth.org). ●*

# Nursing Lectureship Inspired by COVID-19 Care Challenges



Paul and Veronica Gross have established the Paul A. and Veronica H. Gross Nursing Lectureship Series to bring seasoned professionals to the School of Nursing to offer lectures on the concepts and attributes of nursing professionalism, including compassionate care, therapeutic relationships, advocacy, health equity, resilience and well-being.

*Photo courtesy of Paul and Veronica Gross*

**PAUL GROSS** is no stranger to how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected health care professionals. He earned his master's degree in health administration in 1964 from what is now the VCU College of Health Professions and retired after 20 years as the president of Humana's hospital division.

Health care also happens to be a family tradition. His wife Veronica is a registered nurse, and one of their daughters is a retired nurse practitioner. Another daughter is an associate professor and vice chair of the Department of Emergency Medicine at the University of Florida School of Medicine. Paul and Veronica are proud of their grandson, currently in his fourth year of medical school, as well as their granddaughter, who is a child life specialist at Fort Worth's Cook Children's Hospital, and their son, who is CEO of Broward Health's Imperial Point Hospital in Broward, Florida.

Last year, the Gross family recognized a troubling challenge and strain being placed on nurses during the COVID-19 crisis.

"The dynamics of care and demands placed upon health care providers became a day-to-day conversation topic for us," Gross recalled. "Every day, all day long, in the papers and

on television, we could see and feel the toll the pandemic and the fears associated with it were having on hospital nurses."

Gross reached out to Jean Giddens, Ph.D., RN, dean of the VCU School of Nursing, during the height of the pandemic. He and Veronica have been generous supporters of the school in the past, and they wanted to do something more to support nursing education on the MCV Campus.

"Our students possessed the necessary clinical and scientific skills to face the demands and challenges that they were faced with," Gross said. "However, it was apparent that they would need buttressed strengths beyond those skills — emotional resilience, strength in their passion and commitment toward nursing, and strength in communication skills to patients, families and their team members."

Paul and Veronica Gross believe nursing education needs to be bolstered beyond the pandemic to address the ever-changing role and demands of the professional registered nurse and everything that graduates will confront as they enter this new world of professional nursing.

"We wanted to create a teaching opportunity for senior nursing students by establishing a lecture series featuring skilled and experienced professionals who can offer master classes on those essential traits beyond the scientific course material," Gross said. "Our hope is that this will contribute to their educational support and help nurses develop the endurance and resilience needed when facing such challenges and demands like the pandemic."

Gross hopes the series will help the School of Nursing continue to achieve high rankings among institutions of nursing education and continue to meet the professional nursing and educational needs of Virginia and beyond.

"Nursing care is the measuring stick that drives the institutional loyalty, maintains its census and its quality-of-care ratings," Gross said. "I hope this lectureship will continue the School of Nursing's strength in this area for generations."

*If you would like to support the School of Nursing's efforts to educate tomorrow's nursing professionals, please contact Pam Lowe, senior director of development, at 804-827-0020 or [plowe@vcu.edu](mailto:plowe@vcu.edu).* ●



Scholarships reduced the need for Stephanie Cattie, Class of 2020, to work and allowed her to engage fully with the many opportunities available to students at the VCU School of Nursing. For her, that meant being part of the school's Nursing Leadership Fellows Program. *Photo: Jud Froelich, VCU Office of Development and Alumni Relations*

# Make It Real Campaign Closes Strong, Raising \$841.6 Million

Virginia Commonwealth University's Make It Real Campaign raised \$841,606,604, more than 112 percent of its \$750 million goal, the university announced last fall.

The largest campaign in the university's history, the Make It Real Campaign for VCU launched publicly in September 2016.

The MCV Campus raised \$564,854,854, which accounts for 67 percent of the campaign's total. The generosity of alumni and friends of the medical campus continues to be truly outstanding.

"Donor support for the Make It Real Campaign for VCU is transforming the university and helping us continue to change lives in Richmond and beyond," said VCU President Michael Rao, Ph.D. "Funds raised during this campaign will have an immeasurable impact on our students, our faculty and staff, our patients and our caregivers for years to come

and, in turn, give them the opportunity to maximize their own as-yet unknown potential in the world."

The Make It Real Campaign provided support for VCU's people, innovations and environments. During the campaign, donors established 394 endowed scholarships and student support funds, and 138 new endowed chairs, professorships, faculty support and research funds. Donors also supported a number of new buildings, including a new building for the College of Health Professions.

"I want to extend a special thank you and congratulations to the members of our volunteer campaign leadership," said Jay E. Davenport, VCU's vice president for development and alumni relations. "Our outstanding team has made this campaign possible and positioned VCU as one of the great urban research universities in the country. The Make It Real campaign would not have been as successful without their vision, dedication, leadership and generosity." ●

# Looking at the Past for Philanthropy: *A time to address equity*



Members of the VCU School of Medicine's Class of 2023 assemble for their white coat class photo in 2019. Training physicians who reflect the diverse populations they serve is essential to the school's mission to improve the quality of health care for all people. *Photos: Kevin Schindler*



VCU School of Medicine students gather on the steps of VCU's Egyptian Building.

**A. RANDOLPH** “Randy” Garnett Jr., M.D., left the MCV Campus in 1989 after 14 years as a medical student, resident, fellow and assistant professor of medicine. He returned to his hometown of Norfolk along with two MCV Campus cardiac surgery colleagues – Drs. Glenn Barnhart and Szabolcs Szentpetery – to practice in a cardiac and pulmonary transplant program in the area.

Thirty years later, having retired in 2020, Dr. Garnett began thinking of ways to give back to the institution that was an important part of his professional and personal life.

As he began to consider his options, it became clear he wanted to help the next generation of physicians through a scholarship.

“Educational opportunities change people’s lives, and if you find the right person and help them obtain an education, it is a positive for everyone,” he said recently. “In these times, it was obvious that diversity was of utmost importance.”

With that being the premise, he decided to make the MCV Foundation the primary beneficiary of some of his retirement vehicles.

The beauty of using a 403(b) or similar account to educate young people or provide other support is that when it’s donated, the entire amount in a given account goes to the charity. That is not the case when a family member is the beneficiary, as that family member must pay substantial income tax.

The process of naming a beneficiary is another appealing aspect of this popular form of giving. An estate attorney isn’t needed, and account holders simply go to their retirement account vendors and fill out a form that names the MCV Foundation as the primary beneficiary.

“So, retirement vehicles like 401(k)s and 403(b)s are one of the most rational ways to give, help people and effect change,” Dr. Garnett said.

– Continued on next page

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## The Impact

Donors have an incredible number of great causes from which to choose when giving in support of the MCV Campus. They can support research funds that impact how health care is practiced around the world. They can support patient care programs that help clinicians save and improve lives right here in Central Virginia. Or they can support students, whose potential to impact communities and populations for generations is limitless.

Dr. Garnett chose the students.

For many years before making his charitable beneficiary designation, Dr. Garnett had been aware of his long Virginia family history. He decided that establishing a scholarship that might benefit medical students from disadvantaged communities would be an appropriate way to effect change while supporting the goals of the School of Medicine.

As a result, Dr. Garnett has been working with the school to use his beneficiary designation to fund full tuition for at least one student annually.

Scholarship assistance is a key consideration for applicants deciding which medical school to attend. Top applicants who are underrepresented in medicine choose to study at schools that offer competitive scholarship packages. While the VCU School of Medicine has substantially grown its scholarship resources over the past five years, its scholarship awards remain substantially less than those of peer institutions.

In partnership with donors like Dr. Garnett, the school continues to build its scholarship resources. This includes the school making a \$1 million commitment to support the work of building a more diverse, inclusive and equitable community. This commitment has enabled the school to establish the Dean's Equity Scholarship, addressing one of the most significant barriers to access for students of all backgrounds, cultures and socioeconomic statuses — the ability to afford a medical education.

Training physicians who reflect the diverse populations they serve is essential to the school's mission to improve the quality of health care for all people. This can be accomplished through initiatives like the Dean's Equity Scholarship because increased physician diversity is often associated with greater access to care.

*For more information about the Dean's Equity Scholarship, please contact Niles Eggleston, assistant vice president for development at VCU Health and the School of Medicine, at 804-828-2112 or [niles.eggleston@vcuhealth.org](mailto:niles.eggleston@vcuhealth.org).* ●

# Make a Great Impact

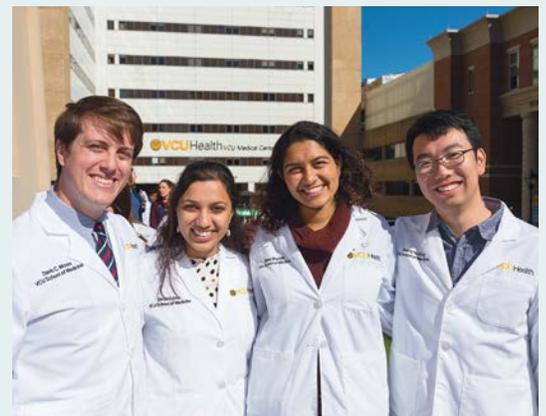
## Charitable Beneficiary Designation

### Allows you to:

- Name the MCV Foundation as a beneficiary of your retirement plan or other account.
- Make a gift that doesn't cost you anything right now.
- Provide future support for MCV Foundation.

### How it works

- Retirement plans, IRAs, life insurance and commercial annuities are not controlled by the terms of your will but instead use beneficiary forms to determine who receives them.



- Beneficiary forms supersede your will when it comes to passing these assets, making them effective and easy ways to leave a legacy.
- By naming the MCV Foundation as a beneficiary of one of these assets, a gift will come directly to the MCV Foundation to be used in the manner you have directed.

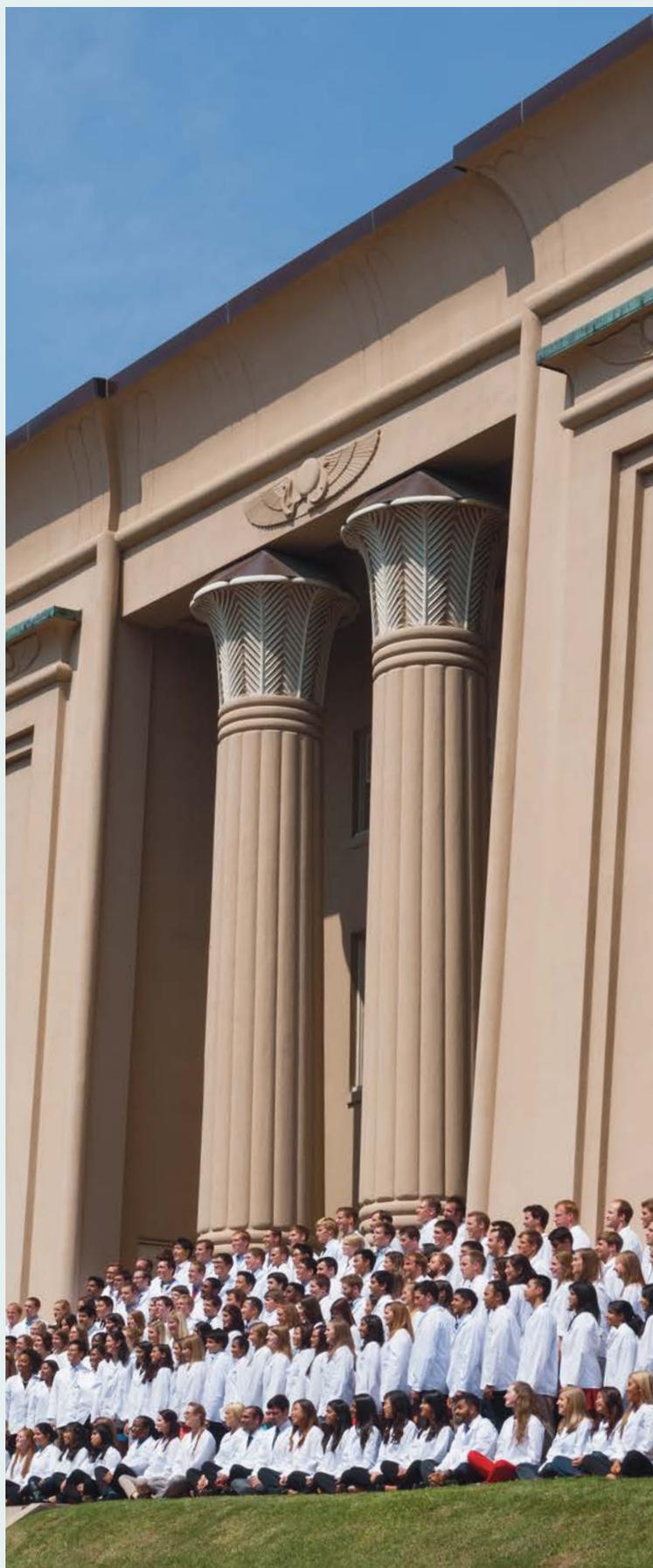
## *How you benefit*

- It is one of the simplest ways to make a legacy gift.
- You maintain control of your assets during your lifetime and can modify your plans as needed.
- Your gift passes outside of probate and is excluded from your estate for tax purposes.
- You avoid passing heavily taxed assets to heirs if you designate certain asset types for the MCV Foundation.
- You will become a member of the MCV Society, which honors those who have made a planned gift of any size to support one of the MCV Campus partners. Society members are invited to special events and programs in appreciation of their commitment to the future of the MCV Campus.

## *Ways to give*

- Retirement plans and IRAs
- Life insurance policies
- Commercial annuities
- Bank accounts
- Investment accounts

*For more information about charitable beneficiary designations or any other planned gift to the MCV Campus, contact Ann Deppman, director of gift planning at the MCV Foundation, at 804-828-4599 or [ann.deppman@vcuhealth.org](mailto:ann.deppman@vcuhealth.org). ●*



# Loss, Grief and Gratitude

Terrence Walker lost his wife Tracy before her 50th birthday. The longtime employee of the University Counseling Center has found it therapeutic to give back to support VCU Massey Cancer Center through a planned gift.

*Photo: Kevin Schindler*



**TERRENCE WALKER** faced the unimaginable when his wife Tracy died of colon cancer before reaching her 50th birthday. In the time since her death, he has found solace in giving back to honor the support of his colleagues and the care she received at VCU Massey Cancer Center.

“It has been therapeutic for me to give back,” said Walker, an 18-year employee of VCU who works in the University Counseling Center. “I wanted to find some way to express my gratitude for the care she received and to the institution for support I received from colleagues.”

Co-workers pooled their leave time to donate to him so that he had time to grieve after nearly seven years of juggling his day job, care appointments for Tracy, child care for their now 13-year-old son Joseph and the weight of losing the love of his life.

Walker has given back frequently to support causes at VCU. He supported a food pantry for students experiencing food insecurity, helped fund a scholarship for Dreamers, and donated to the chapel at VCU Medical Center, where Walker remembers many moments reflecting and praying during Tracy’s treatments and hospital visits. To him, his latest gift was a natural progression to support the MCV Campus and its mission.

“I watched her go through the end stages of her life and I felt so powerless to do anything about her suffering,” Walker said. “When she passed, I began to think about what I can do. I was in a position to financially give back, and I hope that this will help with research that spares families the pain and loss I’ve experienced.”

Walker’s gift was made by designating the MCV Foundation as a beneficiary of appreciated stock he owns. The appreciated stock will support Massey, and Walker did not add any restrictions, he said, because he trusts that Massey will have the best sense of how to use the resources to support its mission in ways that are impactful. By using a beneficiary designation to make a gift of his stock, Walker has the peace of mind that comes from knowing that when he passes away, his gift will benefit Massey immediately, without the delays or costs of probate.

“What I’m giving is such a small fraction compared to what the needs are,” Walker said. “I hope that what I can do to help will encourage others to give. That would make me feel happy about making a difference where I can.” ●

# Pharmacy Alumna Pays Mentorship Forward

Vanitha Sekar, Ph.D., left her home in India for graduate school in the U.S. when she was only 21. She was no stranger to breaking barriers. At 17, she attended pharmacy school away from her family before graduating and entering the doctoral program at the VCU School of Pharmacy.

“I was very fortunate because I came to Richmond and was embraced immediately by a very strong Indian community of graduate students,” Dr. Sekar said. With her family and support system across the world, she was grateful to find such comfort. One of her early friends, Kumar Sekar, who earned a doctorate in organic chemistry at VCU, became her husband in addition to her best friend.

Last year, Dr. Sekar was inspired to support a scholarship established in honor of her mentor Jürgen Venitz, M.D., Ph.D., a professor in the School of Pharmacy’s Department of Pharmaceutics. Reconnecting with the school and so many close friends also what she and her husband could do to give back. For several years, the couple have mentored younger people interested in the sciences, and they wanted to do something more to help students on the MCV Campus.

“Kumar and I are passionate about championing diversity and inclusion in the workplace and mentoring women and immigrants in STEM-related professional areas,” Dr. Sekar said. “We wanted to create the Saraswathi Scholarship for Excellence in Pharmaceutical Sciences to recognize and reward international students who have shown a commitment to advancing women in science.”

She credits Louie Correa, senior director of development in the School of Pharmacy, with working diligently to design a proposal that resonated with their passion and reflected their interests. While neither wanted to name this scholarship for themselves, the couple chose Saraswathi because of its significance as one of the names of the Hindu goddess of learning. As both believers and scientists, they felt this name captured their intent for the scholarship beautifully. Their hope is that it will do more than just support future generations of scholars.

“Hopefully it will encourage other people like us to do more in terms of philanthropy and giving back, not just for immigrant women,” Dr. Sekar said, “but for people who otherwise would not have access to the kind of education and opportunities that we have benefited from in our journey.”

*If you would like to support student scholarships at the School of Pharmacy, please contact Louie Correa, senior director of development at the School of Pharmacy, by calling 804-828-3016 or emailing [lacorrea@vcu.edu](mailto:lacorrea@vcu.edu).* ●



(L to R) Vanitha Sekar, Ph.D., and her husband Kumar Sekar, Ph.D., with daughter Megana. The couple established the Saraswathi Scholarship for Excellence in Pharmaceutical Sciences at the VCU School of Pharmacy to support international students who have shown a commitment to advancing women in the sciences. *Photo courtesy of the Sekar family*

# Attorneys Join the Medical Team



Allison Held (left) is director of VCU Health's MLP-Richmond, a medical-legal partnership that works to ensure legal and social issues no longer challenge patients and their families. Held and Lindsay Pickral (right), an attorney with the law firm ThompsonMcMullan, recently worked with a patient and family who were under the care of Parna Prajapati, M.D. (center), a psychiatrist at Children's Hospital of Richmond at VCU.  
*Photo: Kevin Schindler*

**IN EARLY 2020**, child psychiatrist Parna Prajapati, M.D., recognized that if his patient — a 17-year-old who battles intellectual disabilities, autism, seizures and cerebral palsy — did not get additional help, his patient’s challenges were going to become far more detrimental very quickly.

It was assistance the Children’s Hospital of Richmond at VCU (CHoR) psychiatrist could not provide. His young patient and their family needed an attorney.

As children who lack capacity to make health care and financial decisions for themselves transition into adulthood, it is often essential for their parents or caregivers to establish guardianship to ensure seamless transitions and access to care and financial resources.

This is where a program not seen elsewhere in Central Virginia was able to step in to help. The program, MLP-Richmond at VCU Health, is a medical-legal partnership (MLP) that works to ensure legal and social issues no longer challenge patients and their families, enabling them to focus on treatment and healing.

The program at VCU Health, like similar MLPs across the nation, intervenes to address social determinants of health such as unlawful evictions, poor housing conditions, insurance and public benefit denials, employment discrimination and domestic violence by providing free civil legal aid to low-income patients.

“The medical-legal partnership at CHoR has been a blessing to those families who cannot afford costly legal services,” Dr. Prajapati said. “It takes a huge burden off the shoulders of patients and families when they learn that I can refer them to this kind of help through the health system. Many people don’t know how impactful social issues, once mitigated, can be on overall health, and particularly mental health. I am immensely thankful for this partnership and the service it enables us to provide for the families in need.”

Part of VCU Health’s Division of Community Health, MLP-Richmond launched in 2018 with the help of start-up funding from the MCV Foundation. It began by serving VCU Massey Cancer Center and Children’s Hospital of Richmond at VCU, and today it serves patients and families in six clinical locations and offers free legal services at two community sites.

Through partnerships with Central Virginia Legal Aid Society, CancerLINC, McGuireWoods, Dominion Energy and the University of Richmond School of Law, MLP-Richmond has nearly doubled the number of patients it serves in just the past year. A recent \$25,000 grant from the MCV Foundation has helped the program purchase a robust case management system necessary to support its growing caseload and expansion.

This expansion has been particularly important during the past year, said Allison Held, MLP-Richmond director.

“The COVID-19 pandemic, which disproportionately impacts low-income families and people of color, has highlighted issues of health disparity in Richmond and created an even greater need for the services provided by MLP-Richmond,” she said.

In the case of the 17-year-old in early 2020, Lindsay Pickral at the law firm ThompsonMcMullan provided pro bono services that succeeded in establishing ongoing guardianship for the family.

“Like so many parents, the mother in this case had put her child’s interests first since the day she gave birth,” Pickral said. “She had been involved in every decision for her child for 18 years, but on her child’s 18th birthday — literally overnight — the legal authority to manage health care and other needs was going to evaporate. MLP-Richmond meets an essential need in connecting VCU Health families with critical legal services, and in this case allowed a parent to continue what she’d always done — protect her child.”

The mother told MLP-Richmond she had an excellent experience. She was initially tense and worried about the process, having already gone through so much managing her child’s care as a single parent, but her attorneys explained every step thoroughly.

“If I could take them with me every day, I would,” she said. “The whole experience, the whole group came together as one ... There was caring there, there was a heart there.”

Mother, patient and family recently celebrated a big 18th birthday with the assurance that the best possible care will continue seamlessly. ●

# MCV Alumni Association Legacy Endures



*As MCVAA integrates into the university's alumni relations office, the association has made three gifts to the MCV Foundation totaling more than \$2.3 million.*

**AFTER** first organizing on March 29, 1889, as the Society of Alumni of the Medical College of Virginia, then reorganizing as the MCV Alumni Association in 1943, the MCV Alumni Association of Virginia Commonwealth University voted this spring to dissolve as an independent nonprofit.

The decision was made in order to integrate with the VCU Office of Development and Alumni Relations and relieve the MCVAA of operating expenses while enabling it to protect its endowments and investments.

As MCVAA integrates into the university's alumni relations office, the association has made three gifts to the MCV Foundation totaling more than \$2.3 million. These gifts will ensure MCVAA's impact on students and the entire campus endures for another 130 years and beyond.

One gift will support the MCVAA Legacy Scholarship. The annual payout from this fund will be divided equally among the four MCV Campus schools and one college to provide a student scholarship in each.

Another gift establishes the MCV Alumni Association Reunion Endowment, which will provide an annual payout to support MCV Campus reunions beginning in 2026.

The largest of the three gifts will create the MCVAA Permanent Endowment Fund, providing an annual payout to be divided equally among the MCV Campus schools and college to support alumni events and activities.

"We are honored and proud to make these gifts that will support the MCV Campus, its alumni, and its students in many ways," said Bronwyn Burnham, former president of MCVAA. "Moving forward, the MCVAA Board of Trustees is looking forward to joining VCU Development and Alumni Relations in supporting our alumni on both campuses with the creation of the new VCU Alumni Council. This partnership will allow MCVAA to financially support alumni programs and student scholarships with our endowment, managed by the MCV Foundation, for many years to come." ●

# Massey Shines National Spotlight on Addressing Health Disparities

**O**n Feb. 24, First Lady Jill Biden, Ed.D., visited VCU Massey Cancer Center to meet with researchers and community leaders to learn how they are working together to address health disparities in Central Virginia and beyond. It was her first solo visit outside of Washington, D.C., since becoming First Lady of the United States, and she spoke positively about her tour of several Massey labs on the MCV Campus.

“The researchers and medical professionals here at Massey are pushing the science of medicine every day,” Dr. Biden said. “But I’m just as grateful for the work Massey does for the art of medicine, as well. Building trust and relationships. Empowering communities to bring their own talents to this fight.” ●



*“The researchers and medical professionals here at Massey are pushing the science of medicine every day.”*

*— First Lady Jill Biden, Ed.D.*

Official White House photos by Ana Isabel Martinez Chamorro

# MCV Foundation

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## *Adult Outpatient Pavilion*

The largest construction project in VCU Health's history is nearing completion at the intersection of Leigh and 10th streets on the MCV Campus. The 17-story, 615,000-square-foot, \$383.9 million building will consolidate adult outpatient services that are currently spread among VCU Massey Cancer Center and VCU Health's specialty clinics and will feature collaborative spaces for research and teaching.

*If you are interested in opportunities to support this state-of-the-art building, contact Tom Maness, associate vice president for development, VCU Health Sciences/MCV Campus, at 240-444-5343 or [temaness@vcu.edu](mailto:temaness@vcu.edu).*

