

Pathways

THE POWER OF PHILANTHROPY

UT Southwestern
Medical Center

Winter 2025



Rewiring Hope

Altering the brain's electrical signals leads to new treatments
for mood and movement disorders.

WINTER RADIANCE
ON CAMPUS

On Eugene McDermott Plaza, winter branches adorned with thousands of holiday lights create a serene courtyard haven, where the spirit of celebration joins the daily pursuit of healing, innovation, and care.



Prevention, Progress, and the Power of Partnership

At UT Southwestern, our mission is grounded in a simple but powerful belief: Academic medicine has the ability to change not only how we treat disease, but how we define what is possible. This winter edition of *Pathways* reflects that commitment — showcasing innovation, partnership, and philanthropy that are advancing care across North Texas and beyond.

Our cover story explores the transformative promise of neuromodulation — an emerging frontier redefining care for patients with complex neurological and psychiatric conditions.

This rough groundbreaking clinical trials and the expertise of the Peter O'Donnell Jr. Brain Institute, UT Southwestern is advancing therapies such as deep brain stimulation to restore movement, stabilize mood, and renew hope for those facing treatment-resistant depression, Parkinson's disease, and paralysis. This work reflects the powerful intersection of research, clinical excellence, and philanthropy — accelerating discoveries that are changing lives today and shaping the future of brain health.

That same spirit of bold progress carries throughout this issue. You will read about pioneering efforts in dermatology and burn care, expanded access to trauma services, and the growing impact of pediatric partnerships that are reshaping the future

of care for our youngest patients. Across every story is a common thread: When visionary supporters stand alongside world-class clinicians and scientists, innovation moves faster and reaches further.

Philanthropy remains a vital catalyst in this momentum. It fuels high-risk, high-reward research, strengthens patient-centered programs, and ensures that breakthroughs move from the laboratory to the bedside —

and into the lives of families who depend on us. Together, we are not only responding to today's health challenges; we are building a healthier, more hopeful tomorrow.

We invite you to explore the pages ahead and see how your partnership continues to make extraordinary progress possible.

"We are building a healthier, more hopeful tomorrow."



Daniel K. Podolsky, M.D.
President, UT Southwestern Medical Center



Marc A. Nivet, Ed.D., M.B.A.
Executive Vice President for Institutional Advancement, UT Southwestern Medical Center

Pathways

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Over the past 40-plus years, Ford and Cece Lacy have galvanized support for UT Southwestern — they are now extending that support to aspiring Ph.D. scientists.

"The Lacys are helping us build a future where more students choose to stay in North Texas and grow our research community." — Andrew Zinn, M.D., Ph.D.

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All In

A legacy of corporate support fuels research, care, and community impact.



STARS BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING DAY

Alexander Tatara, M.D., Ph.D., UTSW Assistant Professor of Internal Medicine and Biomedical Engineering, explains to students how bones work. Free North Texas high schools participated in STARS Biomedical Engineering (BME) Day, a campus event designed to inspire interest in biomedical careers.

NEWS

Around Campus

March of Dimes Launches Texas Collaborative Prematurity Research Center

March of Dimes has established the Texas Collaborative Prematurity Research Center, bringing together scientists from UT Southwestern Medical Center and the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston (UTMB) to address one of the nation's most urgent maternal-infant health challenges. Texas has one of the highest preterm birth rates in the U.S., making this work especially critical.

The center is co-led by Catherine

Spong, M.D., Chair of Obstetrics and Gynecology at UT Southwestern, and UTMB's Ramkumar Menon, Ph.D. Leveraging UT Southwestern's large obstetrics practice, which delivers more than 13,000 babies annually at William P. Clements Jr. University Hospital and Parkland Memorial Hospital, researchers will study real-world factors driving pregnancy outcomes – including nutrition, socioeconomic influences, and complications

such as preeclampsia and preterm birth.

Combined with UTMB's "pregnancy-on-a-chip" technology and artificial intelligence-powered drug screening, the collaboration aims to accelerate discoveries and advance new treatments to support healthier pregnancies and babies across Texas and beyond.

Dr. Spong holds the Paul C. MacDonald Distinguished Chair in Obstetrics and Gynecology.

UT Southwestern Steps Up for Heart Health

In October, cooler temperatures and a new route greeted UT Southwestern participants at the 2025 American Heart Association Dallas Heart Walk, held at the Levy Event Plaza in Irving. The event brought together thousands of walkers united by energy, community spirit, and a shared mission to fight cardiovascular disease.

UT Southwestern, with more than 2,300 registrants across 145 teams, was the largest organization represented at the walk. Together, Team UTSW raised over \$40,000 in support of lifesaving research and public awareness efforts to strengthen heart health across North Texas and beyond.



New CEO Oversees UTSW's Clements University Hospital



UT Southwestern recently welcomed Traci d'Auguste, M.B.A., M.S.H.A., as Vice President and Chief Executive Officer of William P. Clements Jr. University Hospital.

Ms. d'Auguste brings more than two decades of leadership in academic medicine, most recently serving as Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer at the University of Florida Health Shands Hospital. There, she led more than 10,000 employees and advanced initiatives to improve patient care, strengthen safety, and expand access to specialized services.

At UT Southwestern, she now oversees operations at Clements University Hospital and Zale Lipshy Pavilion, collaborating with Health System leaders and faculty to advance strategic priorities, strengthen performance, and ensure exceptional patient outcomes.

Nanovaccine Shows Promise for Treating HPV-related Cancers

Researchers at UT Southwestern Medical Center have developed a novel nanoparticle vaccine that eradicated tumors in an animal model of late-stage metastatic cancers caused by human papillomavirus (HPV). Published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, the study led by Jinming Gao, Ph.D., Professor in the Harold C. Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center, found that the nanovaccine not only eliminated primary tumors but also metastatic nodules – and when combined with existing immune checkpoint inhibitor therapy, achieved 100% survival in the tested mice.

The nanovaccine uses tiny particles of 25-30 nanometers in diameter to deliver a viral antigen and a STING-activating compound, triggering potent immune responses. With no current therapeutic vaccines for HPV-driven cancers, this approach offers hope for treating cancers that are inoperable or where radiation is not feasible. Next steps at UT Southwestern include further preclinical testing toward eventual human trials.

Dr. Gao holds the Elaine Dewey Sammons Distinguished Chair in Cancer Research, in Honor of Eugene P. Frenkel, M.D.



Eight Graduate Students Earn Prominent NSF Honors

Eight UT Southwestern graduate students have been recognized by the National Science Foundation’s Graduate Research Fellowship Program (GRFP), the nation’s oldest fellowship and one of the most competitive for early-career scientists. One student earned a three-year fellowship award and seven received honorable mentions – a notable achievement in a year with fewer fellowships awarded nationally.

“The NSF’s GRFP supports exceptional graduate students pursuing research with the potential to shape the future of science, providing stipend and training support and recognizing scholars who will drive innovation across disciplines.

“These students stood out in an extraordinarily competitive year,” said Andrew Zinn, M.D., Ph.D., Dean of the UT Southwestern Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences. “Their recognition reflects both their talent and the strength of our training environment.”

The honored students represent fields from biophysics to molecular microbiology, reinforcing UTSW’s role as a leader in developing the next generation of scientific pioneers.

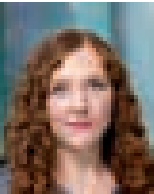
Dr. Zinn holds the Rolf Haberecht and Ute Schwarz Haberecht Deanship of the UT Southwestern Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences and the Henry Ross Perot Distinguished Professorship in Biomedical Science.



Ashley Merriweather

GRADUATE PROGRAM

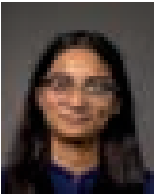
Organic Chemistry



Rachel Adams

GRADUATE PROGRAM

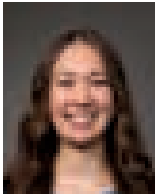
Genetics, Development and Disease



Jessica Alvarez

GRADUATE PROGRAM

Molecular Microbiology



Cristina Guarena

GRADUATE PROGRAM

Cell and Molecular Biology



Wil O'Shaughnessy

GRADUATE PROGRAM

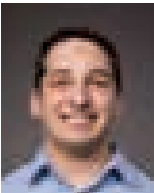
Cell and Molecular Biology



Julia Powell

GRADUATE PROGRAM

Molecular Biophysics



Sean Siniscalco

GRADUATE PROGRAM

Molecular Microbiology



Eric Sun

GRADUATE PROGRAM

Genetics, Development and Disease

Academic Honors

Congratulations to UT Southwestern’s new endowment holders appointed from August to October 2025.



Kala Bailey, M.D.
Drs. Anne and George Race Professorship of Student Psychiatry



Andre Russowsky Brunoni, M.D., Ph.D., M.B.A.
Sherry Gold Knopf Crasilneck Distinguished Chair in Psychiatry, in Honor of Mollie and Murray Gold



Nicholas Conrad, Ph.D.
John P. Perkins, Ph.D. Distinguished Professorship in Biomedical Science



Ryan Davies, M.D.
Pogue Distinguished Chair in Pediatric Cardiac Surgery Research



Rodney Infante, M.D., Ph.D.
Jan and Henri Bromberg Chair in Internal Medicine



Xiaochun Li, Ph.D.
Eugene McDermott Distinguished Chair in Molecular Genetics



Yingxi Lin, Ph.D.
Sherry Knopf Crasilneck Distinguished Chair in Psychiatry, in Honor of Albert Knopf



Judy Liu, M.D., Ph.D.
Miller Family Distinguished University Chair in Neurological Disease



Mala Mahendroo, Ph.D.
Arthur Grollman Professorship in Obstetrics and Gynecology



Nikhil Munshi, M.D., Ph.D.
J. Fred Schoellkopf, Jr. Chair in Cardiology Research



Arthur Westover, M.D.
McKenzie Foundation Chair in Psychiatry I

LEADERSHIP

Q&A

Joseph F. Merola, M.D., M.M.Sc., who is uniquely triple board-certified in internal medicine, dermatology, and rheumatology, is an internationally renowned expert in psoriasis, psoriatic arthritis, and connective tissue diseases as well as other hard-to-treat autoimmune skin diseases. He is Chair and Professor of Dermatology, Professor of Internal Medicine in the Division of Rheumatic Diseases, and Professor in the Peter O’Donnell Jr. School of Public Health at UT Southwestern.

Prior to joining UT Southwestern almost two years ago, he was Vice Chair of Dermatology and held several leadership positions in research and clinical trials at Brigham and Women’s Hospital and Harvard Medical School in Boston.

He earned his medical degree at New York University School of Medicine and a Master of Medical Sciences degree from Harvard Medical School, then completed his internal medicine internship at the University of Pennsylvania, followed by a dermatology residency at NYU. He later completed an internal medicine residency and a rheumatology fellowship at Brigham and Women’s/Harvard Medical School.

Over the course of his career, Dr. Merola has published more than 390 peer-reviewed articles and received numerous awards, continuing to lead the way in psoriatic disease research.

What drew you to North Texas from New England?

I was incredibly excited about the steep growth trajectory at UT Southwestern, both in the scientific and clinical arenas.

The Department of Dermatology is internationally renowned and has a special place in my heart as the birthplace of rheumatology-dermatology. Much of the pivotal work on cutaneous lupus was led by the late James Gilliam, M.D., former Chair and a remarkable physician-scientist also triple-trained in medicine, dermatology, and rheumatology.

Beyond its storied history, I was also drawn by the collaborative and collegial environment at UT Southwestern. Every day I’m inspired by colleagues who are pushing the boundaries of innovation and delivering world-class clinical care. I am especially excited by our strategic

commitment to clinical trials and translational research, which aligns directly with my own work.

What promising areas of dermatological research have implications for other diseases?

Our Department’s work increasingly reaches beyond the skin. For example, we are studying inflammatory skin diseases in the context of systemic comorbidities such as metabolic syndrome and cardiovascular disease while pursuing early-intervention and prevention strategies such as preventing psoriatic arthritis in patients with psoriasis.

At the same time, our faculty are advancing basic and translational work across diverse areas, such as skin-microbiome interactions, the mechanisms of melanoma metastasis and



immune-evasion, and the predictors of transition from cutaneous to systemic lupus, to name a few. We’re also leveraging insights from skin immunology to pioneer cellular treatment approaches that may impact multiple solid and hematologic malignancies.

On the clinical side, we are leading innovative combination therapy trials for difficult-to-treat skin and joint disease and building an increasing portfolio of novel interventional studies for our patients with inflammatory and oncologic skin disease.

Describe your Department’s approach to collaboration across UTSW.

We see all of our faculty as part of the research mission – through, for example, referral to clinical trials, expert patient

disease phenotyping, and biospecimen collection to support translational and basic science across the institution.

Our faculty are uniquely embedded in interdisciplinary teams, such as within the Harold C. Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center and in Ob/Gyn, as well as dermatology clinician-scientists who are integrated into basic programs in biochemistry and bioinformatics. Importantly, we have one of the few dedicated inpatient dermatology consult services in the country, ensuring specialized expertise at the bedside.

Dr. Merola holds the Mary Kay Inc. Distinguished Chair in Dermatology.

“The last thing that
should be on the
patient’s mind
when their life may
be on the line...”

CLARITY OF CARE

Jay Woody, M.D.
(MEDICINE '98, RESIDENT '01),
redefines emergency care
through trust, greater access,
and giving back

BY ALEX LYDA

FOR DECADES, A FAMILIAR SCENE AMONG PEOPLE IN NEED OF IMMEDIATE MED- ICAL TREATMENT HAS PLAYED OUT:

Torn between urgent care and freestanding emergency rooms, a patient is unsure of where to go, fearful that the wrong choice could result in a crippling medical bill. The overwhelming feeling of uncertainty can often be as bad as the acute health issue itself.

For Jay Woody, M.D., this dilemma wasn't acceptable.

As the Chief Medical Officer of Intuitive Health and co-founder of Legacy ER & Urgent Care, Dr. Woody has built a health care model that addresses costs up front, tailoring treatments to fit the scope of the visit while avoiding needless and prohibitively costly tests. His approach to medicine mirrors the same values that guide his philanthropy: transparency, compassion, and empowering others through access.

"The last thing that should be on the patient's mind when their life may be on the line is whether their choice to seek immediate treatment might haunt them financially," Dr. Woody said.

In a career shaped at UT Southwestern Medical Center and sharpened by years on the front lines of emergency medicine, Dr. Woody has pursued one vision: to remove the uncertainty around choosing between an ER and urgent care facility by providing transparency and replacing confusion with clarity and access. It's a philosophy rooted in service, and one he continues to pay forward through his ongoing support of UT Southwestern and its students.

Dr. Woody first felt the adrenaline rush that would lead to a higher calling when he walked into his initial shift as an emergency medicine resident at UT Southwestern. "Every specialty I rotated through was interesting," he recalled. "But emergency medicine had this unpredictability, this energy. You never knew what you'd see that day, and I realized I wanted that."

Seeking a diversity of experiences, Dr. Woody launched a career that blends medicine, business, and public health innovation. Today, his network of freestanding emergency medical centers and urgent cares boasts 37 facilities across 13 states (with 17 new sites opening in 2026), from Delaware to Washington state, with some locations seeing more than 100 patients a day.

HUMBLE ROOTS

Raised in Lubbock, Texas, Dr. Woody was the first in his family to enter medicine. At UT Southwestern, he discovered not only the technical training that would shape his clinical skills but also a broader sense of responsibility.

Dr. Woody's career quickly took him into community hospitals across Dallas, where he encountered a recurring dilemma: patients seeking care in emergency

rooms who didn't require emergency-level treatment. Families often left with bills running into the thousands, even when all they needed was an X-ray or stitches.

"It was when it clicked," Dr. Woody explained. "These patients just didn't know where to go. What if we could take the guesswork out of it?"

The question led to a single-facility experiment, followed by a growing niche of freestanding emergency medical centers that placed care within reach of suburban Dallas.

In 2008, Dr. Woody helped open the first dual-model facility in Frisco, Texas: a freestanding center not attached to any hospital, combining urgent care and emergency services. Unlike the growing number of freestanding ERs at the time, Intuitive Health's model gave patients transparent billing based on the resources they actually used.

"At Intuitive Health, there aren't two doors – one for urgent care and one for the ER," Dr. Woody said. "There's just one door, and we guide you to the right option. You come in, you're seen by ER-trained physicians, and you're billed for the level of care you need."

The impact of this new model was immediate, Dr. Woody said. Patients trusted it because it eliminated fear of surprise bills. Insurers valued it because it prevented

unnecessary ER utilization. And health systems embraced it because it expanded access without diluting quality.

EARNED RECOGNITION

In 2024, the American College of Emergency Physicians honored Dr. Woody for his contributions to freestanding emergency medicine, particularly his leadership in establishing national standards for freestanding centers. His voice is now one of the most influential in the field.

While freestanding ERs have steadily popped up across the country over the last several decades, Texas has the most with 338, according to a study by Texas A&M University. These facilities handle nearly one-quarter of all emergency department visits in the state, the study found.

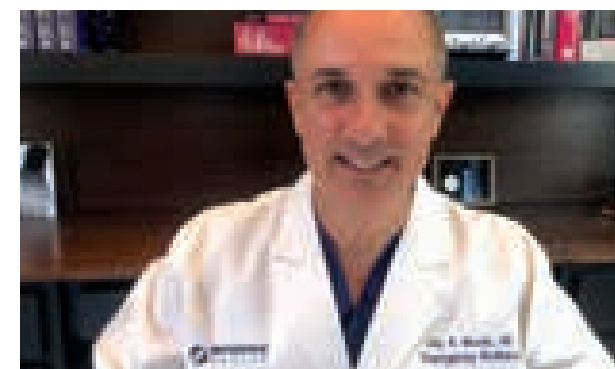
Despite his entrepreneurial success, Dr. Woody has never stepped away from the clinical side. He still works shifts each week to stay grounded in the patient experience. "Patients come to a doctor to get the care they need without judgment and fear," he said. "Patients shouldn't have to choose between their health and their financial security."

GIVING BACK

Dr. Woody's sense of gratitude is grounded by his experience at UT Southwestern. His commitment to the institution extends beyond time and talent through his philanthropic support, which has helped fund an endowed professorship to strengthen UTSW's emergency medicine training and enable new generations of physicians to receive the same world-class preparations he did.

For Dr. Woody, philanthropy is a way of ensuring future medical students can benefit from the same rigorous education and mentorship that shaped his own career. Just as his work expands access to emergency care, his giving expands access to education, removing barriers for the next generation of caregivers.

"UT Southwestern gave me my steppingstone," Dr. Woody said. "The best way I can say thank you is by investing in future students and residents. I wouldn't be where I am today without the training, mentorship, and the foundation I got there." ■



LEFT: Jay Woody, M.D. (Medicine '98, Resident '01)
TOP: Dr. Woody makes the rounds at an Intuitive Health facility. OPPOSITE PAGE: Dr. Woody examines a pediatric patient.

"The best way I can say thank you is by investing in future students and residents. I wouldn't be where I am today without the training, mentorship, and the foundation I got there."

For information about alumni resources, upcoming events, or engaging with UT Southwestern, contact us at alumni@utsouthwestern.edu.



Carrying Forward the

Lacy

Legacy

For more than four decades,
Cece and Ford Lacy have galvanized
support for UT Southwestern –
they are now extending that support
to aspiring Ph.D. scientists.

BY ANDREW MARTON

For over 40 years, Cece and Ford Lacy have shared a deep connection with UT Southwestern Medical Center, including founding the former President's Research Council (PRC), a group that supported early-stage research grants to scientists and helped connect UTSW to the Dallas community.

Although the PRC is no longer active, its legacy endures – both through the impact of the research it supported and through the Lacys' ongoing commitment to advancing discovery at UT Southwestern.

"For more than four decades, Cece and Ford Lacy have been champions of discovery at UT Southwestern," said Daniel K. Podolsky, M.D., President of UT Southwestern Medical Center. "Their commitment to early-career scientists helps ensure that innovative research continues to advance human health."

A new chapter of giving

Building on the spirit of the PRC, the Lacys are extending their legacy of support with the creation of the Cece and Ford Lacy Graduate Research Scientist Fund, which benefits first-year Ph.D. students in the UT Southwestern Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences.



LEFT: Cece and Ford Lacy

"We have always been interested in supporting medical researchers starting their careers," Mrs. Lacy said. "Support of the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences was an important way for us to get involved in beginning-stage research as a continuation of what the PRC was doing with its annual grants."

The Lacys created an endowment to support current and new awardees, to which they plan to direct future lifetime gifts in addition to an estate gift. They have already funded two first-year students – Ashley Bullington and Kaitlyn Nguyen (see sidebar below).

"We just hope that supporting medical research will lead to a number of positive outcomes for patients," Mr. Lacy said. "We know that there is no way of knowing in advance how the research will ultimately turn out, but we enjoy supporting this valuable early-research process."

Welcome and well-timed

The first two Lacy Scholars were nominated by faculty, said Andrew Zinn, M.D., Ph.D., Dean of the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences. Dr. Zinn called the gift "a meaningful way to enrich our school and students."

The Lacy gift provides a stipend for tuition coverage, plus an additional flexible fund for everything from a new laptop to conference travel. These funds cover the first eight months of study, after which the Principal Investigators of UT Southwest-

ern research laboratories cover the costs through research grants. "The Lacys' generous gift helps promising students grow and share their work at top conferences," Dr. Zinn said.

The Lacys' support is both very welcome and well-timed. With federal research funding shrinking, and cuts in federal grants slowing new admissions, schools like UTSW need private support for Ph.D. training. Dr. Zinn said the Lacys wanted to help promising students gain resources for continued growth. With more than 100 students entering the Graduate School's program each year, outside funding is vital.

Their gift also strengthens UTSW's recruitment efforts, as the opportunity to become a Lacy Scholar is expected to



"The Lacys are helping us build a future where more students choose to stay in North Texas and grow our research community."

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Their gift also strengthens UTSW's recruitment efforts, as the opportunity to become a Lacy Scholar is expected to

attract more top students, making the Lacy scholarship "a great recruitment tool," Dr. Zinn said.

For Dr. Zinn, the Lacy gift not only helps bring in top students but bolsters them fully. An additional benefit is "it shows our students how much the Dallas community cares," Dr. Zinn said. "The Lacys are helping us build a future where more students choose to stay in Dallas and grow our research community." ■

Dr. Podolsky holds the Philip O'Bryan Montgomery, Jr., M.D. Distinguished Presidential Chair in Academic Administration and the Charles Cameron Sprague Distinguished Chair in Biomedical Science.

Dr. Zinn holds the Rolf Haberecht and Ute Schwarz Haberecht Deanship of the UT Southwestern Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, and the Henry Ross Perot Distinguished Professorship in Biomedical Science.

Find out how you can create a charitable legacy through estate planning by contacting our gift planning team at 214-648-3069.

THE LACY SCHOLARS

Meet Ashley Bullington and Kaitlyn Nguyen

Ashley Bullington recently joined UT Southwestern Medical Center's Biological Chemistry Ph.D. Program in the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences.

Originally from Damascus, Maryland, she grew up in a large family and first became interested in chemistry during high school.

She completed her bachelor's in biochemistry, magna cum laude,

at the University of Notre Dame, where she worked in the lab of UTSW alumna Patricia Clark, Ph.D. (Biomedical Sciences '97). While there, Ms. Bullington helped develop a



new method to study protein folding, earning the 2023 Outstanding Biochemist Award.

After briefly attending medical school, she chose to focus fully on research. She joined UTSW's Postbaccalaureate to Ph.D. Program in 2024, working in the lab of Daniel Kober, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Biochemistry, to expand her understanding of the activation of a key regulatory

enzyme in cholesterol biosynthesis.

Ms. Bullington is grateful to receive the Lacy Scholar award, which covers her fall stipend and provides additional funds for research needs, allowing her to focus fully on science.

"Cholesterol metabolism and its regulation have been studied for a long time," Ms. Bullington said. "The exciting part for me is that we,

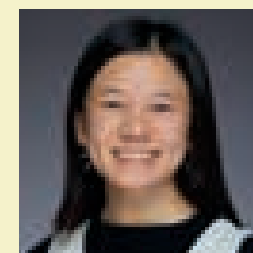
in fact, know so much about well-studied pathways in cholesterol metabolism, and yet, we still have so much more to learn about it."

Kaitlyn Nguyen, who was born in Sugar Land, Texas, discovered a love for science while excelling in AP biology and physics.

At the University of California, Los Angeles, she majored in biochemistry, worked in

a metabolism lab, and graduated magna cum laude. After college, she joined a lab at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center to study atherosclerosis and to prepare to enter UT Southwestern Medical Center's Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences Ph.D. program.

She chose UTSW for its strong labs and proximity to family. In 2025, she began her Ph.D. with plans to



research biological chemistry or cell and molecular biology.

Ms. Nguyen was enormously gratified to receive the Lacy Scholar award and, ultimately, hopes the

Lacys' gift inspires trust in research and brings scientists closer to the public.

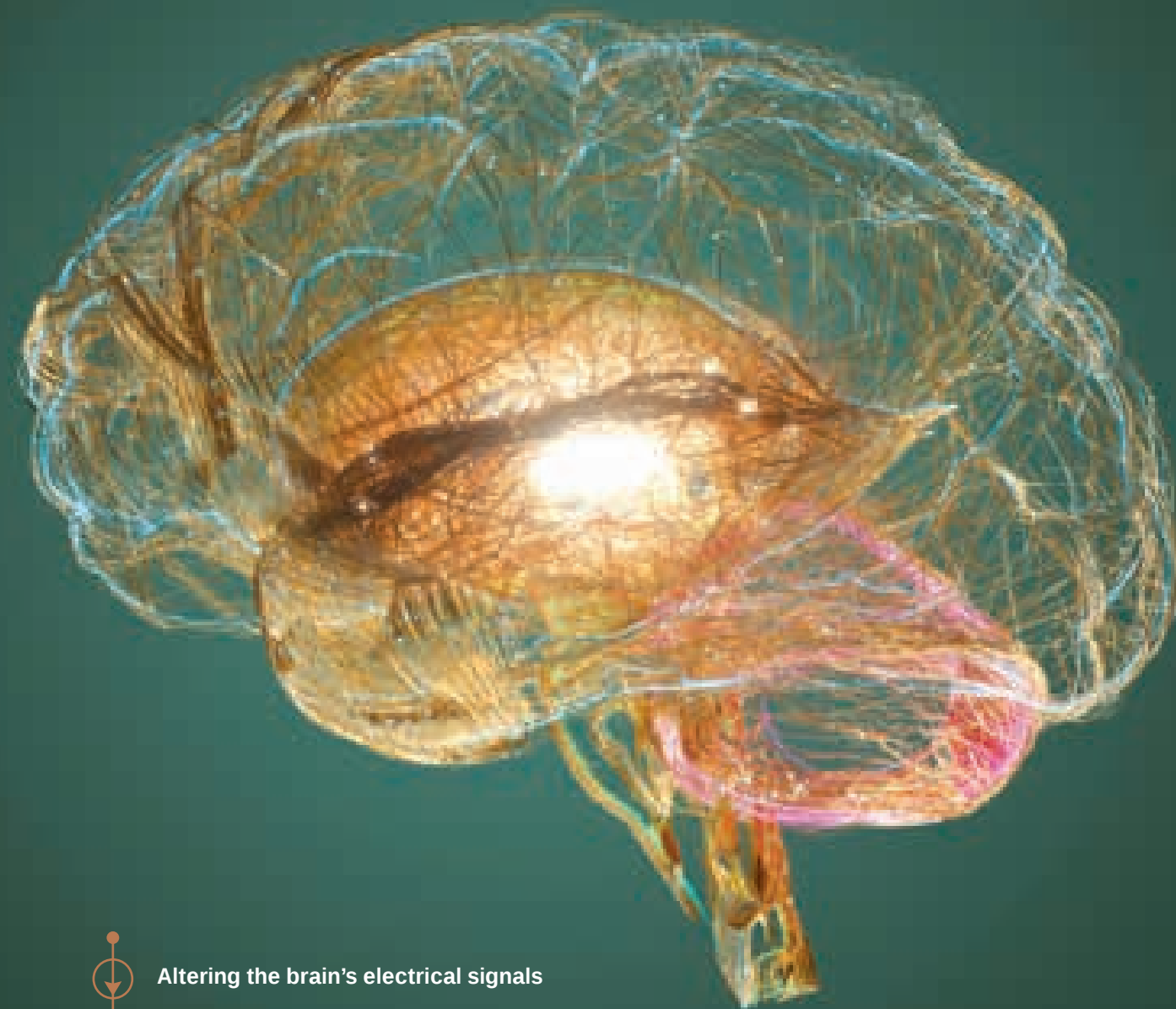
"What is so valuable about this award is that it supports scientists early in their careers to allow us to focus purely on our research," Ms. Nguyen said.

As part of the Lacys' gift, the couple plans to meet annually with their scholarship recipients, which "will give us a great opportunity to

present our research in layman's terms – so that our science is easily understood by the public at large," Ms. Nguyen added. "I'm so grateful to the Lacys for building this bridge of trust and communication between scientists and the public as a whole."

Dr. Kober is a W.W. Caruth, Jr. Scholar in Biomedical Research.

RE WIR ING HOPE



Altering the brain's electrical signals
leads to new treatments for mood and
movement disorders

BY ALEX LYDA



Mark Slaughter's longtime struggles with depression lurk beneath his barrel-chested exterior. Tattoos cover each of his biceps, and a diver's watch adorns his left wrist. Far from the portrait of a man down on his luck, his able ruggedness conceals the cracks of a sometimes-fragile mind that has repeatedly been put back together using the best available – though not always successful – behavioral health treatments each time.

To hear the 62-year-old East Texan explain his latest bout of mental illness, his difficult journey could only have had two outcomes – one involving death, and the other, salvation: “I never thought of committing suicide, but I certainly had moments of praying I would die quickly from something else,” Mr. Slaughter said. “I also prayed for a new treatment after ones that worked for me previously just stopped working.”

Relief came when Mr. Slaughter entered a clinical trial in 2024 at UT Southwestern involving deep brain stimulation (DBS), a form of treatment in the emerging field of neuromodulation. A surgical team implanted four electrodes into premapped areas of his cerebral cortex that are involved in governing mood.

For Mr. Slaughter, the results were immediate.

“When the team turned on the second two electrodes, the relief I felt was almost instantaneous,” he said. “My anxiety and depression just melted away.”

Loosely defined, neuromodulation involves chemically or electrically stimulating the body's nerve cells to change the way they carry information to and from the brain. Small devices carrying an electrical charge are inserted deep within the brain and switched on to decrease pain, increase mobility and sensation, or improve mood, depending on the patient's illness.

Applications of neuromodulation include DBS for the treatment of movement disorders and epilepsy. Now, major depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and schizophrenia are also becoming the focus of new therapies, representing a more targeted approach for difficult-to-treat psychiatric conditions.

Thanks to bold investments in neuromodulation research and clinical care, the Peter O'Donnell Jr. Brain Institute (OBI) at UT Southwestern has become a leading center for treating patients living with psychiatric diseases and neurological disorders like Parkinson's disease, as well as for those coping with paralysis caused by stroke and spinal cord injury.

A persistent foe

After returning from a mission trip to Russia as a teenager in the 1980s, Mr. Slaughter was barely sleeping and began slipping into a major depression.

“My friends wondered if the change in environment while I was in Russia had made me sad, but the truth is depression ran on my mother's side, and there was never any obvious trigger beyond that,” he said.

With the help of medication, Mr. Slaughter emerged from the darkness and didn't look back for more than a decade.

After thriving in business as the director of national sales for John Soules Foods in Tyler, Texas, however, he was struck again in his 30s. A simple change in medica-

“WHEN THE TEAM TURNED ON THE SECOND TWO ELECTRODES, THE RELIEF I FELT WAS ALMOST INSTANTANEOUS. MY ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION JUST MELTED AWAY.”

tion rescued him until he experienced a third round in 2018. During his relapse, a near-panic-level anxiety set in when the second medication stopped working. A pharmaceutical solution might no longer be within reach, his doctors concluded.

The next tool offered a more involved approach – one typically reserved for when other options have failed: electroconvulsive therapy (ECT). Over the course of a year, ECT's therapeutic effects were noticeable. He got back on his feet to continue traveling for his job, earning a good living, and even gregariously socializing with friends – until ECT stopped working and pangs of despair started to return in 2022.

In what Mr. Slaughter considers a silver lining, his successive treatment failures made him a perfect candidate for a new neuromodulation trial co-led by Nader Pouratian, M.D., Ph.D., Chair of Neurological Surgery, and Kala Bailey, M.D., Vice Chair of Clinical Affairs and Associate Professor in the Department of Psychiatry, who had also overseen Mr. Slaughter's ECT.

As part of the trial, two half-dollar-sized power packs were surgically inserted below Mr. Slaughter's collarbones, just beneath the skin. Implanted by Dr. Pouratian, the system delivers constant therapeutic stimulation and course-corrects his depression.

“I often liken it to having an abnormal rhythm in the brain, and just like an arrhythmic heart might require a pacemaker, the brain of someone with a movement disorder or neuropsychiatric illness can also be treated with a type of pacemaker,” Dr. Pouratian said. “We've been really fortunate that DBS works so well for movement disorders, and we're starting to see it treat other neurological diseases as successfully.”

Sensational progress

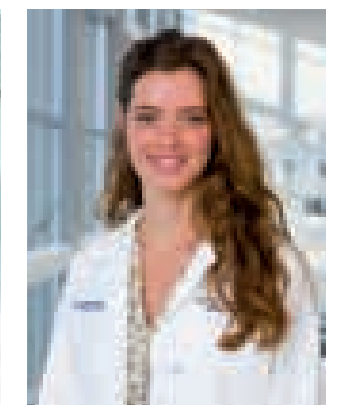
Although behavioral changes are difficult to physically see, the neuromodulation work of Ceci Verbaarschot, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Neurological Surgery and Biomedical Engineering, is creating noticeable changes in the way patients move and feel.

Dr. Verbaarschot is developing a brain-machine interface, or BMI, designed to restore sensation and movement in the upper limbs of people paralyzed from the neck down. She is one of several UT Southwestern faculty members focused on neuromodulation therapies that integrate neuroscience, artificial intelligence, and biotechnology to study the mechanisms of touch and movement.

In clinical trials, she will be recording and simulating electrical signals using

OPPOSITE PAGE:
Mark Slaughter
on his motorcycle.

LEFT TO RIGHT:
Nader Pouratian,
M.D., Ph.D.; Kala
Bailey, M.D.; Ceci
Verbaarschot, Ph.D.



small brain implants known as Utah arrays (so named for where they were invented). Developed by Blackrock Neurotech to be implanted in the brain tissue of people with paralysis, the technology helps researchers like Dr. Verbaarschot record movement intentions while restoring physical sensation.

“The work comes down to restoring a sense of touch and movement in people who have sustained injuries that have left them paralyzed from the neck down,” Dr. Verbaarschot said. “With sensors implanted and connected to a BMI, we can both read information sent by the brain but also stimulate the part of the brain that normally receives touch information from the skin. If you stimulate that part of the brain directly, it feels like you have something touching your hand even though you may have lost all sensation there.”

In earlier work, Dr. Verbaarschot developed a Guitar Hero-like game that enabled participants to “play” the strings via imagined finger movements and feel what string they were playing via a BMI that allowed for intracortical stimulation of their brains.

“We created a kind of bidirectional embodied system so that patients can both control what strings are being played on the virtual guitar and receive the signals in their brains that made it feel like they are actually strumming the instrument,” she said.

Powerful connections

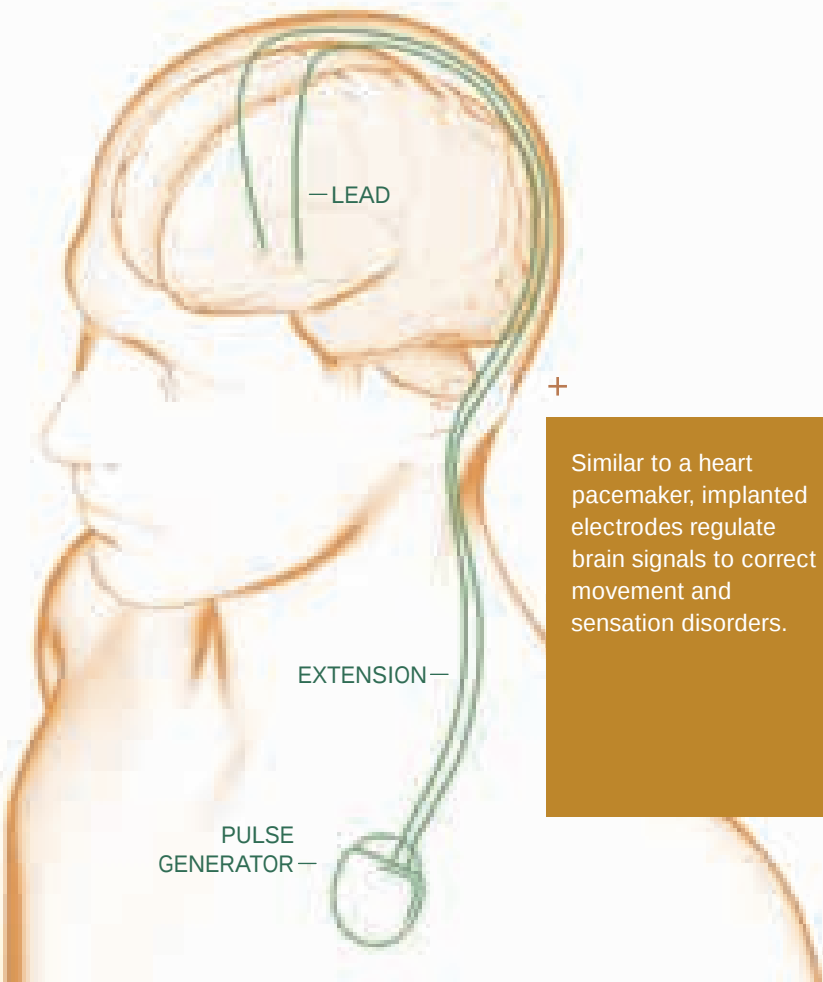
The potential of neuromodulation to dramatically improve the lives of people living with both the obvious and unseen effects of neurological disease or injury has inspired the incredible generosity of Mary and Rich Templeton, one of the most philanthropically focused husband-and-wife teams in Dallas.

“Neuromodulation represents one of the most exciting frontiers in medicine,” said Daniel K. Podolsky, M.D., President of UT Southwestern Medical Center. “Through their vision and generosity, Mary and Rich Templeton are helping UT Southwestern push the boundaries of what’s possible today to change what neurorehabilitation looks like tomorrow for millions of people living with nervous system disorders and injuries.”

Mr. Templeton is the former Chairman, President, and Chief Executive Officer of

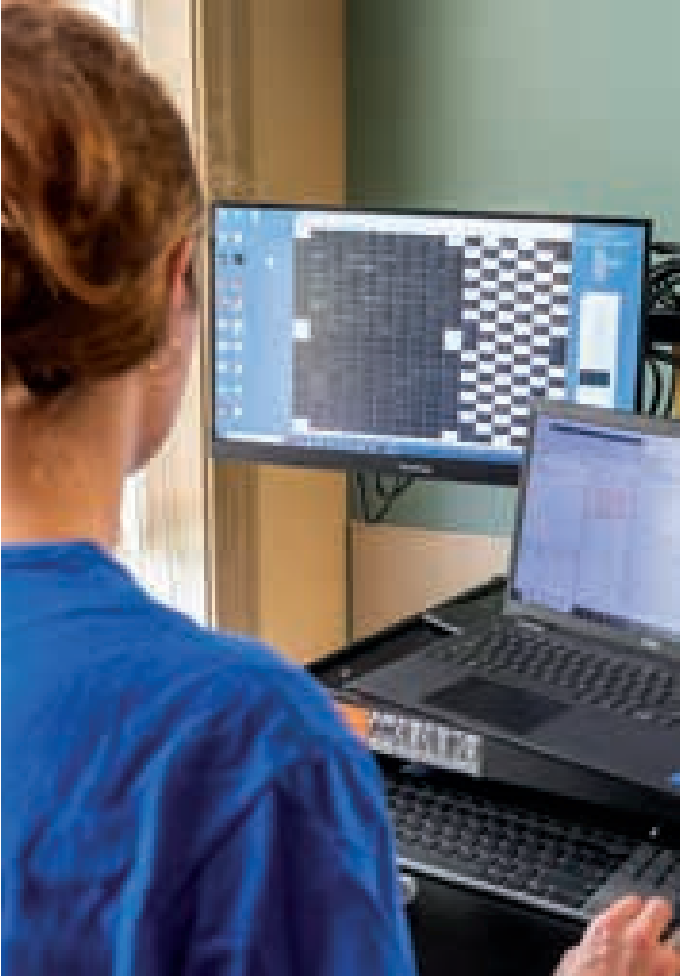
Texas Instruments. He is currently serving on the board of Southern Methodist University. Mrs. Templeton, a community volunteer, was a financial analyst with General Electric before moving to Dallas. She is currently serving on the boards of United Way of Metropolitan Dallas, John Paul II High School, and Union College. She formerly served on a number of other boards, including those of Ursuline Academy of Dallas Foundation, the Southwest Region Boys & Girls Clubs of America, AT&T Performing Arts Center, the University of Dallas, and the Dallas Arboretum.

“Right now, nervous system disorders and injuries have an indelible impact on a person’s life,” Mr. Templeton said. “Our hope with the neuromodulation research being advanced at UT Southwestern is that some conditions deemed irreversible will soon become only transitory, renewing hope for millions who are confined in their daily activities.”



LEFT TO RIGHT: Ceci Verbaarschot, Ph.D., controlling a brain-computer interface (Credit: UPMC and University of Pittsburgh Health Sciences); Kala Bailey, M.D., preparing an ECT treatment.

“NEUROMODULATION REPRESENTS ONE OF THE MOST EXCITING FRONTIERS IN MEDICINE.”



“We were so excited to meet with Drs. Pouratian and Verbaarschot and hear their vision for a future that almost sounds like science fiction,” Mrs. Templeton said. “As analytical thinkers, Rich and I were inspired by the idea of leveraging state-of-the-art technologies that connect directly into the brain that can essentially help rewire the nervous system.”

Not only has Dr. Verbaarschot’s work captured the Templetons’ imagination and hope for the future, but it could one day lead to the restoration of sensation and mobility for people living with paralysis.

For Mr. Slaughter, the power of neuromodulation rescued him and lifted the dark veil of depression through four tiny electrodes implanted in his brain by a UT Southwestern surgeon.

“The appeal of neuromodulation is that it moves us beyond the ‘poke and hope’ strategy that so often characterized early interventions with the brain,” Dr. Pouratian said. “We knew much less about the brain than we do today, and neuromodulation has demonstrated our ability to precisely target areas of the brain where stimulation can quickly and painlessly bring about healing.”

Using minute adjustments to electrically change the way the nervous system sends and receives information offers hope for the estimated 50 million people worldwide who are affected by neurodegenerative conditions, according to the World Health Organization.

Neuromodulation dramatically improved Mr. Slaughter’s life and represents hope for people with major psychiatric illnesses as well as for those with movement disorders that are the result of neurological conditions whose treatment was once guesswork.

“Many times, patients receive treatments or procedures for medication-refractory mood disorders or depression, and while we have many effective treatments, it’s not uncommon for people to come back to them and receive more treatments eventually,” Dr. Bailey said. “The exciting promise of DBS is its potential for longer-lasting efficacy when it works for an individual patient, as it has for Mr. Slaughter.”

While you’d have to look closely, the two batteries beneath Mr. Slaughter’s pectoral muscles stand out because he proudly brandishes them. He wants others to know about his journey – and how grateful he

is to UT Southwestern. Without a second thought, he pulls down the neck of his T-shirt for others to see.

“Before these, my anxiety was off the charts,” said Mr. Slaughter, who on the weekends enjoys riding his Harley. “Dr. Pouratian, Dr. Bailey, and the entire care team got me on the road to recovery.” ■

Dr. Bailey holds the Drs. Anne and George Race Professorship of Student Psychiatry.

Dr. Podolsky holds the Philip O’Byran Montgomery, Jr., M.D. Distinguished Presidential Chair in Academic Administration and the Charles Cameron Sprague Distinguished Chair in Biomedical Science.

Dr. Pouratian holds the Lois C.A. and Darwin E. Smith Distinguished Chair in Neurological Surgery.

Find out how you can support the Peter O’Donnell Jr. Brain Institute by contacting the Office of Development and Alumni Relations at 214-648-2344.



SHARED VISION FOR GENERATIONS

By Andrew Marton

FOR DECADES, the values of the Carpenters and Rowlings have included deep generosity – now they continue that tradition with gifts to the New Pediatric Campus



If there is one belief shared by two of Dallas' most generous families, it is this: *To whom much is given, much is expected.*

Today, both the Rowling and Carpenter families are applying this guiding principle to an ambitious joint project between UT Southwestern Medical Center and Children's Health. Together, these institutions are building a New Pediatric Campus in Dallas to transform care for children throughout the region well into the future.

¶ is visionary project immediately caught the attention of both families, who have deep roots in community giving. ¶eir philanthropic legacy spans generations, with each family inspiring the next – and often each other – to give even more generously.

The Rowlings’ legacy of faith and giving

At the center of the Rowling family’s philanthropy are Bob and Terry Rowling, joined by son Blake and daughter-in-law Carrie.

Their generosity traces back to Mr. Rowling’s parents, who, despite modest means, taught their children the value of steadfastly giving to others. Mr. Rowling recalled discovering after his father’s death that for years he had secretly funded college educations for those in need.

“When he passed away,” Mr. Rowling said, “many showed up at his memorial to express thanks. It was a powerful lesson for us all.”

His legacy shaped the Rowling family’s belief that their resources are not solely theirs but entrusted to them by God.

“We’re just shepherding what he’s given us,” Mr. Rowling said. “It’s about managing wisely, investing well, and giving generously.”

After moving his family to Dallas in 1997, Mr. Rowling recognized UTSW’s strength in research and academics but saw room for growth clinically. That would change with a transformative gift from former Gov. William P. Clements Jr., which birthed UTSW’s flagship hospital. That moment inspired Mr. Rowling to get involved in supporting clinical care, and he later joined the search committee that would hire Daniel K. Podolsky, M.D., President of UT Southwestern.

Now the family is continuing its decades-long support of UTSW with a gift to support the New Pediatric Campus in Dallas.

“His gift supports the continued growth of clinical care at UT Southwestern,” Mr. Rowling said. “People often come here after exhausting other options and finally get the right treatment. That’s why we’ve stayed so committed.”

The Rowling family’s approach to philanthropy focuses on consistency and long-term

“We feel true joy in giving, and from a faith perspective, we believe it’s something we’re called to do. The new pediatric facility will offer a warm, homelike environment, helping children feel comforted and less afraid while far from home.”

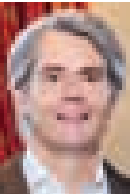
– Terry Rowling

“Our grandparents and parents set the tone early with their example of giving back. My siblings and I are trying to follow that path – and set the same example for our kids. We’re deeply grateful to UT Southwestern for caring for our mother. As Dallas grows, we want to ensure world-class pediatric care is here for every child.”

– Benjamin Carpenter

“My parents have set an example of great generosity throughout my life, and I’ve learned a lot just by watching them. That idea – ‘To whom much is given, much is expected’ – has shaped how we live. We take that responsibility seriously. Our relationship with UT Southwestern reflects our approach: We commit for the long term – 25 years or more.”

– Blake Rowling



commitment – a blueprint Mr. Rowling calls “going long, deep, and narrow.”

“If we believe in something, we stay with it for the long haul,” he said. “And we deepen that investment over time.”

The Carpenters: building on generational generosity

The Carpenter family’s pledge to support the New Pediatric Campus also reflects their desire to make a significant impact.

John and Cele Carpenter, along with their three children – Benjamin, Austin, and Bonner – manage the family’s charitable commitments. Their philanthropic legacy spans generations, from Mr. Carpenter’s grandfather, John W. Carpenter Sr., to his parents, Ben and Betty Carpenter.

The family’s connection to UT Southwestern deepened after Mr. Carpenter’s father underwent a heart transplant at UTSW and Mrs. Carpenter received care following a stroke.

“UT Southwestern saved my life after a stroke and helped me walk and live independently again,” Mrs. Carpenter said. “That experience deepened my family’s commitment to give back. Supporting a pediatric facility that helps children heal emotionally and physically means everything.”

She emphasized that giving is both a responsibility and a value she hopes to pass on to their nine grandchildren. Mrs. Carpenter also recognizes how critical the Dallas pediatric campus is to the broader community.

“We feel lucky to have the hospital in Dallas, as it benefits the entire state,” she said. “It’s something to support and be proud of.”

The Carpenters are especially inspired by the future-forward design of the campus and its promise of global excellence.

“We want Dallas to have the best pediatric facility in the country – if not the world – right here in our backyard,” Mr. Carpenter said.

Generosity rooted in friendship

The strong bond between the Rowlings and Carpenters extends beyond shared values. It is forged in a close friendship that spans decades. Each family sees the other not just as allies in giving, but as sources of inspiration and encouragement in their philanthropy.

Mr. Rowling recalls talking to the Carpenters about UTSW and exchanging updates on its

progress. As it turned out, both families were exploring major donations around the same time – and found themselves excited to support the identical cause. That shared enthusiasm turned into action, as only weeks apart, both families’ foundations committed gifts to the new pediatric facility.

“It all happened very organically,” Mr. Rowling said. “The timing, the shared interest – it just clicked for both families.”

The Rowlings and Carpenters have long admired one another, not just for each other’s generosity, but for how they live out their daily values.

“Our families are very aligned in how we think about giving,” Mr. Rowling said.

Mrs. Carpenter echoed that sentiment, calling the Rowlings “not just inspirationally generous but dear friends who truly walk the walk in life,” she said. “They give because they believe it’s their duty and privilege. And they do it with such grace and purpose.”

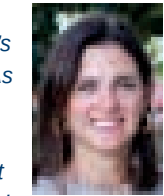
The families’ friendship actually began with their sons – Blake Rowling and Benjamin Carpenter – who met in eighth grade and remain close today. That friendship deepened over the years, eventually connecting both families and even shaping their shared philanthropic endeavors.

“Blake and I have grown up together in this city,” Benjamin Carpenter said. “And we both are following the example set by our parents of giving back to this community by supporting the campus.”

Blake Rowling shares that view, noting how their generation of friends feels united by a passion to improve the Dallas community.

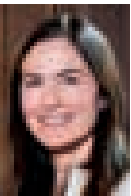


“I feel lucky to witness my family’s legacy of giving. As a mother of four, I’ll always worry about my kids, but knowing the incredible care and research coming from UTSW – and now the New Pediatric Campus – eases those worries. It’s meaningful to see our children begin to understand that giving back is something you do if you have the resources.”



– Carrie Rowling

“Our family has shown us what generosity looks like. Since we were kids, volunteering in West Dallas and supporting various ministries, we’ve been aware of how fortunate we are. We’re simply trying to follow in our parents’ and grandparents’ footsteps – and make them proud.”



– Bonner Carpenter Acker

“We all feel lucky to live here,” he said. “And we want to give a lot of ourselves and resources to provide the best possible health care for kids.”

A shared vision for the future

Both the Rowling and Carpenter families understand their gifts to the pediatric campus are about more than buildings or technology. They also are furthering a legacy – ensuring that generations of children receive world-class care in Dallas, no matter their circumstances.

Mr. Carpenter echoes that feeling: “We want our grandchildren, their children, and the community overall to benefit from what we’re building today,” he said. “I believe that’s what drives our families.”

“The Carpenter and Rowling families’ multi-generational approach to philanthropy reflects what makes our community so special,” said Daniel K. Podolsky, M.D., President of UT Southwestern Medical Center. “Generations of families who have advanced the missions of UT Southwestern and Children’s Health for decades are stepping forward once again to help us create a healthier future for North Texas kids.”

The Rowlings’ and Carpenters’ parallel journeys – rooted in faith, family, and friendship – have converged on a single shared goal: building a healthier future for children. Through their giving, the two families are ensuring that Dallas will lead the way in pediatric medicine for decades ahead. And in doing so, they are living out the truth of their shared credo: “To whom much is given, much is expected.” ■

Dr. Podolsky holds the Philip O’Byran Montgomery, Jr., M.D. Distinguished Presidential Chair in Academic Administration, and the Charles Cameron Sprague Distinguished Chair in Biomedical Science.

For decades, corporate gifts have helped advance UT Southwestern Medical Center's most ambitious projects and philanthropic missions. Among its many partners, Goldman Sachs has built a strong and enduring relationship with UT Southwestern. The global investment bank continues providing vital support for initiatives that shape the future of health care and research.

Nowhere is this partnership more visible than in Goldman Sachs' recent support of the New Pediatric Campus in Dallas, a joint venture between Children's Health and UT Southwestern. Scheduled to open in 2031, the new medical facility will expand access to pediatric care and drive discoveries. Goldman Sachs' investment reflects its steadfast belief that the campus will bring hope through advanced technology, research breakthroughs, and lifesaving treatments.

"We are privileged to have such a civically-minded corporate partner like Goldman Sachs join our effort to create one of the most state-of-the-art hospitals for children in the country," said Daniel K. Podolsky, M.D., President of UT Southwestern Medical Center. "Their support will enable an environment where we can provide the most innovative care possible for children, train the next generation of physicians and other caregivers, and accelerate discoveries that will enhance treatments for children into the future."

Construction began in October 2024, marking one of the largest health care projects in the country. Goldman Sachs was among the first to make a major corporate contribution, affirming its commitment to the region's health care future. By supporting the new campus, the firm is helping ensure children receive the best care available close to home while fueling transformative research.

Several factors inspired Goldman Sachs' involvement. The Dallas-Fort Worth area now has 2.5 million children — a number expected to increase significantly by 2050. The growing population demands expanded hospital capacity and more specialized pediatric care. The new campus will help meet those needs and attract more families and businesses to the region.

Since 2017, the firm's philanthropic arm, Goldman Sachs Gives, has supported UTSW research areas such as brain regeneration, COVID-19 testing, radiation oncology, and neurofibromatosis studies. The firm's leaders believe the new campus will strengthen Dallas-Fort Worth's position as a national hub for pediatric health care and research.

Goldman Sachs' presence in Dallas continues to expand. The firm now employs more than 4,000 people, making Dallas its second-largest U.S. office. A new 800,000-square-foot campus is under construction in Uptown Dallas and will accommodate up to 5,000 employees.



ALL IN

By Andrew Marton

A legacy of corporate support fuels research, care, and community impact

For more information on how you can support the New Pediatric Campus in Dallas, please contact Kelly Thomas at kelly.thomas@utsouthwestern.edu.

Aasem Khalil Named Chair of the UTSW President's Advisory Board

UT Southwestern is pleased to announce the appointment of Aasem Khalil, Goldman Sachs' Global Head of Investment Banking Client Services and Global Head of the Cross Markets Group in addition to Head of the Dallas office, as the new Chair of the President's Advisory Board (PAB).

Mr. Khalil brings nearly three decades of leadership experience to this role. Since joining Goldman Sachs in 1996, he has risen through the ranks to Managing Director and Partner and is known as a respected community advocate. Born near Toronto and raised in New York, he earned his bachelor's degree in political science, with distinction, from Kenyon College before eventually making Dallas his home.

When he arrived in North Texas, Mr. Khalil was eager to understand and support the city's medical landscape.

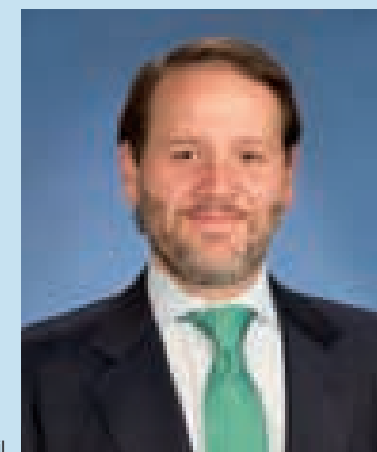
That commitment led him to UT Southwestern, where he has been an active member of the PAB for several years. His service includes chairing the Finance Committee and

contributing to the Board's Executive Committee.

Now as Chair, Mr. Khalil will help guide and advise UT Southwestern President Daniel K. Podolsky, M.D., and University leadership on strategic opportunities and challenges shaping the institution's future.

"When we first moved to Dallas, it was clear this city had extraordinary medical institutions, with UT Southwestern leading the way," Mr. Khalil said. "Few medical centers touch every aspect of medicine like UT Southwestern does. Its research programs and innovation are best in class."

UT Southwestern is grateful for Mr. Khalil's leadership, vision, and steadfast belief in the power of academic medicine.



Aasem Khalil

In a recent news article, Rob Kaplan, Vice Chairman of Goldman Sachs, underscored the firm's long-standing commitment to North Texas, noting, "We've been in Dallas nearly 60 years, but our new campus cements the city's role as a critical global hub. It will help us better serve clients worldwide and serve as a convening center for the Dallas community."

Aasem Khalil, Head of Goldman Sachs' Dallas office, reinforced that commitment. "The vision for UT Southwestern and Children's pediatric campus reflects the kind of ambitious development that has always drawn Goldman Sachs to Dallas," he said. "We are dedicated to supporting the health and well-being of the region, especially its children."

As the new Chair of UT Southwestern's President's Advisory Board (PAB), Mr. Khalil has made supporting the Medical Center a key philanthropic priority. Through his leadership and advocacy, he strengthens the foundation that enables UTSW to advance groundbreaking research, deliver exceptional clinical care, and improve the lives of patients and families across our community.

"We at Goldman Sachs understand that research, innovation, and clinical care require major investment," Mr. Khalil said. "When we invest in medical institutions, the broader community benefits. Dallas believes in the greater good, and those who can contribute should do so."

As a member of the PAB, Mr. Kaplan emphasized the critical role UTSW plays in delivering world-class health care and advancing research, particularly in pediatrics.

"We are proud to support two premier health care providers — UT Southwestern and Children's Health," Mr. Kaplan said, "as they develop a New Pediatric Campus that will serve families across North Texas and beyond for decades to come." ■

Dr. Podolsky holds the Philip O'Bryan Montgomery, Jr., M.D. Distinguished Presidential Chair in Academic Administration, and the Charles Cameron Sprague Distinguished Chair in Biomedical Science.



EARLY PREVENTION TAKES CENTER STAGE

Donor-funded videos aim to prevent heart disease
through early awareness

BY ALEX LYDA



Dan Shimer admits to “burning the candle at both ends” while working on high-level mergers and acquisitions with private and publicly traded companies for decades, often as the Chief Financial Officer. Like many, he devoted long hours to his career, leaving little time to focus on his own well-being – a pace that gradually contributed to weight gain and cardiovascular concerns that went unnoticed until after he retired in 2010.

“Let’s face it, I was on a plane every Monday night, kind of living in the fast lane. There really wasn’t a lot of time to relax because of the career path I was following,” Mr. Shimer said recently in his Dallas home. Behind him, a stock ticker scrolled across the bottom of a wide, wall-mounted monitor in his personal office – his command station for his active life serving on various boards and trading equities for his family’s investment fund.

Whether it was because he was too busy steering the investments of Teakwood Capital, Coresta Services, or FoxMeyer Drug, or because public health messages about the importance of maintaining a work-life balance were too subtle at the time, Mr. Shimer missed the memo and ignored his heart health.

In 2008, he paid the price when a scan revealed a 45% blockage in his heart. His doctor warned he was in danger of suffering a “widow-maker” – a heart attack that is nearly always fatal and occurs when the heart’s left anterior descending artery stops supplying blood to a large part of the heart muscle.

Although certain aspects of Mr. Shimer’s heart disease were irreversible, he felt it necessary to educate others about the

importance of adopting heart-healthy behaviors earlier in life to stave off or avoid heart disease altogether.

“Because I’m analytical by nature, and I do have a family history of heart disease, I started thinking about the problem generationally,” Mr. Shimer said. “I wanted to help future generations avoid some of the missteps I made.”

To this end, Mr. Shimer is underwriting an educational video series featuring prominent doctors and leading voices in the field of preventive cardiology, including Amit Khera, M.D., Director of Preventive Cardiology and Clinical Chief of Cardiology at UT Southwestern. Mr. Shimer’s aim is to dispel some of the myths about heart health by building a video library that combats a growing public health problem – and the world’s leading cause of death.

HARDENING HEARTS

Killing nearly 1 million people each year in the United States, heart disease is the top cause of death for both men and women, with nearly half of the U.S. population having some form of heart disease, according to the American Heart Association.

Rather than focus on heart disease when it arises, preventive cardiology aims to lower patients’ risk of developing heart disease and having a first heart attack or stroke while also avoiding further issues in people who already have cardiovascular disease.

“Contrary to the belief that heart disease begins only in middle age, the foundations of heart disease start in childhood, with the earliest signs being plaque buildup in the arteries,” said Dr. Khera, also Professor of Internal Medicine. “Risk factors like genetics, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and physical inactivity can accumulate early in the lifespan and have detrimental effects later on. The aim of preventive cardiology is to get ahead of that curve.”

Whether it’s preventing or slowing the progression of heart disease, patient education is key, and that’s where videos like the ones being generously supported by Mr. Shimer can have a big impact.

“When I was a junior in high school, I lost my mother to a heart attack,” Mr. Shimer said. “I also lost my father to heart disease in his early 60s. But like many young men, I thought I was bulletproof and ignored the obvious signs.”

By the time Mr. Shimer realized he needed to make certain lifestyle changes, it was too late, and heart damage had occurred.

Realizing he would have done things differently if given a second chance, Mr. Shimer turned to UT Southwestern. He assembled an array of experts – not only doctors but also nutritionists and exercise physiologists – to talk on video about the importance of preventing heart disease early in the lifespan. With the help of UTSW’s marketing team that is producing the content through a number of strategic partnerships, the videos will roll out this summer.

“An attention-getting video on YouTube and social media has the opportunity to get people thinking about heart health and to impact a lot of lives,” Mr. Shimer said. “Heart disease may have caught up with me, but that doesn’t have to be the case for others.”

Dr. Khera agrees.

“It’s never too late to practice preventive cardiology,” Dr. Khera said. “Work that was actually done by Helen Hobbs, M.D., here at UT Southwestern, and in the Dallas Heart Study, has shown that doing a little bit early in life pays a lot more dividends than trying to do a lot as you get older. When we find someone in middle or older age with cardiovascular issues, the very next thing we think about in every one of our clinical encounters is their children. We’re thinking about what their children could have inherited, and how we can get them educated and in the prevention pipeline.”

Dr. Hobbs is a Professor in the Eugene

McDermott Center for Human Growth and Development and of Internal Medicine and Molecular Genetics. Twenty-five years ago, she and another colleague initiated the Dallas Heart Study, a population-based study that has produced major findings guiding advancements in how cardiovascular disease is treated.

TOP-NOTCH DESIGNATION

Last year, UT Southwestern was designated a Comprehensive Cardiac Center (CCC), signifying the highest standard in cardiovascular care. Awarded by the Joint Commission, UT Southwestern is one of just 24 hospitals in the nation to receive the CCC designation for exhibiting excellence across the continuum of heart and vascular care – from prevention and diagnosis through treatment and recovery.

One area of excellence singled out by the Commission was cardiovascular risk identification and disease prevention, the twin pillars of preventive cardiology.

The first step in the prevention process is understanding a patient’s risk of developing cardiovascular disease or of suffering a cardiovascular event, such as a heart attack or stroke. By examining the hereditary factors and other conditions that can affect patients’ future health, UTSW cardiologists develop a baseline understanding personalized to the patient. A care team then develops a medical plan to aggressively reduce the risk factors for that individual, while serving as an expert resource for test results, research studies, new treatments, and other heart-related information.



LEFT TO RIGHT: Helen Hobbs, M.D.; Amit Khera, M.D., shows a heart model to patient. **TOP RIGHT:** Images courtesy of the donor-funded “Preventing Heart Disease Early” video series, produced in partnership with UT Southwestern Medical Center.

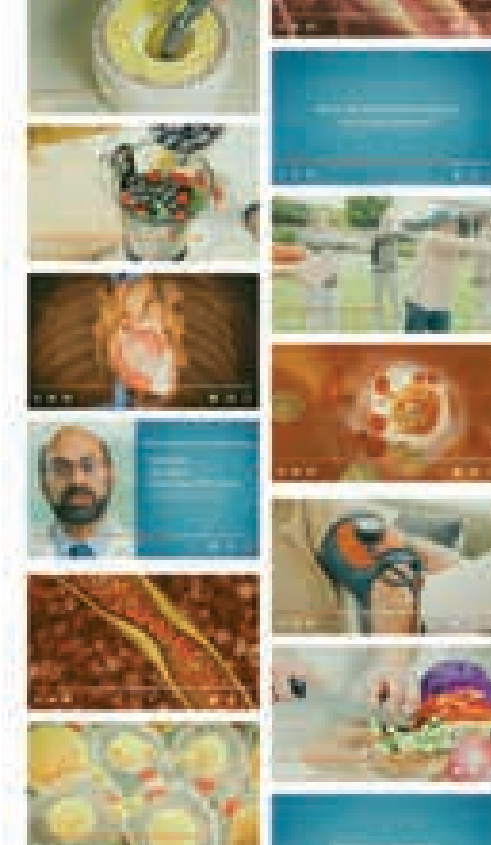
The new videos are designed to complement the expertise of the clinicians and emphasize what preventive steps can be taken by anyone – not just UTSW patients – interested in avoiding heart disease.

Four topics were picked for the video series. The first video, “Cholesterol 101,” identifies different types of cholesterol and what treatments are available for those who have high LDL (“bad cholesterol”) readings. The second covers coronary calcium scanning to help better determine who is at risk and how calcium deposits increase the risk of stroke and heart attacks. The third discusses lipoprotein (a) testing to check for a common inherited type of cholesterol for heart disease. And the last video, “Heart Disease 101,” covers what causes heart attacks and what can be done to prevent them.

With this library of videos and a public service campaign to support it, UT Southwestern is bolstering its position as a trusted medical voice, Dr. Khera said.

“It’s profound how much misinformation there is and how much reluctance there is to treatment because of what someone saw on the internet or heard someone say that’s actually wrong and harmful,” Dr. Khera said. “So, it’s beyond education today. At this point it’s actually about combating misinformation. But it’s also about activation. Everybody knows exercise is good for you – but why aren’t people doing it? That’s where education has to go beyond just saying the obvious and helping activate people in ways that they may not appreciate.”

It’s not the first time Mr. Shimer has dedicated his heart to making others heart-healthy.



Working with the American Heart Association, Mr. Shimer previously supported a social media campaign that focused on the links between mental health, heart health, and overall well-being and the small actions that people could take to decrease their stress and increase their overall health. The campaign included public service announcements and interviews with E! Online and Yahoo Life to reach hundreds of millions of people over several months.

“I am looking to create awareness,” Mr. Shimer said. “No one’s going to wake up and radically change their lifestyle overnight. We’re not changing the world overnight, but we hope to make a significant dent in the number of people with early-stage heart disease.”

For his part, Mr. Shimer appears unstoppable in his efforts.

“I haven’t totally escaped heart disease, but I’m like the Timex watch commercial: My heart ‘takes a licking and keeps on ticking.’” ■

Dr. Hobbs holds the Dallas Heart Ball Chair in Cardiology Research.

Dr. Khera holds the Dallas Heart Ball Chair in Hypertension and Heart Disease.

Find out how you can support the Preventive Cardiology Program by contacting Rosa Haut at rosa.haut@utsouthwestern.edu.

Donor Pulse



Love Passed Down, Care Carried On

For some families, developing a heart for philanthropy is a core part of their identity. The Haggar family's connection to UT Southwestern spans decades, beginning with St. Paul Hospital, which would later become part of UTSW, and their grandparents, Rose and J.M. Haggar Sr., who founded the Haggar clothing line and built close relationships with the physicians and leaders of both medical centers. Isabell and Joe Haggar – Lydia Novakov, Joe Haggar III, and Marian Bryan's parents – continued that commitment, believing deeply in advancing medical care for the community they cherished.

"We grew up hearing these stories," Ms. Novakov said. "Our family always saw UT Southwestern as a place where healing, innovation, and compassion meet."

She and her siblings recalled hospital visits, community gatherings, and meaningful conversations where giving was something

they witnessed as a way of life, not something taught.

Today they continue that tradition with intention, most recently through a generous gift supporting the New Pediatric Campus in Dallas, a joint project between UT Southwestern and Children's Health. The family's support reflects their belief in building a healthier, brighter future for children across North Texas.

"It feels natural to us. This is home," Mr. Haggar said as he reflected on his own care at UTSW. "Supporting UT Southwestern and this community is how we continue what our family has always valued, which is taking care of others."

Ms. Bryan added that their giving is as much about remembrance as it is about hope. "This is how we honor the past and help build what comes next."

Looking at the Haggar family, it's easy to see the blueprint for building a legacy that lasts generations. | BY BRYAN PIERRE

ABOVE LEFT:
Marian Bryan,
Joe Haggar
III and Lydia
Novakov
BELOW RIGHT:
Eliza Solender,
Gary Scott

Eliza Solender and Gary Scott: Bringing Care Closer to Home

Eliza Solender and Gary Scott's relationship with UT Southwestern began with family. When Ms. Solender's parents shifted their medical care to the institution in the late 1980s, it planted a seed. That decision led Ms. Solender and Mr. Scott to do the same, and eventually they joined the Wildenthal Society by including UTSW in their estate plan as well as served as co-Chairs of the former President's Research Council just after its founding. The more they met with researchers, the more they saw the heart behind the science.

Their giving grew over time, shaped by trusted conversations and a desire to make a lasting difference. Recently, they established the Robert and Ellen Solender Fund for Cancer Research, named after Ms. Solender's parents. Her father, Robert Solender, was treated at UTSW for breast cancer at a time when that type of cancer in men was rare and therapy was experimental. That care gave him 30 more years of life.

Ms. Solender's commercial real estate work has led her and Mr. Scott to appreciate deeply the importance of health care access. They're especially moved by UTSW's clinical growth across North Texas, including in Fort Worth, where their family now benefits from more convenient care.

"Our hope," they shared, "is that others, no matter where they live, can experience the kind of care we've come to know and trust."

| BY BRYAN PIERRE



Being Here, Where Courage Meets Compassion

The term "Special Operations," when referring to a U.S. military veteran, often conjures up images of larger-than-life heroes from popular Hollywood films.

Though Johnnie Yellock II does not consider himself larger than life, it is easy to see that he brings determination and mission-focused intensity from his U.S. Air Force service as a Special Operations Combat Controller to his current role as President and CEO of Sons of the Flag (SOTF), a nonprofit organization committed to supporting veterans, first responders, and civilian burn survivors.

When asked about the connection between SOTF and the injuries he sustained during his military service, Mr. Yellock quickly responds: "Sons of the Flag isn't about me." In 2011, during Mr. Yellock's second deployment to Afghanistan, an improvised explosive device (IED) struck his vehicle, severely injuring his legs. His service record and multiple honors speak for themselves. Yet the bridge between Mr. Yellock's service and SOTF is most apparent in the three years of physical rehabilitation, which included 33 surgeries, that allowed him to keep his legs.

Seated next to Mr. Yellock at a popular Philly cheesesteak restaurant in North Dallas was Landon Shaw, SOTF Digital Media Director, who, though a civilian with an extensive professional media background, shared the same almost-militaristic intent and drive as Mr. Yellock. In lockstep, the two tag-teamed their responses to questions about SOTF's mission.

Mr. Yellock leaned forward with, "Our country has over 1.5 million active nonprofit orga-

nizations registered with the IRS. But the number of those supporting burn survivors is terribly low."

Mr. Shaw added, "For 13 years, Sons of the Flag has been at the forefront of meeting survivors' needs and investing in the future of burn care."

Along with the initial burn injury, depending on its severity, surgeries, physical therapy, and psychological recovery may continue for years. Mr. Yellock noted a painful truth that is often overlooked: "Many people think only of adults as being burn survivors, but all too often it is children who fill the far and few between burn units across the nation, and theirs is typically an arduous recovery."

He continued, "We encounter survivors at all stages of their recovery, lean in to better understand the situation, and determine how best to meet specific needs, ensuring care for the whole individual, because scars are mental as well as physical."

Listening to Mr. Yellock and Mr. Shaw, it became obvious their passion is about restoring and empowering lives.

That same philosophy drives physicians and researchers at UT Southwestern, and one name kept surfacing in the conversation: Benjamin Levi, M.D., Professor of Surgery. As the Division Chief of Burn, Trauma, and Acute and Critical Care Surgery and Director of the Center for Organogenesis, Regeneration and Trauma (CORT), Dr. Levi leads efforts to advance treatment and rebuild lives, embodying the same compassion and commitment that brings the focus of SOTF full circle.

"One of the reasons I came to UT Southwestern, and one of the reasons I've stayed, has been my relationship with Sons of the Flag," said Dr. Levi, who



Johnnie Yellock II

also holds appointments in the Charles and Jane Pak Center for Mineral Metabolism and Clinical Research, Children's Medical Center Research Institute at UT Southwestern, and Plastic Surgery. "There is close alignment between our missions to advance the care of people living with burns and traumatic injuries. The partnership with Sons of the Flag has helped us move the field forward faster than we could alone."

To hear Dr. Levi describe it, the word "synergy" seems most accurate.

"What makes Sons of the Flag so unique is that they recognized early on the need to invest in patient care and the people doing the science to advance it. Their support has helped us train new burn surgeons and develop research that is improving care for patients every day," he said.

SOTF and UT Southwestern continue working to improve the lives of burn survivors, ensuring that patients do not merely survive, but thrive. The successes of SOTF continue to capture the attention of count-

less individuals and challenge them to engage philanthropically.

"Word is spreading," Mr. Yellock said, "from burn units to firehouses to military bases across the country. Each request we receive is a life, a family, and a future counting on us. The calls will keep coming. And when they do, Sons of the Flag will be ready."

Mr. Yellock often says, "You can pretend to care, but you cannot pretend to be there." His words capture what makes philanthropy so powerful. It is generosity and presence working together. Rough organizations like SOTF and UT Southwestern, being there means standing alongside those who have been through the fire, believing that healing is both physical and deeply human. Every single dollar, in-kind donation, and act of compassion drives that shared mission to restore hope on the journey from burn victim to survivor.

| BY BRYAN PIERRE

Dr. Levi holds the Dr. Lee Hudson-Robert R. Penn Chair in Surgery.

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