



# PHILANTHROPY HIGHLIGHTS 2023



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THE *University of Vermont* MEDICAL CENTER  
FOUNDATION

Through your charitable investments in The University of Vermont Medical Center, you actively contribute to improving the health of our communities in Vermont, in northern New York and around the world. Charitable gifts help build a culture of gratitude, respect, continuous learning and professionalism. They add a spark to our determination to innovate and elevate patient care and health care delivery, and they enrich our entire academic medical community by acknowledging that our people, our work and our mission are appreciated and valued.

As we emerge from the pandemic's devastating consequences and respond to ever-changing challenges in our community, we are crafting a vision for the next decade. Informed by the complex and acute care needs of the people we serve and a deeper understanding of what our workforce needs to thrive, our vision demands boldness, trust, collaboration and utilization of the full-spectrum knowledge base of our employees, our partners and our leaders.

Your philanthropic support continues to be invaluable, and your generosity inspires us to do more and to do better.

THANK YOU.



Stephen Leffler, MD, President  
and Chief Operating Officer,  
UVM Medical Center



Ginger Lubkowitz, Senior Vice  
President and Chief Development  
Officer, UVM Health Network



On the Cover:  
Bringing our best to children  
and families is a passion and  
a promise. Community gifts  
help expand our reach.  
Learn more on page 4.





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Maggie Connors knows the magic of music. Find out more on page 2.





Maggie Connors, MT-BC, music therapist, UVM Children's Hospital

## Healing Presence

*Generous gift grows music therapy program for pediatric patients*

**M**usic can decrease the heart rate of an upset infant. It can lower the stress level of a caregiver. For toddlers, singing or playing an instrument can distract from a difficult procedure. And for adolescents, talking about their favorite artists and building a playlist may help foster resilience. Now, thanks to a generous gift from the Cunningham family to expand the Music Therapy program with the Lucky Squirrel Music Therapy Fund, more patients at The University of Vermont Children's Hospital will have access to board-certified music therapists to provide this important support. Through the Osher Center for Integrative Health, a UVM and UVM Health Network-wide program, these health professionals offer patient-led, individualized services based on their understanding of how music affects a person's brain and body as well as their emotional and social well-being.

The Cunningham family said that funding this initiative felt like a "natural extension of our core principles," which include music, compassionate health care and community.

"It is our hope that the program will provide a space for patients and families to express themselves, practice autonomy and find respite in an environment that can often feel stressful and out of one's control," they said. "Music therapy has the flexibility and accessibility to meet the diverse needs of those impacted by medical conditions. We feel passionate that our neighbors, friends and family will find connection and meaning during challenging times."

Research has demonstrated many therapeutic benefits to medical music therapy, including reduced pain perception, decreased cortisol levels (a measure of stress), increased patient satisfaction, reduction of patient sedation and procedure times and improved quality of life during hospitalization.

Maggie Connors, MT-BC, a music therapist at the UVM Children's Hospital, sees all these benefits and more. She sees the joy music brings.

"Music is an inherently connective experience," she said. "To play music with someone is to listen with your ears and your heart. To play music with kids is the most honest form of expression I've ever seen." ■



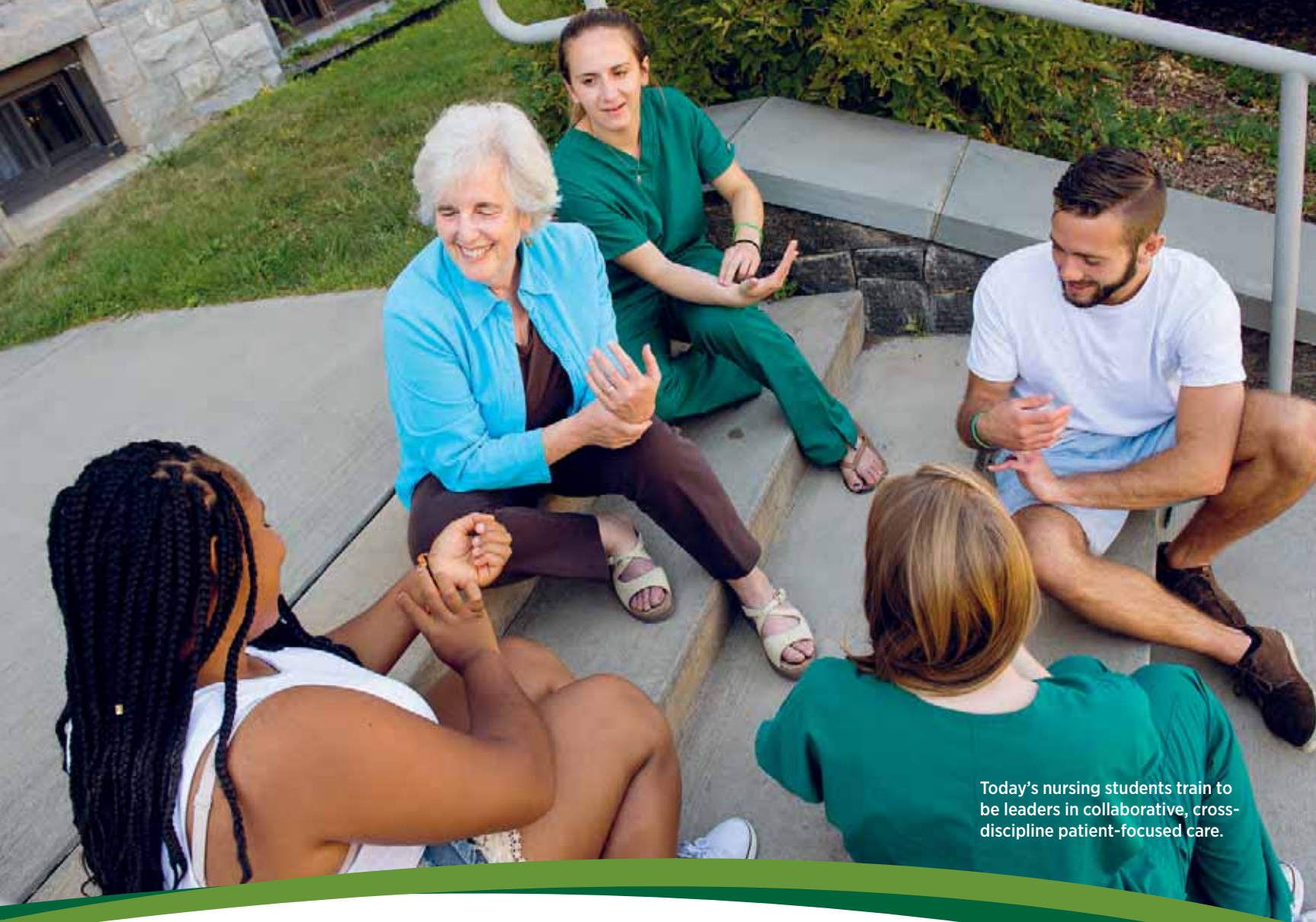
**To explore opportunities to advance whole-person integrative health therapies, contact**

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Today's nursing students train to be leaders in collaborative, cross-discipline patient-focused care.

## Milestone in Nursing Education

*Nursing education at UVM celebrates 80th anniversary*



To learn more about supporting current and future nurses, contact

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**E**ighty years have passed since the first two nursing students enrolled at UVM. Now, the program has more than 600 students enrolled annually, carrying on a proud tradition of fostering leaders skilled in the art and science of nursing. Philanthropy supports nursing students at every turn, from scholarships and grants to mentorship opportunities that reinforce skills and improve retention.

Next up is a groundbreaking program to further strengthen the nursing workforce. Currently in the planning phase, a master's degree entry program in nursing will allow students with a bachelor's degree in any field to become practicing nurses in one year, filling a vital need in primary care. It's innovation with a purpose—one that hasn't changed since the program's founding: to provide the best care possible to patients and families. ■



Nursing Class of 1963



# Whole-Health Care

*Expanding medicine to alleviate suffering,  
build resilience and promote healing*

**F**or years, the UVM Children's Hospital has delivered world-class medical care to infants, children and teens in Vermont and the North Country no matter how critical or rare their condition, and regardless of their family's ability to pay. Charitable giving continues to power vital (but nonbillable) programs that address whole-health needs of patients, families and care providers at times of great vulnerability. Here are a few examples of programs that might never have taken flight without philanthropic support from our community.

## Child Life Specialists

Hospitalization can be deeply stressful for young people. Procedures that are routine for adults often trigger fears in youth. Confusion, discomfort and the presence of unfamiliar people and surroundings can amplify those feelings and create significant barriers to treatment and healing.

Child Life Specialists at the UVM Children's Hospital focus on the psychosocial needs of children and families in the health care setting, help empower them with knowledge and equip them with coping strategies so that they may face potential stressors with understanding and confidence. As highly trained child development experts who are integral to the care team, Child Life Specialists utilize research-based play and distraction techniques to normalize pediatric patients' environments and educate and prepare them and their families for various aspects of medical treatment. They help patients express their feelings. They serve as educators, coaches, cheerleaders, friends and advocates. At the UVM Cancer Center, the Child Life Specialist also brings this invaluable service to children of adult patients with cancer.

As at many other hospitals, the UVM Children's Hospital's Child Life program exists largely due to philanthropic



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programs that  
support vulnerable  
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support. Gifts to this program have an immediate and lasting impact on children's well-being and health outcomes.

**Key funding:** Children's Miracle Network (CMN) Hospitals Fund, Fiddlehead Brewing Company's Team Mastermind Fund, Spirit of Children Foundation, Dunkin' Joy in Childhood Foundation, Epic

### Food Pharmacy

The UVM Medical Center screens for food insecurity in all its care settings. At the UVM Children's Hospital, the Food Security Action Team, with representatives from the Children's Hospital and community organizations, has standardized the screening process to help ensure the hospital is identifying and responding to patients experiencing food insecurity no matter where they enter the health system. Standardization also helps fuel equity, continuity of care and trust building.

Founded by and continually funded by donations, the Food Pharmacy is a key component of the Children's Hospital's multifaceted efforts to address food insecurity among its patients. When a family screens positive for food insecurity or another

social determinant of health (such as uncertain housing or an unsafe home environment—factors that influence health outcomes), our providers can offer tangible support in addition to connecting them with community resources to assist them over the long term.

Through the Food Pharmacy program, hundreds of Vermont and northern New York families receive food shares, grocery gift cards and transportation gift cards, plus cooking tools such as cutting boards, knives, spatulas and baking pans. Primary community partners in this effort are Vermont 211, Hunger Free Vermont, Feeding Chittenden, Milton Family Center and the Janet S. Munt Family Room.

**Key funding:** Rite Aid Healthy Futures Foundation, CMN Hospitals Fund

### Spiritual Care

Thanks to philanthropic support, in 2023 the UVM Children's Hospital was able to hire a pediatric chaplain to offer spiritual care to patients, families and employees. In this role, Katherine Daniels made 575 patient and family



Katherine Daniels, pediatric chaplain,  
UVM Children's Hospital

visits between February and November. The Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, Inpatient Pediatrics and Pediatric Intensive Care Unit were among the most visited. Parents and staff report with gratitude that Daniels helped them cope with stress, uncertainty and existential issues such as meaning, identity and grief/loss.

An important aspect of Daniels' work has been to provide support to care team members. This has included facilitating debrief sessions in the aftermath of pediatric patient deaths. Daniels also provides staff with opportunities for individual emotional processing. To date, she has delivered over 30 hours of skilled emotional and spiritual support to more than 100 employees, helping reduce stress, burnout and turnover.

Thanks to our community's generosity, Daniels' work will continue to be funded in 2024. Additional philanthropic support would enable an expansion of services to the Transgender Youth Clinic, the Eating Disorder Clinic, and adolescents boarding in the Emergency Department awaiting inpatient psychiatry placement, as well as outpatient pediatric palliative care home visits and other areas of need.

**Key funding:** CMN Hospitals Fund ■

# Protecting Young Lives

*Youth suicide prevention research and training gains invaluable new resources*

**S**uicide is the second leading cause of death for youth in Vermont, yet finding care that directly addresses suicide prevention with an evidence-based approach is exceedingly difficult. Adding to the complexity is a deficit in suicide prevention research and a limited availability of suicide-specific trainings for clinic-based care providers, staff and learners.

In 2023, the Vermont-based Four Pines Fund made formative philanthropic investments in two initiatives that aim to address these shortfalls and not only prevent suicide deaths but prevent and reduce the tremendous suffering associated with suicidality and all its drivers.



**To learn more about investing in suicide prevention initiatives, contact**

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*“Without clear quality tracking and feedback, we cannot improve our work. If we succeed, we can better support the well-being of youth and families in Vermont and the North Country, expand resources for caregivers and staff and inform systemwide improvements across our health network.”*

– Andrew Rosenfeld, MD, Four Pines VCCYF Zero Suicide Fund project lead, UVM Medical Center Child & Adolescent Psychiatry Division Outpatient Services director, Psychiatry Department quality director, associate professor and board-certified psychiatrist





#### Four Pines VCCYF Zero Suicide Fund

The UVM Medical Center's Vermont Center for Children, Youth and Families (VCCYF) outpatient clinic offers child and adolescent psychiatry services to the community, and suicide risk is a primary concern. There are no other academic child and adolescent psychiatry clinics or training programs in Vermont, and overall, very few child and adolescent psychiatrists practice in the state.

The Four Pines Zero Suicide Fund will have a direct impact on the youth and families served by VCCYF. The foundational belief of Zero Suicide is that suicide deaths for individuals under the care of health and behavioral health systems are preventable. For systems like the UVM Health Network—dedicated to improving patient safety—Zero Suicide presents an aspirational challenge and practical framework for systemwide transformation toward safer suicide care.

The fund will provide multitiered support, enabling VCCYF to participate in the global Education Development Center's Zero Suicide Institute (ZSI), identify evidence-based suicide-specific treatments, develop a sustainable training program for clinicians, pinpoint gaps in care and engage in ZSI's statewide collaboration to learn from and connect with organizations invested in suicide prevention.

#### Four Pines Fellowship for Excellence in Suicide Prevention

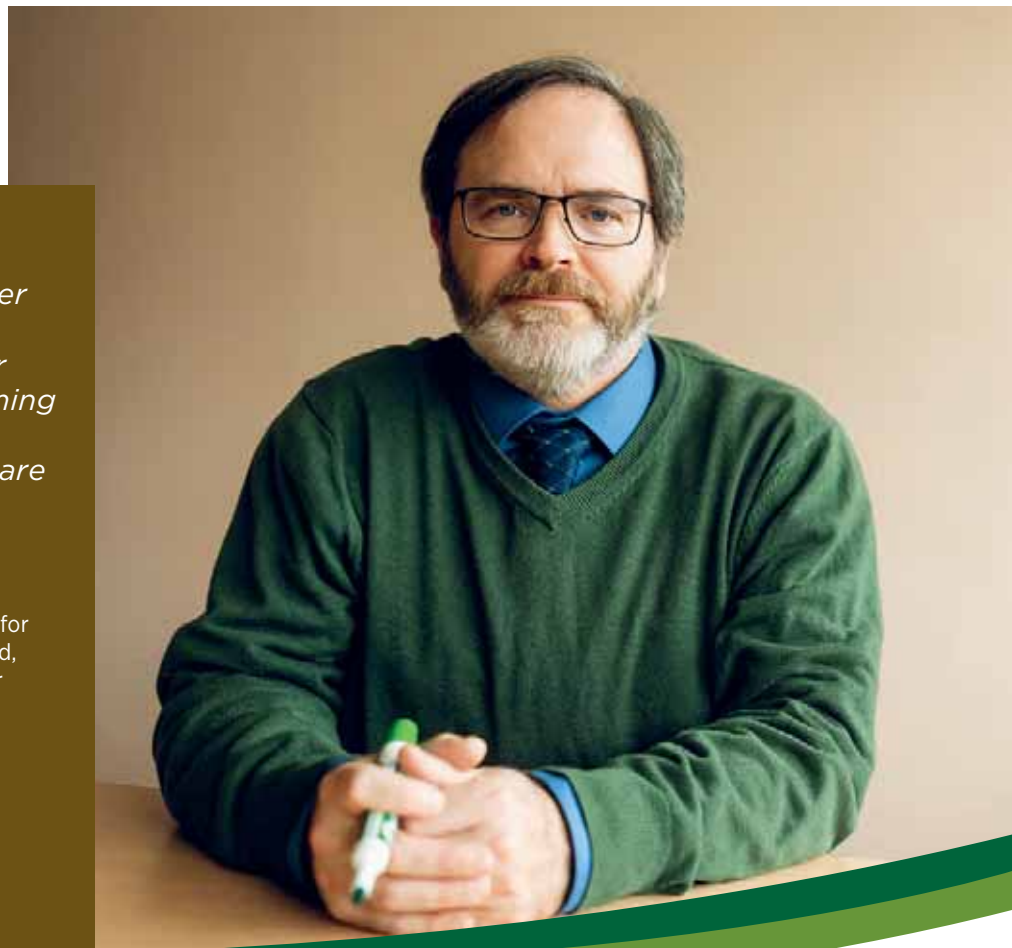
Millions of Americans experience symptoms of a mental health condition each year, and the number of people seeking care is trending upward. The Four Pines Fellowship for Excellence in Suicide Prevention was envisioned by Thomas Delaney, PhD, associate professor of pediatrics at the Larner College of Medicine, a medical educator and mental health researcher.

The fellowship is made possible through philanthropic support from the Four Pines Fund and is the first of its kind, providing suicide prevention-specific research and clinical learning opportunities to cohorts of emerging health care providers. Larner College of Medicine students codesign a short-term research project with a mentor and gain new clinical knowledge and practice skills by observing and working with skilled suicide prevention health care providers. The fellowship is guided by an advisory committee that includes psychiatrists, psychologists, educational specialists and people with lived experience involving suicide. Both Delaney and the Four Pines Fund see this fellowship serving as a model for others across the nation.

"Recent studies show that as many as 80% of individuals who went on to die by suicide saw a health care provider in the months before dying, and strengthening providers' skills around identifying and responding to suicide risk is a crucial public health strategy for reducing suicide attempt and death rates," said Delaney. ■

*"The Four Pines Fellowship is an opportunity for medical and other health care students at UVM to develop knowledge and skills for addressing suicide and self-harming behaviors, gaining research and clinical experience that will prepare them to be leaders in suicide prevention as they become independent practitioners."*

– Thomas Delaney, PhD, Four Pines Fellowship for Excellence in Suicide Prevention program lead, associate professor of pediatrics, UVM Larner College of Medicine



# Generosity Spurs Solutions

*2023 marked the eighth round of employee-led innovation grants made possible by community donations*

**E**ach year, nearly 1,000 donors contribute to the UVM Medical Center Fund, with most contributions under \$100. Through the UVM Medical Center Grant Program, these pooled gifts fuel employee-led initiatives that bring new knowledge and resources to areas of critical and emerging need.

One theme among the funded grants is health care worker safety, well-being and retention. Investments in our people will not only help our workforce thrive but benefit patient satisfaction, flow of care and health care access. Here are a few of the work-force and work environment-focused grants awarded funding in the 2023 grant cycle.

**Code ASSIST** (*All Staff Support in Stressful Times*) creates a deployable Critical Care Response Team (CCRT) specially trained to support staff facing destabilizing events such as violence or aggression. With an under-10-minutes response time, the CCRT—composed of employees from throughout the hospital—can deliver real-time backup and resources in the moment staff members need it. Three tiers of support will be available: peer-to-peer, during high-stress patient encounters; targeted, post-event support for those severely impacted by high-stress patient encounters; and follow-up support for individuals, teams and units that are routinely experiencing stress in their jobs. (Grant co-leads: Amanda Young, MSN, RN, CEN, CPEN, Rev. Andrew Gregg, MA)

**ED ImPACT** (*Emergency Department Improvement of Psychiatric and Crisis Treatment*) aims to elevate the therapeutic value of the Psychiatric Suite, an extension of the Emergency Department for patients awaiting psychiatric hospitalization. The suite's lack of comfort, entertainment and basic amenities has made it difficult to accommodate patients for prolonged periods. With improvements, the area will provide an outlet for emotions and stress, encourage autonomy and healthy coping skills, and help this vulnerable population meaningfully engage in treatment while in the ED. (Grant lead: Bridget McNamara, MS) ■



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**Maintaining Dignity, Humanity and Autonomy of Vulnerable Populations during Hospitalization** provides clothing and footwear for a highly vulnerable patient population during their time of crisis. Patients admitted to the inpatient psychiatry units seek acute mental health stabilization. Many arrive in a state of disorganization or exist with limited access to resources such as family, housing or basic amenities. Central to their stabilization is the cultivation of coping skills and daily living activities. Without clothing and footwear, practicing such activities—getting dressed, tidying one's room, walking laps to de-stress—is impossible.

(Right) Grant lead Jessica Charbonneau, DNP, RN, nurse manager, Inpatient Psychiatry





University of Vermont  
JESSICA  
CHARBONNEAU, RN  
Nurse Manager  
RN



# INVEST, INNOVATE, Move Forward in Strength

*Growing, training and empowering our health care workforce*

Madison Tourville, RN

**T**he nation's health care workforce is short by 1.27 million workers. Such gaps can diminish access to care, the flow of care delivery, patient satisfaction, and employee retention and well-being. Charitable gifts from grateful patients and families, area organizations, and many others are enabling us to act quickly and innovate to address our own workforce shortage.

Our approach is two-pronged. First, we're investing in current employees by expanding in-house training opportunities, experiential learning apprenticeships in highly skilled fields, paid training programs, and retention programs that address employees' needs and support their ambitions to grow.

Second, we're attracting new talent by collaborating with local, regional and online universities to create accessible learning pathways while building education and training programs for nontraditional adult learners, youth and individuals with barriers to employment or education.

Together, these programs and the charitable gifts that support them demonstrate both the hospital's and the community's deep appreciation for and commitment to a thriving and satisfied health care workforce. ■

## INVESTMENTS IN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

**Workforce investments have direct and immediate benefits to our community, including:**

- Improved access to care
- Lower patient wait times
- More caregivers to meet demand
- Family-sustaining career opportunities
- Reduced education and employment barriers
- Full classrooms at area colleges and universities



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Gloria Thomas, RN

## NEW DONOR-FUNDED PROGRAMS

### **Boosting Degree Progression**

A new donor-funded Licensed Nursing Assistant (LNA) Educational Development Program has been launched to provide a cohort of six UVM Medical Center LNAs with resources to ensure their successful progression from LNA through licensed practical nurse and registered nurse (RN). Recognizing that our LNAs may have external demands that would deter, delay or impede successful and timely progression to their RN license—such as the cost of education or the need to work full-time to sustain health benefits and full wages—this program aims to remove barriers, facilitate learning and empower employees while limiting nursing vacancies at the hospital.

**Key funding:** UVM Medical Center Auxiliary

### **Strengthening Well-Being and Recognition**

Grateful for the care she and loved ones have received at the UVM Medical Center, Lili Ruane, a local philanthropist, made a charitable gift to fund immediate investments in employee well-being and recognition. Following are a few of the initiatives her generosity is making possible.

***Complimentary chair massages*** for employees on their units from September 2023 to February 2024. Rest and relaxation are important for employees if they are to feel their best and bring compassionate care to their patients. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.

***Recognition and spot awards*** in the form of free coffee cards to the teams on units that are excelling in our new patient progression rounds to elevate coordination of care.

***Perioperative celebration*** to recognize the several hundred perioperative employees across many disciplines and responsibilities who have made possible remarkable and historic delivery of surgical care to our patients.

***Future programs*** in the planning stage include an employee wellness space, multicultural group fitness classes and passes to state parks and area recreational facilities.

**Key funding:** Lili Ruane Angels Employee Appreciation Fund

“I GET PROFOUND SATISFACTION IN  
SEEING THE GOOD THAT FLOWS FROM  
GIVING WHILE I AM ALIVE.”

– VITO IMBASCIANI, MD '85, PhD

## Change Agent

*UVM medical education opens a pathway to a lifetime of service*

Vito Imbasciani, MD '85, PhD, began his career with a focus on music, earning both a master's and doctorate degree in the field. But medicine always called to him. A “transformative interview” with the UVM Larner College of Medicine's dean of admissions changed the trajectory of Imbasciani's life, offering him the opportunity to become a doctor.

The field of medicine is better for that series of events: Over the past several decades, Imbasciani has served his country as a wartime surgeon and well-respected public servant who played a key role in ending the “Don't Ask, Don't Tell” policy that prevented gay and lesbian individuals from serving openly in the U.S. military.

After receiving his medical degree, Imbasciani completed surgical and urologic residencies at Yale. For over 25 years he served as a surgeon in the United States Army Medical Corps, with four wartime deployments. He was California's Secretary of Veterans Affairs for eight years, serving the needs of 1.6 million veterans. Now, he chairs the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine. Imbasciani has called 2012 a “defining moment” in his career, when President Barack Obama publicly acknowledged and thanked him for his role in ending “Don't Ask, Don't Tell.”

He was inspired to bring that spirit of activism to the Larner College of Medicine, establishing with his husband, George DiSalvo, the Imbasciani DiSalvo lectureship dedicated to exploring important health care issues that impact LGBTQ+ populations. It was the first lectureship of

its kind at any medical school in the country. Imbasciani's generous investments in Larner medical students have been vast and varied, including an endowed scholarship for students who help advance diversity at the college. This spirit of giving defines his personal ethos.

“There is an unstated expectation that responsible people will find a way to model generous behavior and give something back to the communities they live in, whether by sitting on a board of a nonprofit or charitable organization or by helping to underwrite its activities,” Imbasciani said. “Since everything I have been able to accomplish for good in this world stems directly from UVM putting the letters ‘MD’ after my name, it is only fitting that I direct my efforts back to Vermont and my medical alma mater.”

When he sees the Larner College of Medicine and its students thrive as a result of his philanthropy, he's reminded of his own life path and the hope that new graduates bring to medicine.

“I get profound satisfaction in seeing the good that flows from giving while I am alive,” he said. “To the extent that I vicariously share in students' accomplishments certainly elevates me; that scholarship students realize that they are valued for who they are and what they will ultimately contribute to our profession equally elevates the Larner College of Medicine.”

On behalf of all who've benefited from Imbasciani's generosity, we say thank you. ■



**To help shape the  
future of medicine,  
contact**

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(Opposite, left to right) Pamela Gibson, MD; Dallas Ducar, MSN, APRN; Vito Imbasciani, MD '85, PhD; Margaret Tandoh, MD, FACS; and George DiSalvo at the 2023 Vito Imbasciani, MD '85, PhD, and George DiSalvo LGBTQ Health Equity Lecture Series presentation of Gender-Affirming Care as a Model for Healthcare







# Investing in the Future of Medicine

*Scholarships open doors for a new generation of gifted physicians*

*"The Ignat family's scholarship has removed barriers for me to come back to Vermont after my residency and fellowship. My goal is to practice rural emergency medicine in a small, community hospital and use my Master of Public Health [degree] to improve the health care delivery system. My fiancée and I also hope to raise kids here. The Ignats' scholarship will help make all this a reality."*

– Cliff Reilly, Class of 2024,  
David and Eleanor Ignat Incentive/Loan  
Forgiveness Program Scholar



**U**VM Larner College of Medicine graduates are highly skilled and caring, and they contribute to human health in myriad ways. Donor-funded medical scholarships are vital to successful cultivation of a talented and diverse student body that enriches classroom and clinical learning environments, builds cultural competency and cultivates tomorrow's skilled and compassionate physician leaders.

## Every scholarship gift helps:

- Attract the best and brightest minds to medicine
- Bolster our region's and our nation's physician pipeline
- Create opportunities to diversify the physician workforce

- Reduce long-term debt, giving graduates more freedom to choose to practice in less lucrative specialties, in historically marginalized areas or in communities in which access to high-quality providers is limited
- Enable talented and deserving students to realize their dream of being a physician

"Donors who give to medical scholarships at the Larner College of Medicine have a huge impact on our ability to attract top applicants. The cost of medical education in our country is staggering. For many applicants, the financial aid/scholarship package becomes the deciding factor in where they choose to attend," says Leila Amiri, PhD, associate dean of admissions, UVM Larner College of Medicine and assistant professor, Department of Psychiatry, UVM Medical Center.



**To learn more about opening doors for promising medical students, contact**

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*"Scholarships have allowed me a medical education experience at Larner that I am proud of. I've grown my confidence in the clinical setting while pursuing other passions such as mentorship, social justice, and advocacy through various extra-curriculars and conferences. I hope to expand my health equity advocacy work and address social determinants of health in my future practice as a pediatrician."*

– Anneliese Lapidès, Class of 2024,  
Robert Larner, MD '42 2023 Student Award recipient





# Easing the Burden of Cancer

*Gifts from the community translate to resources for patients undergoing treatment*

**E**xpanding resources for patients with cancer and their families is a top priority for the UVM Cancer Center. Charitable gifts to supportive patient services funds help remove financial barriers to treatment and sustain valuable programs and educational initiatives. Read on to learn more about their impact.

**Victoria Buffum Endowment Fund:** Grateful for her care, Victoria (Vicki) Buffum wanted to ease the burden on other patients and families as they navigate treatment. Although she died in 2002, her legacy lives on through a fund set up in her name. Today, the Victoria Buffum Endowment Fund offers grants to support programs focused on patient education, community outreach, supportive care, research and more.

## 2023 grants

### **Cancer Caregiver Registry to Support Caregivers and Patients:**

This grant surveys informal caregivers (e.g., a cancer patient's spouse, sibling, child) to better identify barriers to care, desired services and opportunities to elevate caregiver support and patient health outcomes. (Grant lead: Maija Reblin, PhD)

**Support for Oncology Patients:** This grant provides support for the purchase of gas cards, ferry passes, lodging, meal vouchers and more to cover the increased out-of-pocket expenses that come with a cancer diagnosis. (Grant lead: Cybelle Joy, MSW, RN, CCM)

**Cancer Patient Support Foundation Emergency Fund:** This grant supports the local nonprofit Cancer Patient Support Foundation's Emergency Fund, which provides resources in moments of crisis for household expenses, often filling requests in less than 72 hours. (Grant lead: Liz Philip-Buttery, MS)

**Educational Video for Point-of-Care Genetic Testing:** This grant supports a new point-of-care video and informed consent document that streamlines the process of enrolling in genetic testing for patients diagnosed with cancer. (Grant lead: Wendy McKinnon, MS, CGC)

**Improving Patient Experiences in Radiation Oncology Through Patient Education Videos:** This grant supports the production of targeted patient education videos to increase understanding of radiation therapy treatments, which can be technically complex and sometimes anxiety-producing for patients. (Grant lead: Emilie Soisson, PhD)



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Outpatient social workers help bridge the gap for oncology patients in need. (Left to right) Michele Mosley, MSW, LICSW; Matthew Mugford, LICSW; Stephanie Fraser, MSW; Michelle Pierce, LICSW; Amy Bertrand, BSW, MPS





### Thankful family strengthens patient fund and honors a care team

**K**athy Busier and her family's generous gift to the Cancer Patient Supportive Services Fund will strengthen a new effort around patient supportive services including financial assistance for treatment-related expenses, integrative health programs and more. The inspiration behind the family's gift was shared in their thank you letter.

"Please accept this gift to honor Dr. Chris Holmes in the memory of Brian Busier. Her dedication and love for her patients and their families are endless. We are grateful for the wonderful care and support Dr. Holmes and her team, JoAnn Nielson and Annie Berkowitz, provided during Brian's journey. In addition to providing the best medical care, they became members of our family and for that we are grateful."





# Giving Back, Pushing Forward

*Grateful family fuels innovations in cancer research, care, education and detection*

As educators in local schools, Richard and Shirley Ahern's careers focused on helping others. Whether it was working with children, parents, peers or mentoring student interns, they knew the importance of collaborating with others to achieve meaningful goals. They also knew the pain of losing family members at a young age to terminal cancer.

"My sister died at the age of 25 of a fatal myosarcoma," said Richard. "I lost my brother to cancer as well, and Shirley has lost a sister."

"Cancer treatment 40 years ago looked very different," Shirley added. "It reflected the research that had been conducted up to that point. Thankfully, investigators continued to push forward, taking the science that was known and building on it."

Recognizing the impact of evolving research and education on clinical care, health outcomes and quality of life for patients with cancer and their families, the Aherns established the Richard Charles and Shirley LaVigne Ahern Family Oncology Fund at the UVM Cancer Center.

"It's our hope that the fund will assist in developing tomorrow's leaders in cancer research and clinical practice, and moving early detection and treatments forward," Richard said. "We don't think of ourselves as philanthropists. We know firsthand the effect of cancer on patients and their families, and we believe in helping where we can."

The fund will award meritorious research and/or education scholarships for rising new investigators and clinicians and support the purchase of specialty equipment and instrumentation for patient care in the quest for preventing, identifying and treating breast and hematologic cancers.

"The UVM Cancer Center has attracted and sustains an amazing group of dedicated medical professionals who offer state-of-the-art cancer care, top-notch education and world-class oncological research in collaboration with scientists from around the globe," said Shirley.

"As new treatments evolve, more hope is offered to patients confronting a cancer diagnosis," added Richard. "We are fortunate to live in this community, and to have this opportunity to invest in the welfare of others." ■



**To learn more about investing in our cancer mission, contact**

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# Pink Out Cancer

*Local field hockey teams honor their coaches and support world-class cancer care*



Colchester Coach  
Shawn Lefebvre  
connects with  
a player



**To join efforts to  
relieve cancer's  
burden on patients,  
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Last fall, when the Colchester High School and South Burlington High School field hockey teams faced off for a game, they all donned pink for a very good cause.

They honored their coaches—both of whom were battling breast cancer—by hosting and standing in solidarity with a Pink Out Cancer event to raise awareness and funds for the UVM Cancer Center Breast Cancer Patient Support Fund. At the event, Rhonda Forcier, UVM Cancer Center's assistant director of philanthropic engagement, spoke to the importance of the local community showing up for their own.

"We honor patients and family members affected by this disease, and the doctors and researchers working to detect, treat and cure breast cancer," said Forcier. "Today, the

Colchester field hockey team chose this game to demonstrate their love and support for two great coaches as they travel on their own cancer journeys."

Part of a growing national movement of organizations giving back, the goal of Pink Out Cancer games is to direct local fundraising efforts toward critical cancer care in their communities. At the UVM Cancer Center, Pink Out events support a range of initiatives such as access to integrative therapies that make patients more comfortable during treatment and guidance from patient navigators to help families understand the complexities of their cancer care. Funds also help ease the financial burden of a cancer diagnosis.

For organizations that participate, the Pink Out Cancer fundraising effort adds meaning to events; local teams at the youth, high school and college levels as well as other groups, individual organizers, and even businesses can honor their friends, family and neighbors while supporting the lifesaving care they need. Events like these bring the UVM Cancer Center's mission full circle by providing the opportunity to celebrate community and the value of world-class health care right here in Vermont. ■



Colchester High School  
Field Hockey Team

# Hearts and Hands

*Sculpture honors our workforce's service during an unforgettable era*

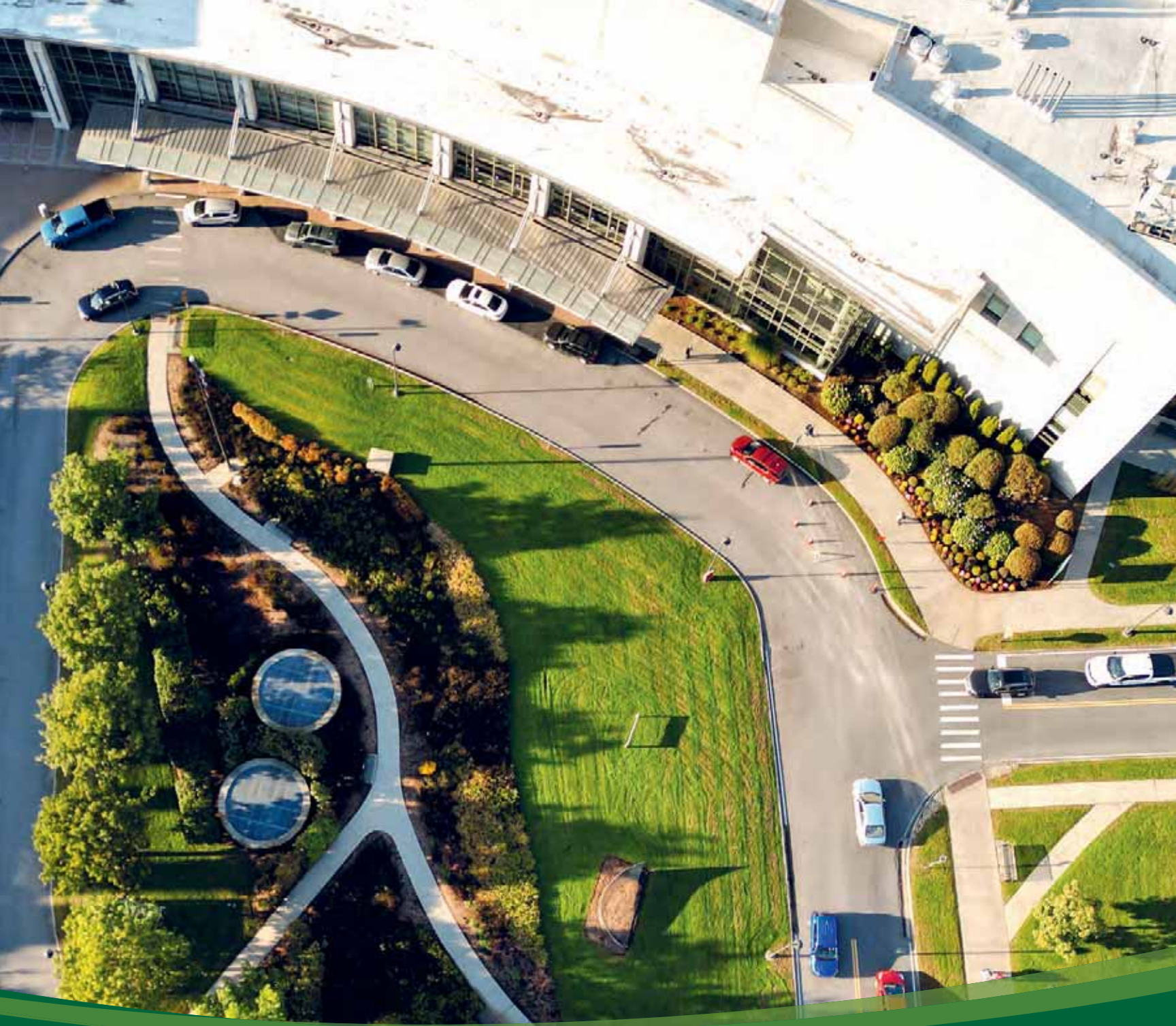
As a tribute to our health care workers and in recognition of art's capacity to promote wellness and healing, a bench sculpture titled Hearts and Hands now resides near the McClure elevators on the third floor of the hospital. Hearts and Hands recognizes the vast and varied contributions of our health care workforce during the pandemic from 2019 to 2023 and reminds us of our community's profound gratitude. Deeply appreciative of the UVM Medical Center and its employees, the Pizzagalli family commissioned the sculpture from artist Jim Sardonis and generously donated it to the UVM Medical Center in August 2023.



**2023  
Philanthropy  
Highlights**

Annie Seyler, UVM Medical Center Foundation, *Editor and Principal Writer*  
Ann Howard, UVM Larner College of Medicine, *Designer*  
Erin Post, *Contributing Writer*  
Andy Duback, Geeda Searfoorce, David Seaver, UVM Spatial Analysis Lab,  
*Contributing Photographers*





THE UVM MEDICAL CENTER, INCLUDING THE UVM CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL AND THE UVM CANCER CENTER, IS A NONPROFIT HOSPITAL **that relies on private philanthropic support to achieve its mission.**

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**2023 Foundation  
Board Members**

*\*Completed term  
in 2023  
\*\*Ex officio*

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Kate Laud, Vice Chair  
Dawn LeBaron, Secretary  
Michael Biama  
Paul Danielson, DMD  
Jay Desautels

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Frank Ittleman, MD  
Stephen Leffler, MD\*\*  
Ginger Lubkowitz\*\*  
Stephanie Miller Taylor  
Sally Wichert  
Glen Wright





The UVM Medical Center, together with UVM's Larner College of Medicine and College of Nursing and Health Sciences, is our region's premier academic medical center. One important reason our caregivers, scientists, educators and learners can change so many lives: philanthropic support from our community. Your charitable gifts help us push the boundaries of clinical care, research and training—coming ever closer to treatments and cures for the health conditions that affect thousands of people throughout Vermont and northern New York, and millions more around the globe. Our collaborative work relies on close partnerships, vision, shared passion and a vast, dedicated community of donors.

**Thank You.**

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[UVMHealth.org/MedCenterFoundation](http://UVMHealth.org/MedCenterFoundation)

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