BARBARA (Babs) DONAHUE has been extraordinarily generous to UMass Memorial Medical Center and its academic partner UMass Medical School over the years, helping to make possible the acquisition of such life-changing equipment as a dedicated breast CT machine, a specially equipped emergency response vehicle to bring physicians to the site of medical emergencies, and technology to help care for infants born with brain injuries.

Her latest gift has enabled the purchase of three specialized monitors for the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU)—and it’s having a big impact on the way UMass Memorial is able to care for its tiniest patients. These state-of-the-art machines enable NICU doctors and nurses to non-invasively assess the levels of carbon dioxide (CO2) in the blood of these tiny infants.

“In the old days, to measure a patient’s blood levels of oxygen or carbon dioxide—which is essential in assessing patients’ lung function—we had to draw blood,” said Chief of Neonatology Lawrence M. Rhein, MD, MPH. “A couple of decades ago, a non-invasive way to measure oxygen status was developed that uses a probe on the finger, or a sticker affixed to an infant, that displays what those levels are every second.

“Until recently, however, we still had to draw blood to determine how well the lungs were getting rid of carbon dioxide,” Dr. Rhein continued. “New technology allows us to continuously monitor both of these vital measures non-invasively. For any patient—but especially for these tiny, fragile infants who are on ventilators—this is a big deal.”

Dr. Rhein pointed out that this new technology improves the way the NICU is able to care for these patients in two important ways.

“Before, to the naked eye, a baby might look stable but her CO2 could be going up suddenly,” he explained. “However, we wouldn’t know that until she was in obvious distress. These new monitors signal us to intervene before the infant is in distress, which translates into better care and better outcomes.

“We also want to wean babies off ventilators as quickly as possible, so they’re not exposed to unnecessary treatment,” Continued on page 2
Dr. Rhein continued. “Now we can do this with much greater confidence since we can better monitor their lung function. It’s also teaching us how to better care for infants in the future—information we can share with other NICUs and providers caring for patients of all ages.”

Babs discovered UMass Memorial’s need for these monitors while visiting the NICU to see how her previous donation had helped.

“At a tour of the unit with the doctors and nurses, we were sitting around a conference table and I asked, ‘If you could make a wish, what’s the one thing you need?’” she said. “All in a chorus, they mentioned these new ventilation monitors.”

While the NICU already had one of these ventilation monitors, its use had to be rationed, sharing it among the babies who needed it most. Dr. Rhein told Babs that if they had more of these pieces of equipment, they could make the technology more available.

“So I asked how many they needed, and they said three,” she said. “So that’s how many I wanted them to have, so they’d have a little fleet of these machines.

“I just love that NICU,” Babs continued, explaining her motivation for supporting its work. “I get emotional seeing those little ones struggling to hold onto life, and if I could help a thousand times over I would. It’s quite a feeling when you think that some little machine you provide can help save a life.”

“To have her come in and just ask how she can help, well, we are just so grateful,” Dr. Rhein said. “If we want to be on the cutting edge, we need help. This is something that, through her efforts, is already having an impact on families.”

“I’m blessed to be able to do it,” Babs said. “It gives me a lot of joy.”

Thank you UMass ALS Cellucci Fund 2018 Boston Marathon Team!

As this newsletter went to press, our team was finishing up race preparations—and had already crossed their fundraising finish line... by a mile!

By early April, they had collectively raised more than $70,000—well above the team’s goal of $37,500.

UMMS scientists are closer than ever to an ALS breakthrough and it’s possible because of people like Claire, Kate, Matt, Sean and Todd, and the hundreds who supported them.

Learn more about this remarkable group of supporters and the Cellucci Fund: www.umassals.com.
Steadfast supporters of the 19th UMass Cancer Walk & Run beat fundraising goal

DONORS LIKE YOU AND LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS raised $570,000 in 2017 for cancer research and treatment at UMass Medical School and UMass Memorial.

“Our goal was to raise $475,000,” said Beth Whitney, organizer of the UMass Cancer Walk & Run, which was held on Sept. 24, 2017. “To have the support go beyond that goal was as thrilling as it was heartening. We’re so grateful to everyone who donated, organized fundraising teams and sponsored the 19th annual event.”

To date, the event has raised more than $11 million to support cancer research, clinical trials and patient care. Thank you to all who supported this vital fundraising event!

Your planned gift to UMass Medical School or UMass Memorial can take many forms: from an outright gift of cash or real estate to a bequest.

Learn more about planned gift options: www.umassmed.edu/planned-giving
PHILANTHROPY is invariably attributed to one of two motivations: giving back or paying it forward. When Nathaniel G. Clark, MD’88, established an endowed scholarship at UMass Medical School, his gift fulfills both.

“The major motivator for me was that when I went to UMass Medical School, I felt fortunate to have good scholarship aid,” he said. “And I believe that one should give back for the good fortune they’ve had.

“I realized that at this point in my career, it was financially possible for me to do so, and decided an endowed scholarship was a good opportunity,” he continued.

After earning his medical degree in 1988, Dr. Clark completed a combined residency in internal medicine and pediatrics, followed by a fellowship in endocrinology, all at Baystate Medical Center in Springfield. Today, he specializes in endocrinology as part of the Beth Israel Deaconess Specialty Group, seeing patients with diabetes and thyroid problems in Plymouth and Sandwich.

Dr. Clark, himself, had a wonderful experience with a benefactor who helped him get through prep school before college. “I got to correspond with the man who set up the scholarship; he listened and gave me advice along the way,” Dr. Clark recalled. “As a graduation present, he even bought me a three-piece suit.

“I wanted to recreate that to some degree, so I set up my scholarship to have the opportunity to get to know the student recipient. “I was delighted to attend the annual scholarship dinner in fall 2017 and meet her,” he said. “I learned about her background and goals, and found that we have a lot in common.”

Notably, the first Clark scholarship wasn’t scheduled to be awarded until 2018, in order to give the principal funds time to earn interest. So he donated some additional monies to cover the award right away.

In addition, he has made a provision in his will to continue his support of the scholarship after he dies. “While I can reap the benefits of establishing this scholarship now, while I’m alive and kicking, it also feels good knowing that when I’m gone I can continue to support students,” he said.

Dr. Clark sees his gift as a meaningful and valuable way to remain involved with his alma mater. “Going to UMMS was a great experience because it was, and still is, a relatively young medical school, and the faculty were excited to make it the best it could be,” he said. “They were—and are—open to new ideas, dedicated to listening and making the experience as meaningful as possible.”

He also hopes that by sharing his story, it will help motivate other alumni to support medical education at UMMS. “I think there’s a misconception that because it’s a state school, taxpayers foot the bill,” Dr. Clark said. “In fact, the Medical School relies very much on benefactors who set up scholarships. The scholarship program only thrives when people are willing to donate, and if graduates weren’t willing to do so, it would put this program in peril.

“It’s so very important for graduates to see that earning a medical degree isn’t just a four-year experience,” he added. “It lasts for a lifetime, and we need to do our best to continue to be a resource for the Medical School so it endures.”
A NEW INSTITUTE for rare diseases research at UMass Medical School has been created with extraordinary support from the Li Weibo Charitable Foundation in China. The $10 million endowment gift—one of the largest charitable donations to UMMS in its history—will build on the school’s already substantial accomplishments in the fields of gene therapy, RNA biology and RNAi technology to accelerate the development of novel therapeutics for a host of disorders.

The Li Weibo (李伟波) Institute for Rare Diseases Research is home to existing faculty whose expertise has led to profound discoveries related to numerous rare diseases.

“At UMass Medical School, our scientists and physician-investigators have long been committed to discovering life-changing treatments and cures for these diseases,” said Chancellor Michael F. Collins. “This generous gift from the Li Weibo Charitable Foundation will allow us to expand on our discoveries, bringing research support and hope for people around the world.”

Li Weibo, who established the Li Weibo Charitable Foundation in 2013 to support a number of causes, including biomedical research and education, said he met with Chancellor Collins and faculty at UMass Medical School and was deeply moved by the progress being made in the labs.

“I am eager to support this globally leading medical school in establishing a rare diseases institute in the hope of helping more patients and their family members who need our help,” he said. “The diseases are rare, but the love, care and compassion in our society is abundant and we want to support these families in their time of need.”

There are more than 7,000 diseases defined as “rare” by the National Institutes of Health, generally those that impact fewer than 200,000 people. Rare disease research underway at UMMS includes the study of alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency, ALS, Canavan disease, CDKL5 deficiency, cystic fibrosis, Duchenne muscular dystrophy, facioscapulohumeral muscular dystrophy, fragile X syndrome, Friedreich’s ataxia, frontotemporal dementia (FTD), Huntington’s disease, neurofibromatosis, Rett syndrome, Pompe disease, retinitis pigmentosa and Tay Sachs.

Additionally, Li Weibo contributed $750,000 to establish an annual scholarship for up to five doctoral students in the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences.

Learn more
www.umassmed.edu/rare-disease-research

Accelerating research, expanding discoveries
$10 million endowment gift from Li Weibo Charitable Foundation supports world-leading research at UMMS

You, too, can make a difference in the lives of others.
Please, join us!
www.umassmed.edu/campaign
Thank you to the generous sponsors and supporters of the 2017 Winter Ball!

More than $1.4 million raised for 9th annual event

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10th Annual Winter Ball – Friday, Dec. 7, 2018
www.umassmed.edu/winterball