Inspiring Hope

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Surgeon returns smiles to children

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Inspiring Hope

Integrity is a fundamental value at Mayo Clinic. Combining our knowledge and medical expertise with the highest standards of professionalism, ethics and personal responsibility, we join together to transform medicine and earn the trust of our patients and benefactors.

We are committed to honesty, fairness and transparency in the work we do, and we foster trust because of our commitment to put the needs of the patient first.

In this issue of Mayo Clinic Magazine, we show how integrity is personified in our patients, benefactors and staff for the greater good.

The stories include a focus on some of our biggest visionary advancements. We meet Jay Alix, a Mayo Clinic Board of Trustees member and Philanthropic Partner, who is playing a pivotal role transforming the future of medical education. There also are the stories of Josh Labott, a medical student ambushed on the battlefield just a decade ago; learners advancing science in fields such as regenerative medicine, artificial intelligence and simulation education; and a new lung transplant technique that saved Chuck Boetsch’s life.

Through these stories and many others, we show how Mayo Clinic’s value of integrity plays a role in each experience.

Mayo Clinic cannot move forward alone. Beyond our teams of experts, your support makes the transformation of medicine possible as we cast our eyes to what the future holds.

We invite you to learn more about the people we meet and to experience the joy we have on a daily basis through our mission to help others find hope and healing. Thank you for your support.

Evanthia Galanis, M.D.
Executive Dean for Development
Sandra J. Schulze Professor of Novel Therapeutics

Cheryl J. Hadaway
Chief Development Officer
Chair, Department of Development
Florida Flourishes

Mayo Clinic’s expansion in Florida continues, delivering new possibilities for patients now and even more reasons for optimism in the years ahead.

In September 2019, Mayo Clinic announced approval from the Food and Drug Administration to offer sophisticated imaging tests in Florida that use radiopharmaceuticals. Radiopharmaceuticals are radioactive compounds that are tuned to specific features of diseases. For example, prostate cancer cells readily absorb carbon c-11 choline, which is a radiopharmaceutical that Mayo Clinic invented. That interaction makes it possible to use PET imaging to detect recurrent prostate cancer much earlier and with greater precision compared with conventional imaging.

The radiopharmaceuticals are produced in the Robert and Monica Jacoby Building, which was completed last year. From there, they are delivered to a new imaging center that is part of a recently completed addition to the Mayo Building in Florida.

These additions will improve care across several specialties, but they are also part of an evolution for cancer care in Florida. Mayo Clinic recently announced plans to build a $233 million integrated oncology facility that will link to the Mangurian Building and offer proton beam therapy and other advanced radiation oncology treatments. Housing these services close together will best serve patients with cancer and help to further integrate cancer care. The building is scheduled to open in 2023.

“We’re on an exciting path to grow, innovate and positively impact more lives,” says Kent R. Thielen, M.D., CEO of Mayo Clinic in Florida. “We’re tremendously grateful for the support of Bob and Monica Jacoby and many other benefactors whose gifts are helping us make a bold move forward here in the Southeast.”

The Jacoby family — Bob and Monica with daughters Cynthia Greene (left) and Lars Swingle (right) — tours the Jacoby Building. The cyclotron in the Jacoby Building is one of several additions Mayo Clinic is making in Florida to transform patient care.
Arizona Accelerates Progress With New CEO

Richard J. Gray, M.D., looks out over Mayo Clinic’s Arizona campus, which is undergoing a period of tremendous evolution and growth. “The Arizona campus is vibrant, innovative and collaborative, and I could not be more proud to lead this team because I share their unrelenting passion for the best in patient care,” says Dr. Gray, the new CEO of Mayo Clinic in Arizona.

“That’s why I’m truly excited about our ‘Arizona. Bold. Forward.’ capital expansion plan. This is an opportunity to propel us toward something greater. While maintaining everything that makes Mayo Clinic the world leader in health care, we are forging a new way to practice medicine with innovative spaces, technology and ideas that were previously unimaginable,” he says.

Dr. Gray, a professor of surgery in Mayo Clinic College of Medicine and Science, is deeply involved in the education of physicians and profoundly dedicated to cancer research and care. Dr. Gray first came to Mayo Clinic’s Arizona campus in 1995 as a surgical intern, and he completed his residency in general surgery through Mayo Clinic School of Graduate Medical Education in Arizona. As a Mayo Foundation Scholar, Dr. Gray also completed a fellowship in surgical oncology at the H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center in Florida and then returned to join the Mayo Clinic faculty in 2001.

“Dr. Gray is uniquely positioned to serve Mayo Clinic in Arizona and the institution. As operations in the Southwest double in size over the next five years, his skill and experience combined with his collaborative spirit and strategic vision are crucial to maintaining and expanding Arizona’s reputation as a destination medical center for hope and healing,” says Gianrico Farrugia, M.D., Mayo Clinic president and CEO.

As the CEO for Mayo Clinic in Arizona, Dr. Gray provides leadership and strategy, defines and implements Mayo Clinic’s operational plan, and expands Mayo Clinic’s leadership in the Southwest. He also partners with Dr. Farrugia; Kent R. Thielen, M.D., CEO of Mayo Clinic in Florida; and Bobbie S. Gostout, M.D., president, Mayo Clinic Health System.

Dr. Gray and his wife, Kathryn, have three sons. He grew up on a cattle ranch in Michigan, the youngest of seven, with six older sisters.
Mayo Clinic is growing to increase access for more patients by doubling the size of the Phoenix campus, expanding locations around the globe and leveraging digital technology to connect even more people to Mayo experts.

A key component of Mayo Clinic’s path to 2030, Arizona. Bold. Forward. will increase capacity, accelerate new platforms for innovation, and provide more opportunities for research and education. With a focus on core services such as surgery, cancer, neurosciences, cardiovascular diseases, regenerative and individualized medicine, and transplantation, Mayo Clinic in Arizona will be poised for the future of medicine.

Through this expansion, Mayo Clinic will have a proof of concept of what works best for the future of all Mayo Clinic’s sites. This next-generation space will be where Mayo Clinic applies what has been learned and transforms that knowledge into what patients will need over the next 10 years and beyond.
Discovery’s Edge

Supporting the Lives of Those Who Change Lives

Joline E. Brandenburg, M.D., devotes her workday at Mayo Clinic to treating children with cerebral palsy. At home, she cares for her 11-year-old daughter, who also has the condition. In between, Dr. Brandenburg conducts research on the movement disorder. Scientific research at a level that changes lives takes time — which is in short supply when you’re also a caregiver. In the juggling act of a clinician-researcher’s life, the ball that generally gets dropped is research. To prevent that sad outcome, a new grant from the Mayo Clinic Office of Research Diversity and Inclusion was awarded this year. The grant will help clinician-researchers investigate cerebral palsy, deliver CAR-T cell therapy, advance youth concussion protocol and guide transgender care.

Training the New Scientists of Aging

Aging is a natural and inevitable part of the life span. It’s also at the nexus of many chronic diseases, including cancer, diabetes, dementia and more. The emerging field of geroscience is about finding the fundamental causes of aging. It may be able to delay or prevent age-related diseases as a group rather than one condition at a time. Researchers say that if the promise of geroscience is realized, a revolution in geriatric medicine may be near. However, only a few of the 7,000 geriatricians in the United States are prepared to step up. So Mayo Clinic launched the first geroscience training program.

A New View of Alzheimer’s

Ronald C. Petersen, M.D., Ph.D., Cora Kanow Professor of Alzheimer’s Disease Research, is the Chester and Debbie Cadieux Director, Mayo Clinic Alzheimer’s Disease Research Center, and director of the Mayo Clinic Study of Aging. Dr. Petersen and his colleague Clifford R. Jack Jr., M.D., Alexander Family Professor of Alzheimer’s Disease Research, a Mayo Clinic neuroradiologist, are at the forefront of an international reappraisal of Alzheimer’s that’s changing how researchers think about the onset and progression of the disease.

Fruit Flies Rise to the Occasion

Fishing them out of a drink, you may not see the benefit of fruit flies, but they are a vital scientific model. At Mayo Clinic, they are helping researchers investigate a debilitating chemotherapy side effect: nerve damage called peripheral neuropathy. In 30% to 40% of people with cancer, platinum-based drugs can cause enduring pain in the hands and feet. Peripheral neuropathy significantly changes patients’ quality of life. Some interpret the pins and needles of nerve damage as pain. For others, it’s numbness. When it affects feet, the nerve damage can impact balance and gait. It’s not clear who is most at risk of this side effect. Researchers in the lab of Anthony J. Windebank, M.D., Judith and Jean Pape Adams Charitable Foundation Professor of Neuroscience, are trying to find out and discover if there are ways to protect nerve cells prior to chemotherapy. And for the first time in science, they’re doing it using fruit flies.
A Man Behind the Machine

When searching for an exact diagnosis through a myriad of complex and serious factors spread across millions of data points, it helps to have a powerful magnifying glass — and another expert point of view.

Enter Arjun P. Athreya, Ph.D., an engineer by trade who has a knack for bringing together data science algorithms and computing technology to predict events relating to potential disasters lurking within mission-critical cybersecurity infrastructure.

Dr. Athreya is the inaugural doctoral graduate of the Mayo Clinic and University of Illinois Alliance for Technology-Based Healthcare Fellowship program. Now, as a new Mayo Clinic faculty and staff member within Molecular Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics, the electrical and computer engineer has his sights set on health care.

Dr. Athreya developed a system for Mayo Clinic that uses artificial intelligence approaches ranging from machine learning to probabilistic graphs to better indicate treatment prognoses in people diagnosed with depression — the leading cause of medical disability worldwide. The system works by identifying patterns within patient history and other relevant data to predict which treatment option is best for the patient’s condition.

“In working with physicians, I learned that finding a diagnosis or treatment prognosis for a complex condition using the huge volumes of data generated from each patient can be like searching for a needle in the haystack,” Dr. Athreya says. “I try to create a magnifying glass to narrow the possibilities down and support the physician’s medical expertise.”

How do AI and machine learning fit into health care? Mathematical formulations of AI methodologies can discover patterns in a patient’s data — such as genome, microbiome and imaging data — that can explain unique characteristics of the specific patient, allowing for the right treatment to be chosen at the right time and right dose to achieve the therapeutic benefit.

“When people hear AI, they usually feel like they’re going to be replaced by machines,” he says. “First, no doctor will be replaced, as I argued in my doctoral dissertation. Instead, I want to show that AI-based tools serve as an interactive companion to the physician, a technological innovation that assists clinicians in their patient care delivery.”

William V. Bobo, M.D., is one of the physicians who collaborates with Dr. Athreya as part of a research team that is looking to personalize the treatment of major depression. A variety of treatment methods exist, but because of the timeline required to monitor effects — sometimes spanning several years — patients often grow weary of the process.

“Precision is of utmost importance in medicine,” Dr. Bobo says. “We work to give patients a more accurate diagnosis earlier, to spare them the suffering of their symptoms and the frustration they have.”

By combining the two mutually exclusive fields of direct patient care and data analysis, the team is able to answer that need. Dr. Bobo thinks this unique spirit of collaboration at Mayo Clinic is what makes the approach successful.
Alix’s Inspiration

Jay Alix grew up surrounded by an unlikely team of experts. That, and a supportive community, gave him a push that turned him into a world-class business leader. Now a member of the Mayo Clinic Board of Trustees, he’s sharing his legendary business acumen to help Mayo Clinic educate the next generation of physician-scientists and to transform medicine.
To understand Jay Alix’s desire to give back to education, it’s important to go back to the unlikely time and place where he began his own learning experience — at his family’s Shell service station nestled in Waterbury, Connecticut.

From the time his mother stitched Jay his very own service station uniform at age 4, Jay received business lessons that laid the foundation for everything that would come in his career — and eventually his transformational gift to Mayo Clinic that the organization recognizes by naming the medical school Mayo Clinic Alix School of Medicine.

The Shell service station was more than just pumps — it was a hub of activity harkening back to an earlier time when stations provided full services, from repair to towing, and worked hard to cultivate a regular clientele by solving the customers’ problems.

One of the ways his parents encouraged him to work harder in grammar school was by rewarding Jay with additional hours at the station. He learned all manner of business and life lessons from his father, the mechanics and car dealers, the customers and their families, and more who came through the doors weekly, for years.

At 18, Jay became the youngest person in the Shell dealer training organization to be certified as a Shell dealer. It was a result of what he’d learned: developing expertise, putting customers’ needs first and relying on a team of employees with specialized skills. Jay and his father took pride in Shell’s motto — “Service Is Our Business.”

But one thing Jay wasn’t sure about was what was next in his life. He loved the service station. His vision revolved around a regional network of stations — maybe bigger. He went to the local junior college for an associate degree in marketing and management to further those goals.

“I was happy. I wasn’t sure I wanted to go to a university, but my dad said, ‘Why don’t you try it? You can always come back if it doesn’t work out,’” Jay says. “There were two parts to his advice — first, there were no expectations. Second, I could always come back to what I knew and loved. It was encouragement without expectation.”

Still, that didn’t mean Jay was primed or successful in everything that came next. It was perseverance and unwavering values that drove him to eventually become an innovator so visionary that a whole industry sprang up from his work of solving corporate problems and turning around distressed companies.

An Ideal Model
Jay’s parents and the community of regular customers who watched him grow up encouraged him to broaden his horizon. Jay entered the only school he applied to at the time — the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. He went on to Rutgers University, where he earned an MBA and then passed the CPA exam. At the age of 25, just a few years out of college, he founded his own business, Jay Alix, CPA PC, a corporate turnaround firm.

Success followed. The firm evolved into Jay Alix & Associates, and at 31, he turned around Phoenix Steel Corp, the oldest steel company in the country. Soon more national and international brands came calling — Unisys,
National Car Rental, Zenith, DirecTV, Ryder Trucks and countless others. His firm eventually became AlixPartners in 2002, and Jay retired as the largest shareholder in 2006.

While growing his own business over 25 years, Jay always sought out mentorship from entrepreneurs, business leaders and academics. In particular, he took a strong interest in and studied Mayo Clinic and other organizations started by a single person or family that later grew into top-flight businesses in different fields, such as finance, law, health care and more.

“I became fascinated in my continuing business education with Mayo Clinic’s model of care, which had thrived for more than 150 years,” Jay says. “It was impactful for me to see the health care analogies and metaphors as I built the architecture of my ‘corporate health care’ businesses.”

Studying Mayo Clinic and modeling parts of his company after it in the 1980s, Jay became even more interested in Mayo Clinic’s success following his first patient care experience in the 1990s.

“In 1994, I went to Mayo Clinic for my first executive physical. I was so impressed and so taken by it,” Jay says. “Now, I go many times a year, not because of a health issue, but because of the people.”

A Mayo-Minded Focus

Watching Mayo Clinic, and searching for his main philanthropic mission, Jay saw an opportunity to make a significant impact at Mayo through conversations with former President and CEO John H. Noseworthy, M.D.

Jay’s advising role and gifts grew over many years, supporting the Mayo Clinic Model of Care, which features unhurried
Alix Challenge

To preserve and protect the Mayo Clinic Model of Care, Mayo Clinic has an aggressive plan to attract and train the highest-caliber medical students who will form its future physician ranks and deliver Mayo’s gold standard of care for generations to come. Recruiting this candidate pool requires raising the national profile of Mayo Clinic Alix School of Medicine by bolstering its scholarship endowment and offering the most rigorous and innovative educational experiences these top students seek.

A transformational gift from Jay Alix catalyzed this vision, but it is just the beginning. Jay has challenged Mayo Clinic to raise an additional $100 million in scholarship support to ensure Mayo Clinic Alix School of Medicine is not just competitive with other medical schools, but the most attractive destination for superior and diverse applicants.

“We need more people to go into medical education. It’s prohibitively expensive without scholarships,” Jay says. “Without scholarships, we’ll have a shortage of doctors. We have to solve that problem here and around the world to ensure more people can choose to go to medical school.”

Mayo Clinic invites like-minded benefactors who value the Mayo Clinic Model of Care to meet this challenge. Together, benefactors will leave an enduring mark on the lives of these future physicians, the patients they serve and Mayo Clinic’s humanitarian mission.
exams and focuses on the highest-quality patient care with comprehensive and efficient evaluation, assessment and treatment. But there was another need — addressing the prohibitive costs young people must bear to receive a medical education.

“We need to ensure more people can choose to go to medical school. We need to make a medical education more affordable for people,” Jay says. “We must lower the cost burden to enter the profession so the best and brightest will choose to become doctors.”

To do so, Jay made a transformational gift to Mayo Clinic of $200 million. He also deepened his time commitment to Mayo Clinic to ensure its long-term success by joining the Board of Trustees. In recognition of the gift, Mayo Clinic named its medical school Mayo Clinic Alix School of Medicine and recognizes Jay as a Philanthropic Partner.

“It couldn’t be a more satisfying, gratifying, enriching part of my life,” Jay says. “Mayo Clinic’s unique approach to medical care, education and research changes the outcome for patients and provides hope. This was the inspiration for my own successful business model, and if I can pay that forward and help Mayo Clinic by using my time, abilities and resources, that’s my way to impact millions of lives as part of the Mayo team.”

And that’s a big part of what drew him to supporting education — solving a pressing problem and the need for more doctors by providing a large-scale solution to help educate the next generation of physicians.

Mayo Clinic Alix School of Medicine is a top 10-ranked national medical school, currently growing to graduate 100 doctors each year by 2021. About one-third of those graduates go on to join Mayo Clinic’s staff, while the rest use the knowledge received through training at Mayo Clinic to enhance other medical practices.

“The next generation of Mayo Clinic’s leaders is being trained now,” Jay says.

“They will perpetuate the Mayo Clinic Model of Care and will fulfill the mission to meet the needs of patients first.”

**Impacting Millions, One at a Time**

Jay’s philosophy is refreshingly simple.

“I’ve become convinced that the nature and quality of our lives will be determined by the nature and the quality of our relationships,” Jay says. “So, if we form positive, productive relationships with high-quality, high-integrity people, really good human beings, we will likely have a high-quality positive life and we, too, will help them improve the quality of their lives.”

That’s what he sees in the eyes of all the students he meets at Mayo Clinic Alix School of Medicine. Jay mentions that one of his greatest joys and a source of inspiration is to hear the students’ own stories of overcoming adversity, because it reminds him of the vital role education played in his own life.

“One of the lessons I’ve learned — the pursuit of happiness isn’t a job; it isn’t climbing a career ladder,” Jay says.

**Mayo Clinic’s unique approach to medical care, education and research changes the outcome for patients and provides hope. This was the inspiration for my own successful business model.”**

*Jay Alix*
“It’s about being productive, intellectually honest and doing things for the greater good. That gives us a stronger sense of self-esteem and self-worth, and purpose, and that’s where we find real satisfaction and ultimate happiness.”

And, when people of integrity have the time and space to think clearly and logically as well as humanistically about issues at hand, Jay believes that’s when even the biggest problems can be solved.

**A System of Success**

For Jay, it starts with a No. 2 pencil and 3-by-5 notecards and a time management system he learned from an early mentor about 40 years ago.

“The cards are my priority-setting and time management system. It helps clear my mind. The idea is, people make a big effort around a to-do list, but you can only do one thing, one task at a time. Most important achievements are made up of big, complex projects and solving major problems. But if you break complex things down to one item at a time on an index card, it focuses all your attention, and in a physical way it can be accomplished or solved quickly.

“Life is lived in the present, from moment to moment, from task to task. The past is gone, the future is not yet here. By being as present as possible, you can listen carefully and become a positive influence for solving problems.”

**Opportunity Abounds**

Jay’s list of people he admires at Mayo Clinic runs so long that he’s afraid of missing someone, but he acknowledges his friendship with Dr. Noseworthy and Gianrico Farrugia, M.D., Mayo Clinic president and CEO, as
well as Mayo Clinic’s internal leadership board and department chairs.

In appreciation, he wanted to do something beyond his $200 million gift that would be innovative for Mayo Clinic’s future leaders. He worked with Dr. Noseworthy, who was president and CEO from 2009 through 2018 — a period of unprecedented growth as well as challenges — to create an endowment.

“One of the things I witnessed in the clinic from leadership is that there are always more great ideas than there are funds for,” Jay says. “By creating an endowed position supporting the CEO this year, it’ll produce a source of funding so President and CEO Gianrico Farrugia, M.D., and all future CEOs can bring about bright ideas that will advance Mayo Clinic as a global institution.”

No matter what the future holds, Jay believes Mayo Clinic’s mission will remain paramount because of the personal commitment and individual dedication of Mayo Clinic’s staff.

“It’s a joy to collaboratively work with Mayo people. They are dedicated, smart, hardworking people; they have personal missions to help heal and cure the world,” Jay says. “When I see people at Mayo Clinic working together, collaborating to discover a solution to a patient’s problem because they’re sick or hurting and they’re healed and they feel better, that’s very inspiring.”

And it’s one thing that won’t ever change. “Mayo Clinic keeps its eye on what makes it special — patient encounters. Each individual episode of care makes Mayo Clinic the exceptional place it is every day,” Jay says. “The world is changing rapidly, and that won’t stop. Mayo Clinic will continue to evolve and lead the charge of the change in health care. Mayo Clinic will continue to influence the practice of medicine through doctors, scientists, researchers, students, staff.”

**A Joyful Time**

There are opportunities for milestones ahead in Jay’s own life, including several he’s looking forward to with his partner, Una Jackman. He’s taking it all in stride, one day at a time.

“It brings me joy to think that I’ll be a grandparent,” he says, smiling.

Is one of Jay’s or Una’s six children between them expecting a baby?

“Well, not yet,” he chuckles. “But our kids will definitely be reading this.”

Still smiling, he thinks about their impact in his own life.

“Watching them as young adults as they take on life’s challenges makes me so proud. It’s joyful to see their lives continue to unfold as they grow and prosper.”

And with that, Jay reflects on all of his experiences, and how bright the future is to come.

“It’s meaningful and purposeful to see my own life in context, with the abilities and opportunities I was given, and to be able to fulfill the legacy of sacrifices my parents and grandparents made, by making a gift to help students work for the greatest good and help Mayo Clinic,” Jay says.

“And now I see it continuing far into my family’s future because in the end, it’s about how we help each other, and how we help humankind — in all ways.”

“It’s a joy to collaboratively work with Mayo people. They are dedicated, smart, hardworking people; they have personal missions to help heal and cure the world.”

*Jay Alix*
Why We Give

“In deep appreciation for the skilled medical care received over the past 22 years from Mayo Clinic doctors and nurses, we are delighted to share financial resources from the many bountiful blessings granted to us by our Heavenly Father and great physicians.”

RC and Lois Mills
Florida
2019
The Power of Philanthropy

Your gift to Mayo Clinic has the power to strengthen and accelerate our efforts to solve the world’s most serious and complex medical challenges — one patient at a time.

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### Cumulative Philanthropy
Mayo Clinic recognizes each benefactor for philanthropic giving of $100,000 to $10 million or more in one of the Hall of Benefactors at Mayo Clinic’s three main campuses.

**RECOGNITION LEVELS**
- **Philanthropic Partners** $10 million or more
- **Principal Benefactors** $1 million to $9,999,999
- **Distinguished Benefactors** $500,000 to $999,999
- **Major Benefactors** $100,000 to $499,999

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### Planned Giving
Planned gifts through your will or other type of estate plan create a lasting legacy that helps Mayo Clinic advance its mission in service to humanity. Mayo Clinic recognizes these and other planned gift commitments in The Mayo Legacy, our honorary society of benefactors who invest in Mayo Clinic. The Mayo Legacy connects Mayo Clinic’s current activities with the institution’s vision for the future.

**RECOGNITION LEVELS**
- **Mayo Alumni Laureates** $100,000 or more
- **Doctors Mayo Society** $10,000 or more; bequest of $25,000 or more

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### Alumni Philanthropy
Having seen and felt the direct impact of philanthropy, Mayo Clinic alumni know the difference it makes better than anyone. Many become benefactors of Mayo to help maintain the highest quality of patient care, research and education.

**RECOGNITION LEVELS**
- **Mayo Alumni Laureates** $100,000 or more
- **Doctors Mayo Society** $10,000 or more; bequest of $25,000 or more

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### Annual Giving
Some benefactors choose to support Mayo Clinic’s work with yearly gifts. Six levels honor benefactors for annual philanthropy of $1,000 to $99,999.

**RECOGNITION LEVELS**
- **Mayo Leadership Circle** $50,000 to $99,999
- **Mayo Ambassadors** $25,000 to $49,999
- **Mayo Sponsors** $10,000 to $24,999
- **Mayo Stewards** $5,000 to $9,999
- **Mayo Patrons** $2,500 to $4,999
- **Mayo Friends** $1,000 to $2,499

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For more information about philanthropy at Mayo Clinic, please call 1-800-297-1185 or visit mayoclinic.org/development.
Excellence in Education

Mayo Clinic College of Medicine and Science is transforming health care for both patients and society through excellence in education, discovery, innovation, teamwork and leadership. The college first began when physicians from throughout the world traveled to Mayo Clinic to learn innovative approaches to medical practice and surgery.

As one of the largest postgraduate medical education systems in North America, the college consists of five schools providing education to nearly 4,000 students, in addition to the more than 135,000 learners through Mayo Clinic School of Continuous Professional Development.

In the rapidly changing health care environment, it is not enough to study the health care issues of today. That’s why Mayo Clinic is boldly transforming health education and training to improve patient care, accelerate discovery and innovation, and advance the practice of medicine for today and into the future.
Pursuit of Education

An Excellent Experience

Josh’s Journey

Finding a Fit

Modeling Excellence
Unrealistic. Selfish. Impossible.

The words were lobbed at Waleed Gibreel, M.B.B.S., who has lived in the margins of two powerful forces that shaped him — his dream of becoming a top-flight surgeon and his reality of growing up in war-torn Sudan.

“I knew as a child that my ultimate goal was to be a doctor, no matter what it took,” Dr. Gibreel says. “I didn’t really have any understanding of what medicine was nor how to get into it.”

Dr. Gibreel’s dream and his accompanying reality led him from witnessing impoverished communities in Khartoum to becoming a meticulous and highly skilled pediatric surgeon. Along the way, he tended a gas station in Virginia, drove a cab and delivered pizzas on frigid Minnesota nights.

Watching, Waiting
The United Nations called the killing of 300,000 people and the displacement of 3 million more one of the worst humanitarian crises ever when Darfur, Sudan, exploded with civil war in the 2000s.

Although he was not directly affected by the war, Dr. Gibreel watched how the crisis shaped the country. People didn’t have access to medical care. Many died from a lack of basic necessities.

“When people are sick, they are vulnerable and need help. They need someone to be their advocate,” Dr. Gibreel says. “I wanted to be that person who could help someone when they truly needed it.”

Dr. Gibreel’s father was an accountant and his mother worked raising three children. But even professional workers had difficulty finding what is commonplace in the West — cohesive medical care and education.

Education is not free or compulsory in Sudan for children between ages 6 and 13. The literacy rate is 70%, and only half the population can afford to even attend school. Dr. Gibreel’s family strongly stressed the importance of education, and his father worked long hours just to ensure that the children would receive an education.

“I saw what my parents did for me, and I want to make sure I keep doing what I’m doing, so they can see me succeed and can be proud to know all their effort was worth it,” he says. “In Sudan, most teens have to get jobs to help their families. When I would tell someone about medical school and the additional five-plus years of training, they would say it’s not possible.
“They had to take care of their families. Putting my interests and dreams first was difficult for the community to understand, and some viewed it as selfish.”

But Dr. Gibreel pressed on, achieving and entering medical school at the British-founded University of Khartoum Medical School in Sudan, where his classes were taught in Arabic and English. He was drawn to anatomy and surgery because he liked being able to diagnose the cause of a patient’s condition and be able to act on it through surgery and immediately see the outcome.

In 2009, Dr. Gibreel graduated at the top of his 400-student class with a medical degree. After a yearlong internship, Dr. Gibreel knew he wanted more — to train with the best in the United States.

**Sudan to the States**

Sudan lacks many medical resources and opportunities. Consequently, doctors often work two or more jobs just to get by, medications are limited, and many areas are not safe.

With aspirations to train as an academic medical center surgeon, Dr. Gibreel embarked on his cross-continent voyage, landing in Arlington, Virginia, in 2011.

To join a medical practice in the United States as a foreign-trained physician can take up to 10 years because of the involved testing process, burdensome costs and often duplicative educational requirements. The biggest hurdle is gaining acceptance to a medical residency program, which requires obtaining medical experience in the U.S. prior to acceptance.

To get by, Dr. Gibreel spent his first year working numerous blue-collar jobs while studying for his medical exams.

Even so, he scored in the top percentile on his first medical exam.

Frequently asked about his accent, Dr. Gibreel would share his story about becoming a U.S. physician. A customer at the gas station he tended suggested he reach out to Sudan-born pediatric surgeon Abdalla Zarroug, M.D., who worked at Mayo Clinic at the time. A few days later, a friend referred Dr. Gibreel to the Sudanese American Medical Association, which also mentioned Dr. Zarroug.

“I called him and he was kind enough to allow me to come join him,” Dr. Gibreel says.

With that, Dr. Gibreel secured a one-year unpaid research position to gain the medical experience required to apply for residency.

To make ends meet, Dr. Gibreel drove a cab and delivered pizzas in Rochester for six hours each night after his days in the lab. What little downtime he had he spent studying for his medical exams to apply for resident positions.

Despite the long days and lack of sufficient study time and sleep, Dr. Gibreel once again excelled, and he was accepted into the Mayo Clinic General Surgery Residency Program at Mayo Clinic School of Graduate Medical Education.

The school is America’s first physician graduate program and one of the largest in the country. Learners at Mayo Clinic have extensive opportunities to conduct research, work beside experts in a clinical setting and receive tremendous career guidance and networking.

“I came to this country without my family, but the people at Mayo Clinic embraced me. Mayo changed me.”

*Waleed Gibreel, M.B.B.S.*
Mentors Mold the Man

Michael G. Sarr, M.D., Dr. Gibreel’s attending senior consultant in surgery at the time, recalls their first meeting while collaborating on a research project. “It was immediately obvious that Waleed was brilliant, despite his recent struggles to learn the language and social customs,” he says. “With his ever-present infectious smile and extreme intelligence, he won the heart and confidence of everyone he worked with.”

Extremely humble, Dr. Gibreel appreciates the mysteries of disease and the marvels of healing. He cites his advocates and mentors for his achievements and for helping him narrow his specialty to pediatric plastic surgery to restore function to kids born with congenital facial abnormalities.

Dr. Gibreel says, “Kids deserve to look normal, and sometimes they are born with cleft lips or cleft palates. There is nothing harder in life than to be a child whose face does not function normally or look normal. I decided to spend the rest of my life helping these kids.”

Karim Bakri, M.B.B.S., another mentor of Dr. Gibreel’s, says, “Dr. Gibreel personifies humanitarianism, as evidenced in all aspects of his life. I have worked with him in the operating room, and his technical skills are outstanding. He is detail oriented yet thoughtful.”

As chief resident, Dr. Gibreel has published 18 research articles, with six pending publication. He has also given back to the institution that he says gave him so much by educating junior residents and assisting with residency program development.

“I came to this country without my family, but the people at Mayo Clinic embraced me. Mayo changed me,” Dr. Gibreel says. “I met a team that believed in me and was willing to give me a chance. I’m a better person because of the mentors and role models who had such a positive influence on me.”

Dr. Gibreel graduated in May 2019 and is now continuing his education with a one-year fellowship in craniofacial surgery in California. He was awarded the prestigious Mayo Foundation Scholarship, guaranteeing him a position at Mayo Clinic when he finishes his fellowship.
An Excellent Experience

Mayo Clinic program gives sneak peek at rewarding health careers

Not many people can say that their lives were changed in one week, but Arlena Schmidt can. She was one of 40 Minnesota junior and senior high school students inspired by health professions while attending the Mayo Clinic School of Health Sciences’ Career Immersion Program.

The weeklong free residential summer program introduces students to more than a dozen health science careers, helps them map an academic path to those careers, and instills in them the confidence to excel. “The program solidified that I wanted a career in health care,” Arlena says. She was excited to learn about options, such as becoming a phlebotomist, so that she could work in health care while attending college.

“Most high school students are familiar with the career pathways to become a physician or a nurse,” says Stacey A. Rizza, M.D., associate dean of the school. “What they likely aren’t familiar with are all the other health science careers that contribute to a patient’s diagnosis, treatment and follow-up care.”

At Mayo Clinic, the practice of medicine is built around a cohesive team of professionals all focused on the needs of the patient. Overall, allied health providers make up an estimated 60% of America’s health care workforce. They play a vital role in the continuity of care.

“Our goal is to introduce high school students to these careers, show them the academic path to achieve these careers, and — we hope — eventually employ them as our workforce of the future after they’ve completed their schooling,” Dr. Rizza says.
“The phlebotomy program staff filled my head with knowledge and made the program seem very interesting.”

Arlena Schmidt

Mapping the Future
Participants are introduced to professional conduct in the workplace, a vast network of Mayo Clinic faculty and current Mayo Clinic School of Health Sciences students. Under the guidance of staff from the Office of Strategic Student Recruitment and Outreach, participants learn how to chart their college and career paths. Students also have the opportunity to connect with local college recruiters and mentors for specific allied health training programs.

The Career Immersion Program is competitive, and students are selected based on academic achievements, an essay, letters of recommendation and an interview. The program is intended for students who have an interest in health care, especially those from diverse or underserved populations. Similar programs are available at the Arizona and Florida campuses.

During the program Arlena was privy to a glimpse of the work of a phlebotomist. “The phlebotomy program staff filled my head with knowledge and made the program seem very interesting,” Arlena says.

Arlena earned her phlebotomy certification immediately after high school and was hired at Mayo Clinic. She plans to further her education by attending the Mayo Clinic School of Health Sciences Surgical First Assistant one-year program after she graduates from the University of Minnesota Rochester in 2021.

That success began with the Career Immersion Program.

Says Arlena: “Not only did I begin a health care career, but I also received an income to help support me while in college and the opportunity to make many professional relationships within Mayo Clinic.”

Arlena Schmidt
More than 135,000 learners each year rely on Mayo Clinic College of Medicine and Science's biggest school by enrollment — the Mayo Clinic School of Continuous Professional Development.

Each year, physicians and nonphysicians from all over the world take part in over 400 accredited educational opportunities the school offers for medical professionals to enhance their practice.

Staying at the forefront of medical knowledge and collaborating with the best and brightest minds at Mayo Clinic and around the country generate an educational opportunity that is unparalleled.

“The school is constantly evolving and innovating to ensure the highest value and engagement to support health care delivery in multiple transformative ways,” says Mitchell R. Humphreys, M.D., dean of the school.

Through a school dedicated to lifelong learning and specific needs, learners from many disciplines interact with world-class faculty to constantly exchange ideas and challenge traditional science with a quest for new knowledge that never stops. This way, medical professionals are able to anticipate and address patients' needs — and will lead affirmative change in health care for generations to come.

135,000+ learners

400+ accredited educational opportunities
Senior Airman Josh Labott awoke from unconsciousness in significant pain after a blast. His head and back hurt. He couldn’t hear. But he knew he was in trouble and his unit was under siege.

Josh had enlisted in the Air Force a few weeks before his 18th birthday in 2006. A bomb disposal expert, Josh was deployed to Afghanistan and was already three months into his second overseas deployment in January 2010. On the day he was injured, Josh and his infantry squad had set out to help secure a school that planned to allow girls to enroll; the Taliban ambushed his patrol with six concealed bombs.

Two members of Josh’s patrol died. Another lost a leg during the ambush. Helicopters provided air support, and others joined the fray, allowing the wounded to be evacuated.

“I was one of the lucky ones,” Josh says.

An Epiphany
It was during this catastrophe that Josh saw the vast capabilities of medicine. Despite his own injuries — a traumatic brain injury and ruptured disks in his back — Josh says, “When I woke up, my combat lifesaving skills instantly kicked in. I scrambled alongside the medics trying to control the blood loss of the injured soldiers in my patrol.”

“After the adrenaline wore off, that’s when I realized I’d found my calling,” Josh says. “I knew that I was meant to serve others.”

Learning Through Life
Josh was raised by his grandparents and was occasionally shuffled from family member to family member. Josh grew up never going to the doctor, and he learned early how to water down a gallon of milk to make it last all week. The necessities of life didn’t leave money for much else.
“We went to the Salvation Army for Christmas,” Josh recalls. “I remember waiting for our bag of toys. We’d use records for Frisbees, because we didn’t have a record player. But I still felt fortunate to have a roof over my head and three meals a day, usually.”

At age 9, Josh joined his father, a maintenance man for an apartment complex, in Milwaukee. Josh and his father then moved to Big Bend, Wisconsin, about 19 miles southwest, where his father worked hard, eventually training to become certified in HVAC and buying a home when Josh was 13.

By his sophomore year of high school, Josh knew he wanted to see the world through the military like his grandfather, a former Marine, had done. But that required a high school diploma. None of his immediate family members had graduated from high school, and they urged Josh to be the first. “College was never really an option for me,” he says.

Josh got his high school degree and decided to embark on a 20-year military career. Little did he know how much shorter it would be.

Recovery and Realization
Immediately after the roadside bomb explosion, Josh recovered in Afghanistan. His hearing returned, he received physical therapy for his back, and he participated in Eastern medicine practices for three months. Undeterred by the rigors of his recovery, Josh completed his tour of duty.
Josh was then reassigned in the Air Force to Turkey, where he was a teacher and supervisor for recent graduates of the bomb disposal school until his medical discharge in August 2012.

“It was hard to imagine being anything but in the military,” he says. But he knew it was time to listen to the calling he’d recognized back in Afghanistan. At 24, he applied to Marquette University, which was near his home. He began his path to medicine with his undergraduate work in an accelerated three-year program in biomedicine. “I wanted to finish fast, so I took full loads each semester and summer. I lived at home to be near my family and friends,” he says.

A Generous Gift
When it came time to choose a medical school, Josh had his sights on a nearby large university because of its veterans benefits. Then a friend whose parents worked at Mayo Clinic told him about Mayo’s medical school.

“The more I researched the school, the more I knew this was the school I wanted to go to,” Josh says.

Josh was most impressed with the collaboration among the students, the fostering of teamwork instead of competition and the ongoing motivation for all students to do their best.

But could he afford to go to Mayo Clinic Alix School of Medicine when the other school had veterans benefits?

He applied for a scholarship.

As a nontraditional student and recently married, Josh could attend medical school only with financial assistance. Because of the generosity of benefactors to build Mayo Clinic Alix School of Medicine’s endowment, Josh was awarded this assistance, making his attendance at Mayo Clinic’s medical school a reality.

In the fall of 2019, Josh entered his fourth year of medical school with plans of becoming an orthopedic surgeon.

“This aid has allowed me to study and focus solely on medicine … I now have the freedom to choose a specialty and career path knowing that a loan burden will not affect that choice.”

Josh Labott
Finding a Fit

Determined difference makers abound in biomedical sciences

Happy. It isn’t a word quickly associated with students pursuing a top degree in biomedical science due to the pressure felt by those enrolled in rigorous Ph.D. programs.

However, Emma Goddery noted that the students who were part of her interview at Mayo Clinic Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences were happy and smiling.

“I knew the stresses of obtaining a Ph.D. would happen anywhere, but the fact that everyone at Mayo was so friendly and happy really made an impression,” Emma says. She started in the graduate school in July 2016 and will graduate in 2021 with a Ph.D. in biomedical sciences, specializing in neuroimmunology and regenerative medicine science.

A close friend of Emma’s experienced a traumatic brain injury in high school and went from being in a coma to making a complete recovery, triggering Emma’s interest in medicine, and specifically the brain. She attended Arizona State University as a pre-med student, worked on research as a sophomore and loved it. Finding a graduate school that provided a strong research component was important, and Mayo Clinic fit the bill with its Regenerative Sciences Training Program.

“There is such strong science here, and the environment is collaborative rather than competitive. We share and work together,” she says. In the graduate school, students receive most of their education as apprentices and scientific team members in research labs. Another aspect of the school that has made a difference to Emma is the faculty and her mentor, inspiring her to grow.

“They encourage me and talk to me as a peer. We can exchange ideas as fellow researchers and scientists,” she says. Mayo classifies students as trainees rather than employees, allowing them to work together on the same level.
Part of the Process

Emma’s research focuses on neurodegeneration and regeneration. She wants to understand how the immune system responds to neurological events in the brain. To do this, she is studying viral infections in the brain and how the immune system responds. “If we can figure out why degeneration is happening on the front end, we can prevent or lessen it,” she says. “Then regeneration can begin to mend what was previously injured or lost completely.”

Regenerative medicine is redefining clinical care — going beyond disease symptom management to addressing the underlying cause of disease to restore health. Regenerative care is expected to represent 10% of all health care in the next decade.

Emma now participates in the interview process for Ph.D. candidates. She has come full circle, becoming one of the students who made such an impact on her three years ago.

“It makes me reflect on my journey, scientific knowledge and personal growth. I understand why the students were so happy when I was here for my interview,” Emma says.

She sees herself as a mentor now for the younger students and is co-president of the Graduate Student Association.

“Anyone can be a scientist,” Emma says. “My advice is to follow your passion, practice rigorous science, maintain a healthy work-life balance and be happy doing it.”

Enabling ‘Rock Stars’

The next generation of health care is made possible by empowering students to push the boundaries of innovation and scientific discovery.

Grateful patients A. Gary and Anita Klesch help make the future a reality. Their philanthropy, which supports predoctoral fellows in Mayo Clinic Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, combines their passions of educating students and uncovering new solutions.

“When Gary met the team from the Center for Regenerative Medicine, he came back to me and said, ‘I just met the rock stars of the future,’” says Anita, who holds a Ph.D. in art history. “He was so animated, excited about this research. It was a wonderful opportunity for us to be part of the future.”

Training for the Future

Regenerative medicine, which harnesses the body’s natural ability to heal, is addressing unmet needs of people with chronic and complex conditions who often have no other options. Because of the science’s immense potential to transform medicine for decades to come, the Mayo Clinic Center for Regenerative Medicine has created a powerful approach to develop treatments, deliver them to patients and train the next generation of experts who will advance regenerative therapies.
“These are students that are very passionate. It’s hard to deny someone’s passion when they’re prepared to put it all on the line to find new solutions,” Gary says. “What we see here is so refreshing. We see excitement and people driven to find solutions. Their work is moving so fast that we can’t even keep up.”

**Expanding Opportunities**
Gary and Anita understand the drive to follow a passion firsthand. A titan in international business, Gary founded and chairs the Klesch Group, a successful global industrial commodity firm whose work spans investment, operational optimization and risk mitigation. Anita is an honorary research fellow at the Vasari Research Centre in the Department of History of Art for Birkbeck, University of London.

Their business and humanities acumen come together when imagining a better future for the world. And, it was the Klesches’ visionary generosity that expanded opportunities for regenerative medicine education at Mayo Clinic. In recognition of their support, Mayo Clinic honors the Klesches as Distinguished Benefactors.

“I did a lot of investigating before we settled on Mayo Clinic,” Gary says. “It was really the total package. After being at Mayo Clinic as a patient, we knew we wanted to associate ourselves, our family, with the best care available, so we decided to give back.”
Blueprints take shape through ingenuity and time at the drafting table. At Mayo Clinic, new draft designs can guide physician-scientists toward milestones in the field of medicine.

William E. Clifton, M.D., had an idea to tap into the realm of 3D printing for medicine. As one of the first recipients of the Mayo Clinic John H. and Carolyn O. Sonnentag Neurosurgery Residency in Florida, Dr. Clifton believed he could find new ways to train surgeons by creating 3D-printed models.

Many ideas, including Dr. Clifton’s, are well thought out and worthy of funding, but Mayo Clinic’s pool of resources is finite and space is limited.

So he rolled out his own blueprint to bring his design to life. Dr. Clifton purchased a 3D printer with a personal loan and safely stashed it in the corner of a bedroom in his home. Similar to the difficulty of securing research space at work, space is a commodity at home with his wife, Kristen, and their four children.

“When the 50-pound box was delivered, my wife and I shared a big smile. Of course, she added a more appropriate eye roll. Then Kristen took the lead, and we set it up in the bedroom.”

Dr. Clifton worked in his free time using the 3D printer to practice his innovative idea. It was these early designs that helped him build the training models used today.

“Visualize the Architecture”
Early in his journey, Dr. Clifton sought the advice of his faculty mentor in spine surgery, Mark A. Pichelmann, M.D., who recognized the importance of this work and encouraged Dr. Clifton to meet obstacles head-on.

“At Mayo Clinic, many clinicians are heavily engaged in groundbreaking research,” Dr. Pichelmann says. “It’s important for physician-scientists to balance time between...
seeing patients and building our knowledge base — for the betterment of patients and the advancement of the field. We continue to strive to be at the forefront of patient care, research and education.”

Fast-forward eight months to more than 20 peer-reviewed publications penned by Dr. Clifton, as well as several patent submissions for neurosurgical devices. The Department of Neurologic Surgery also is heavily engaged in planning for dedicated neurosurgery 3D printing space and a materials science laboratory based on the ideas and infrastructure Dr. Clifton helped create.

“One of the distinct advantages of 3D printing is that it allows us to build models made from different material compositions and properties. We do this to simulate different disease processes for resident training, and to approach patient care and surgical planning in an individualized way,” Dr. Clifton says.

Design the Model
The 3D printing process comprises stripping down information from a patient’s CT scan and converting the image to a 3D language called stereolithography. Based on spatial information, Mayo Clinic can program the printer to create patient-specific models, such as anatomically precise vertebrae. Physician-scientists use these surgical training models in tandem with resources provided by the J. Wayne and Delores Barr Weaver Simulation Center at Mayo Clinic’s campus in Florida.

The Weaver Simulation Center partners with Dr. Clifton to share his 3D training models with surgical learners. Simulation has a huge impact on patient care.

“Building the best possible patient experience is at the center of everything we do. The Weaver Simulation Center allows for experiential learning in a safe, controlled environment,” says Leslie V. Simon, D.O.,

Kristen and Dr. Clifton at home with their four children, Kenzie (3), Maisie (4 months), Billy (2) and Lila (5).
Weaver Simulation Center medical director. “It promotes intellectual growth and scientific discovery among learners and clinicians alike. We are very proud of what we do, and grateful for the privilege to advance medical innovation at Mayo Clinic.”

Translate Design to Scale
Alfredo Quinones-Hinojosa, M.D., chairs the Department of Neurologic Surgery and is recognized as a William J. and Charles H. Mayo Professor. He is inspired by Mayo Clinic’s dedication to the next generation of leaders.

“Education and training are the scaffolding on which medical excellence is built,” Dr. Quinones-Hinojosa says. “Highly innovative research such as 3D printing to train surgeons is another example of how our work changes the world with creativity, hope and healing.”

Three of Dr. Clifton’s patients recently benefited from his applications of 3D printing. The unique models contributed to surgical planning sessions, helped to pinpoint precise diagnoses and guided postoperative management choices. The first patient had a congenital spinal deformity, the next had a large metastatic tumor near the lumbar spine, and the third had a rare cyst compressing her brainstem.

All three patients have recovered from their successful surgeries because of the combined forces of innovation and surgical skill provided by the Mayo Clinic neurosurgery team. Dr. Clifton and his colleagues continue to extend the reach of 3D printing to touch more lives.

And Dr. Clifton’s wife, Kristen, ever supportive, stays vigilant for the couple’s next delivery.

Skilled Simulation
Building a master classroom for surgical skill development

The Mayo Clinic Mastery Skills Lab at Mayo Clinic Hospital — Rochester, Saint Marys Campus, is a planned multifunctional procedural space that will incorporate learning, innovation and technology.

The Mastery Skills Lab, overseen by Mayo Clinic School of Graduate Medical Education, will give multiple specialties opportunities to practice advanced procedural simulation in a dynamic and collaborative space. It will also aid learners training to use leading-edge technology in robotics, fluoroscopy, augmented reality, virtual reality, artificial intelligence and 3D printing.

Mayo Clinic is a leader in complex procedures that require careful preparation and practice to ensure the best results. The center will provide an innovative training space for practicing the increasing number of complex procedures in a location that is easily accessible and available 24 hours a day.

Mayo Clinic physicians are treating people who are sicker and have more-complicated diseases, and practicing procedures through simulation is necessary to further a learner’s skills and improve patient outcomes. Deliberate practice is purposeful, focused training conducted with the specific goal of improving performance. Learners need a space that allows them to receive feedback, as well as have a safe space to master performance.

The Mastery Skills Lab is scheduled to open in 2020.
Evanthia Galanis, M.D., grew up in a house brimming with books, which her father would bring home by the dozen. It was through the works of classical writers that a young Eva found her initial calling — as a scholar of ancient literature and philosophy. As college approached, however, her thoughts turned increasingly to how she could make a difference in the lives of others. She was inspired in large part by her parents, who modeled the importance of volunteering and helping those in need. “I realized that if I were to follow my initial path, my work would likely only be of academic interest, rather than truly having an impact on the lives of others,” Dr. Galanis says. “Medicine, however, would give me that opportunity.”

Today, Dr. Galanis is a practicing oncologist who also directs a research laboratory that has been funded by the National Institutes of Health for the past 18 years, and she is a principal investigator in national clinical trials. In addition, she has served as chair of the Department of Molecular Medicine for the last 10 years and is currently leading the Gene and Virus Therapy Program of the Mayo Clinic Cancer Center. This year, she took on a new leadership position at Mayo Clinic as the executive dean for Development. It’s a role in which she focuses on advancing the mission of Mayo Clinic by fostering philanthropic support for the organization’s most important efforts in practice, research and education. “I see an opportunity to make a difference on a larger scale,” she says.

**Our Patients Do Not Have Years to Wait**
In addition to her leadership roles at Mayo Clinic, Dr. Galanis leads a number of national and international collaborations for cancer

**Instant Impact**
As an oncologist, Evanthia Galanis, M.D., sees the anguish cancer can bring to families, including her own. Her philosophy in her lab and practice is simple — patients need answers quicker. Dr. Galanis brings this perspective from her research and clinical experience to her new role as Mayo Clinic’s executive dean for Development, where she’s seen the impact visionary philanthropy can have when joined with Mayo Clinic’s patient-centered values.
research. She serves as chair of the Neuro-Oncology Committee of the cooperative group Alliance for Clinical Trials in Oncology and is co-chair of the Glioblastoma Working Group and U.S. lead for the international rare brain tumor initiative.

“I did not structure my career with any particular opportunity or position in mind,” she says. “Each step of the way was more about how I could make the greatest impact in the lives of our patients by combining the best science with the best delivery of medicine, and bridging the two.”

Dr. Galanis talks with a sense of urgency for advancing new treatments fast. This urgency is inspired by both her work with patients with cancer and by her late parents, who each had cancer.

“Both my daily professional encounters with the pressing needs of our patients with cancer and my personal experience through my parents’ cancer journeys reinforce that our patients do not have years to wait,” she says. “The way I see it is that we need better answers yesterday!”

Philanthropy Propels the Vision

Dr. Galanis joined the staff of Mayo Clinic in 1998. Since the beginning, she says, she has seen firsthand how philanthropy plays an integral role in helping Mayo thrive. Early in her career at Mayo Clinic, philanthropy made it possible for Dr. Galanis to start her first laboratory. She says that benefactor support helped her pursue novel ideas in cancer therapeutics and rapidly translate them to clinical use with patients, with findings that subsequently led to publications, extramural funding and academic recognition.

“My career trajectory would likely have been entirely different if it were not for the trust that benefactors bestowed on my work when I was a young investigator,” she says.

At the core of Mayo Clinic, Dr. Galanis says, is the transformative philanthropy of Drs. Will and Charlie Mayo and their wives, Hattie and Edith, who in 1919 donated the assets of Mayo Clinic and the majority of their life savings to establish Mayo as a not-for-profit organization. This gift would be worth more than $100 million today.

As Mayo Clinic pursues a bold and innovative strategy to transform health care over the next decade and beyond, Dr. Galanis says philanthropy is more important than ever to achieve advances for patients.

“The biggest opportunity is to expand our reach to the rest of the world and essentially disrupt and transform health care while strengthening our core values and expertise, which make care at Mayo Clinic

“Mayo Clinic was created as the result of philanthropy and is thriving because of philanthropy. Our benefactors make creating the future of Mayo Clinic possible.”

Evanthia Galanis, M.D.
unique,” she says. “Philanthropy can allow us to propel this vision much faster than we otherwise would be able to.”

In the meantime, as the Sandra J. Schulze Professor of Novel Therapeutics, Dr. Galanis continues to see the impact of philanthropy in finding answers for patients. Work made possible by the professorship focuses on pursuing advances in virotherapy, an innovative way to treat cancer by modifying viruses to stimulate patients’ immune systems.

“Endowed professorships are a huge honor because they represent our highest academic distinction at Mayo Clinic,” Dr. Galanis says. “This benefactor funding has a continuous effect since it makes it possible for Mayo Clinic to reward exceptional academic contributions and foster paradigm-shifting science from one generation to the next.”

As she steps into her role as executive dean for Development, Dr. Galanis is looking forward to helping take the already successful fundraising activities at Mayo Clinic to a new level.

“Mayo Clinic was created as the result of philanthropy and is thriving because of philanthropy,” she says. “Our benefactors make creating the future of Mayo Clinic possible.”

Hippocratic Inspiration

Since childhood, Dr. Galanis has been deeply influenced by ancient literature and philosophy. Hippocrates, the ancient Greek physician often referred to as the Father of Medicine, represented one of the first reference points in her career as a physician and scientist.

Dr. Galanis attended Athens University School of Medicine, which has a strong tradition of teaching Hippocratic thinking in medicine. When she graduated as valedictorian of her class, she followed university tradition by reciting the Hippocratic oath in ancient Greek in front of her classmates at the graduation ceremony.

“Going back to this oath, certain things still stand out, including the integrity and ethical principles in the practice of medicine, and the patient being the central focus and inspiration,” she says.

When Dr. Galanis visited Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, as the potential location for her residency in the mid-1990s, she was struck by how Hippocratic principles were put into practice at Mayo.

“I knew this was the place for me, a place where I could grow,” she says.
Wholeness In Health Care

Penny and Bill George learned the importance of caring for the mind, body and spirit firsthand. Penny’s experience inspired a gift to Mayo Clinic that established the Center for Women’s Health — a center focused on empowering women during their health journeys.
Penny George, Psy.D., learned from a young age the role that care and comfort play in health care. Her father, Dr. Robert Pilgram, a general surgeon, would take young Penny to visit neighboring communities on horseback in the mountains of Maryland.

The visits weren’t necessarily to offer treatment to patients, who often had advanced conditions such as congestive heart failure. The mission was to offer them comfort in their time of need.

“Dad told me it was important for people to know that someone cared about them,” Penny recalls. “Although he was a surgeon, it was a different era. Money wasn’t in long supply, but the gift of self and the idea of service were.”

**The Big Picture**

Penny attributes these experiences as key in establishing her values of servitude and giving back to the community. After being treated for breast cancer and building on those values, she discovered her mission.

While grateful for the care she received at another health care system in the 1990s, Penny found that care incomplete because it focused solely on her disease and body part, not on herself as a whole person connected in mind, body and spirit. She found success in her healing journey in part by complementing her conventional care with integrative elements, such as nutrition, mindfulness meditation, acupuncture and tai chi.

Penny and her husband, Bill, former CEO of Medtronic, created the George Family Foundation in 1994. Penny became determined to use the resources of the foundation to improve the care experiences of those who would follow. The mission of the George Family Foundation is to foster wholeness in mind, body, spirit and community by developing authentic leaders and supporting transformative programs that serve the common good. Supporting the pioneering leadership of Stephanie S. Faubion, M.D., is a perfect fit for that mission.

Bill had noticed the lack of focus on women in health care for years, beginning in his time at Medtronic. Traditionally, clinical care, research and drug trials were based on the needs of men. From Bill’s perspective, there needed to be more emphasis on the health of women.

“There are women’s breast centers, or obstetrics and gynecology centers, but they’re very specialized,” Bill says. “Penny and I didn’t see anyone looking comprehensively at what women need, and we felt like this was an idea whose time had come.”

**Focus on the Whole Person**

Earlier this year, Penny and Bill and the George Family Foundation committed a combined gift of $5 million to establish the Mayo Clinic Center for Women’s Health. In honor of the gift, Mayo Clinic recognizes Penny and Bill and the George Family Foundation as Principal Benefactors. The center, led by Dr. Faubion, will apply the collaborative care Mayo Clinic is known for to address the comprehensive health care needs of women.

“To provide truly effective health care for women, we need to understand who they are and what they are juggling at home and in their lives,” Dr. Faubion says. “We can provide

“Penny and I look for leaders who are really making a difference in the world, and we believe Dr. Faubion is one of those people.”

Bill George
medically appropriate care, but if we don’t understand a woman’s circumstances and tailor recommendations to her specifically, she may not be able to carry out the plan of care.”

When fully established, the Center for Women’s Health will focus on empowering women with resources that help them prioritize their care and provide them with the options and solutions they need to improve their well-being based on their health needs, genetic traits, lifestyle and personal preferences. Patients will be provided with information and education on health and wellness and will be able to take advantage of services in all areas of women’s health to help them stay healthy or to treat their existing conditions.

The multidisciplinary center will serve as a model for other departments at Mayo Clinic and will work with them to incorporate integrative health and lifestyle services into patient care. The center will also collaborate with the Mayo Clinic Women’s Health Research Center and Mayo Clinic Alix School of Medicine to further research and the education of future health care leaders on how sex and gender influence health and disease.

By establishing trusting relationships between women and their providers, the hope is that women feel heard and valued as partners in their care. Dr. Faubion, recognized as the Penny and Bill George Director for the Mayo Clinic Center for Women’s Health, has found through years of direct patient care and research that this has been a long-standing need.

“When we asked women about their health care, we heard — loud and clear — that women weren’t happy with their care,” Dr. Faubion says. “They didn’t feel heard and sometimes felt their concerns were being dismissed. They also didn’t feel that their multiple roles, as mothers, daughters and caregivers, were being considered in their care.”

**Leading the Way**

Bill’s conversations during appointments with Dr. Faubion led him to learn about her passion for women’s health and, in turn, her strong leadership at Mayo Clinic.

“We like to get behind leaders who make a difference,” says Bill. “Penny and I look for leaders who are really making a difference in the world, and we believe Dr. Faubion is one of those people.”

Bill and Penny are optimistic about the launch of the center after working over the last 20 years to promote women’s health and integrative medicine around the country. They see Mayo Clinic’s investment as a way to accelerate the growing movement.

“For an institution of Mayo’s scope and credibility to say this is important makes it possible for others to get on board,” says Penny. “Bill and I are grateful to be able to help launch such an important center. What could bring us more joy at this point in our lives than knowing the lives of so many women will be touched in this wonderfully holistic way?”
Resounding Joy

Mayo Clinic’s values are imbued throughout its dedicated staff and benefactors as well as the people the organization serves. The net result of these meaningful relationships? Joy. Inspiration is everywhere.

“I volunteer because of the inspiration I feel from the children and adolescents I get to meet. Through my years volunteering, I have found children to be incredibly brave and resilient during typically very difficult times, which inspires me to do the same.”

Jackie Butler
Volunteer
“Focusing on others brings us joy. When we refer someone to Mayo Clinic, we feel like we’ve played a part in their healing. Then Mayo takes over and makes it all better.”

Carla Paonessa
Principal Benefactor
Member of
The Mayo Legacy
“The whole idea of helping others — I’m impressed by that concept. Every time I’ve been able to help somebody, it brightens my day. It’s a driving force for me in my volunteer work.”

Frank Klauda
Volunteer
“Our most recent joy comes from our team receiving a National Institutes of Health research grant that will facilitate our multicenter clinical translational research on a very high level. We are extremely proud of it.”

Eva Morava-Kozicz, M.D., Ph.D.
(with husband, Tamas Kozicz, M.D.)
Clinical Biochemical Geneticist

“Even though I can’t save lives as a firefighter anymore, I’m saving lives by educating and recruiting organ donors through Donate Life Arizona. This brings me joy!”

Cesar Alvarez
Mayo Clinic Patient
Liver Transplant Recipient
Mayo Clinic benefactors James Reibel, M.D., and Barbara Reibel are not the type to slow down. They travel the world and have been actively engaged in a panoply of civic and community organizations.

Even in retirement, Dr. and Mrs. Reibel—or Jay and Barbara as their friends at Mayo Clinic have come to know them—are always on the go.

Chronic pain in both knees threatened Jay’s ability to continue his active lifestyle, and over time, it became almost debilitating. Jay had trouble climbing stairs, or even sitting for long periods. He couldn’t make it through an opera—a favorite activity—without rubbing his knees in pain. It was a constant distraction and a serious challenge.

Doctors in New York City, close to the Reibels’ home in Greenwich, Connecticut, were unable to find an answer or provide relief. Jay knew where he needed to go: Mayo Clinic.

Transformative Relief
The Reibels have a 25-year patient history with Mayo Clinic that began with Robert L. Frye, M.D., a cardiologist who led the Division of Cardiovascular Diseases (1974–1984) and the Department of Medicine (1987–1999). Their Mayo experiences have been overwhelmingly positive—so much so that they look forward to their visits, even in challenging circumstances.

“We love Mayo Clinic because from the very beginning of our experience it’s been so welcoming,” Barbara says. “We actually look forward to our visits. People usually don’t look forward to going to hospitals or clinics.”

Jay had heard about regenerative medicine techniques, including the use of a patient’s own stem cells, to restore knee function and alleviate pain. Shane A. Shapiro, M.D., medical director of the Regenerative Medicine Therapeutics Suites at Mayo Clinic’s campus in Florida, was the first researcher in the emerging field to lead a study on the safety and efficacy of the technique. Jay inquired about the procedure and was referred for treatment.

Jay’s results were almost beyond belief.

“It was—and I don’t misuse the word or use it hyperbolically—transformative,” Jay says. “It was magical. Within a week, I had significant pain relief. And it continues now.”
The effect of the procedure was immediately apparent to Jay’s family and close friends.

“It would be really difficult watching him while he was in pain,” Jay’s daughter, Kate, says. “Now he’s able to do the things he loves to do again.”

**Unique Perspectives**
The incredible outcome for Jay was one among many positive experiences he and Barbara have had at Mayo Clinic.

As a result of their numerous outstanding interactions with Mayo, the couple decided to express their gratitude by becoming benefactors. Supporting Mayo Clinic’s Center for Regenerative Medicine was a natural fit for their philanthropic interests.

Before the Reibels committed to their philanthropic gift, they wanted to learn more. Jay has a unique perspective based on his personal experience in medicine and business.

Trained as a psychiatrist, Jay, early in his medical career, held several prominent positions on national and medical governing and advisory bodies, including the board of directors of Blue Cross-Blue Shield of Greater New York, the New York County Medical Society and the American Psychiatric Association, as well as a presidential appointment to the advisory body for Medicare and Medicaid. Jay applied his talent and experience to establish a system of high-quality private psychiatric hospitals, and he founded a publicly traded company that was the first managed care organization. His company grew to serve millions of people across the country.

Barbara also brought her unique perspective to studying the opportunity. During her career, she worked as a public health advisor for the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

At Jay’s request, the Reibels spent two days at Mayo Clinic’s Florida campus studying the Center for Regenerative Medicine from a clinical, organizational and business standpoint. They met with leaders including Gianrico Farrugia, M.D., Mayo Clinic president and CEO, who was CEO of the Florida campus at the time, and Andre Terzic, M.D., Ph.D., the Michael S. and Mary Sue Shannon Family Director for the Center for Regenerative Medicine.

They spent time with researchers, visited laboratories, and learned about the science behind new and emerging techniques that harness the body’s natural ability to heal. It was an introduction to what Mayo Clinic calls translational medicine — developments in the laboratory that are quickly translated to patient care improvements.

**Something ‘Magical’**
“We were beyond impressed,” Jay says. “The research that we saw being done was explained to us in a clear manner that we could understand. The teams of researchers with whom we met all evidenced their commitment to the ethos of Mayo Clinic and its profound commitment to excellence.”

Perhaps most important of all, the Reibels saw the immense impact regenerative medicine

“It was magical. Within a week, I had significant pain relief. And it continues now.”

*James Reibel, M.D.*
will have in the future, spanning medical specialties to improve the lives of patients, as well as reducing the economic burden that many patients, and our society, face today.

“I appreciate the importance of what is happening in regenerative medicine, not only to the lives of people but to the cost savings to the economy of the country,” Jay says. “The focus on getting the discoveries from the laboratory to application to the patient is wonderful. I’m an example of that.”

Mayo Clinic honors the Reibel family by recognizing them as Principal Benefactors. Through their experience in becoming Mayo Clinic benefactors, the Reibels have forged new relationships and personal friendships with leaders and researchers they have met.

“We value the personal relationships that we’ve developed. They’re stimulating, meaningful and very enjoyable,” Jay says.

These relationships add an invaluable dimension to the Reibels’ experiences at Mayo Clinic, and they are a reflection of Mayo’s commitment to values such as integrity, compassion and healing. It is apparent in every interaction, and it is what sets Mayo Clinic apart.

“There’s something magical about Mayo Clinic,” Barbara says. “It’s the staff, whether it be the top physicians, the nurses and physical therapists, or the clerks at the desk. Everyone we’ve encountered in all of our experiences has been so sweet and lovely and helpful. We can’t tell people enough how different Mayo Clinic is from any other medical institution with which we are familiar.”

Barbara and James Reibel, M.D., with daughter, Kate, at the family’s garden in Connecticut.
A Full Breath of Fresh Air

Chuck Boetsch inhaled, drawing his breath in deeply for the first time in a long time.

“My wife and two of my daughters were in my hospital room,” Chuck says. “I took a deep breath, and I was overwhelmed.”

Chuck, now 73, of Palm Harbor, Florida, will always remember the act — so often taken for granted — when he awoke on Dec. 1, 2017, two days after lung transplant surgery at Mayo Clinic’s Florida campus.

A Winding Road
That first breath was an end to a journey that began in 2013, when Chuck was living in Chicago and working as the CEO of a logistics company.

“I was having shortness of breath,” Chuck says. “I initially thought it was just age-related, and I needed to exercise more. But as much as I worked out, my endurance and breathing didn’t improve.”

After multiple visits to several doctors, he was diagnosed with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis. IPF is the leading cause of lung transplantation. The disease has no known cause or cure, and its progression is unpredictable. People typically live between three and five years after diagnosis, according to the American Lung Association, but some can live much longer.
Chuck knew he would eventually need a transplant. But he also knew he wasn’t guaranteed to receive one. And his path to transplantation was anything but direct. First, he participated in clinical trials for new treatments for IPF, but they didn’t slow the progression of his condition. Then, after his daughter moved to Jacksonville, Florida, he began receiving care at Mayo Clinic. Still, he wasn’t immediately approved for a transplant.

“It’s a delicate balance because donated lungs are such precious resources, and they have a limited life span,” says David B. Erasmus, M.B., Ch.B., M.D., medical director of the Lung Transplant Program at Mayo Clinic’s campus in Florida. “You don’t want to transplant people too soon, but at the same time, you don’t want to transplant them when they’re too sick and unlikely to survive.”

**A Precarious Pendulum**

By the spring of 2017, Chuck’s health began to swing precariously along that pendulum. His lung function had dropped about 10%, and he was using supplemental oxygen when he slept. He started Mayo Clinic’s evaluation process for a lung transplant, but then another hurdle emerged.

“I had a 90% blockage in my carotid artery,” Chuck says. “It caught me totally by surprise, and I had to do something about it, quickly, to reduce my risk of having a stroke.”

The discovery also made him ineligible for a transplant.

Chuck had the surgery at Mayo Clinic to remove the blockage. It took him about four weeks to recover, and in a way, the hurdle may have worked to his benefit.

**A New Teammate**

While he recovered, Mayo Clinic added a new surgeon, Si M. Pham, M.D., to lead the Lung Transplant Program in Florida.

Dr. Pham came to Mayo Clinic from the University of Maryland, where he established a reputation for his success performing lung and heart transplant surgeries in complicated situations such as Chuck’s. Dr. Pham, Dr. Erasmus and the rest of the transplant team reevaluated Chuck in September 2017 and approved him for a lung transplant.

Chuck’s condition was worsening. He was tethered to an oxygen tank for most of the day. He was also called twice to Mayo Clinic for a transplant procedure. But after further testing, the lungs for those procedures were determined to be nonviable. He received his third call on Nov. 28, and two days later he awoke with a new right lung and a feeling he still has trouble describing.

“Looking back, I was prepared physically, but I was unprepared for the emotional aspects of the whole experience,” Chuck says. “Only about 2,500 people each year receive lung transplants, and the need is far greater. I just feel tremendously blessed.”
“I feel like I will have many more years of quality life, well beyond the five-year median for lung transplantation.”

Chuck Boetsch

Future Focus
The hurdles Chuck faced are far too common for patients and medical teams looking to save lives through lung transplantation, say his physicians. And most of those challenges, they say, emanate from a central problem — the scarcity of donated lungs that are viable for transplantation.

But Chuck’s story also includes a potential solution. He received his lung through a clinical trial at Mayo Clinic that is testing a new system in the United States using ex vivo lung perfusion (EVLP). EVLP is a technology used to gather more information on lungs that would not otherwise be used for transplantation. The lungs are recovered using the standard transplantation protocol but then sent to a centralized facility where they are perfused and ventilated, similar to the way they would work inside the human body. Data from this additional testing helps the transplant center reassess the lungs and their viability for transplantation.

“My doctors asked me how I felt about receiving a lung through that system, and to be honest, I preferred it,” Chuck says. “The lungs are pressure tested, load tested, flushed and thoroughly evaluated. I felt they had a better chance of performing well versus lungs that don’t go through that process.”

The technology driving the clinical trial is from Lung Bioengineering, a company based in Silver Spring, Maryland. Specialists there and Mayo Clinic physicians believe it has the potential to significantly increase the supply of lungs that are viable for transplantation.

“About 25% of donated lungs meet the criteria for transplantation, but with this system, we think we may be able to increase that to about 50%,” says Brandi Zofkie, an EVLP specialist at Lung Bioengineering. “In addition, we’re extending the window for transplantation much longer — from about six hours from the moment a lung is donated to a maximum of 22 hours.”

The company and Mayo Clinic believe so strongly in the technology’s potential that they collaborated and built a lung bioengineering center on Mayo Clinic’s Florida campus.

The new facility in Florida will provide EVLP services to multiple transplant centers. Eventually, it could process about 900 lungs a year. As the practice grows, additional lung bioengineering centers will be built across the country to further reduce shortages.

One Day at a Time
Since his transplant, Chuck is playing golf, spending time with family, traveling and living life with few limitations. He’s also trying to give back. He has met the family of his lung donor and communicates with them regularly to share his gratitude for the gift of life he has received. He also volunteers for organizations that promote organ donation and shares his experience with people who are awaiting transplantation.

Chuck also knows that he may need another transplant. He still has IPF in his left lung, and transplanted lungs don’t last forever. But he has hope.

“I feel like I will have many more years of quality life,” Chuck says. “By then I am confident my doctors will have other options for me and people everywhere who are in my shoes.”
There’s Something Special About Neighbors

Stephen and Barbara Slaggie are pillars of their communities in Minnesota and in Florida. Over a decadeslong relationship with Mayo Clinic, they’ve found a community with the organization too.
Stephen Slaggie was running a routine errand — dropping off his lawn mower for repairs. The shop owner, an old acquaintance, told Stephen that he had recently been to Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, for cancer care.

While there, the man had been referred to the Mayo Clinic Stephen and Barbara Slaggie Family Cancer Education Center, a resource for patients to learn about cancer and share their experiences.

“He said to me, ‘That’s really something. It’s such a benefit, and I can’t believe you did that,’” Steve says.

For the Slaggie family, including Steve and his wife, Barb, this kind of reaction is what their philanthropy is really about: the simple thanks of a neighbor who has benefited from a gift the Slaggies say they are blessed to be able to give.

Mayo Clinic has been a part of the Slaggies’ lives for many years. Both Steve and Barb have a history of care at Mayo, and their children and grandchildren are patients too.

**Blessed to Provide**
The couple, who now reside in Marco Island, Florida, have supported many Mayo Clinic initiatives, including the Center for Regenerative Medicine, the Center for Connected Care and, most recently, the Mayo Clinic Health System Stephen and Barbara Slaggie Family Cancer and Blood Disorders Center in La Crosse, Wisconsin. Mayo Clinic recognizes the Slaggie family as Philanthropic Partners.

In addition to their long relationship with Mayo Clinic, the Slaggies are philanthropic leaders in other areas of their communities in Marco Island and Winona, Minnesota. They support education, arts and humanitarian causes. Their four children are following in their footsteps by finding their own interests to support with their time, talent and resources as members of the Slaggie Family Foundation Board.

**Value of Giving**
Both Steve and Barb come from modest backgrounds. Barb grew up on a farm with 13 siblings and parents who, despite the challenges of providing for their family, were attentive to the needs of their community. While the family didn’t have much, they were always ready to help when a neighbor needed it.

“They taught me to look out for the other person,” Barb says. “I think it’s our responsibility to educate our four kids and our grandchildren to do the same — and not only with financial support, but with your heart.”

Steve holds the same values of compassion and selflessness. He was educated in a Catholic school system under the Sisters of Saint Francis, the same order that teamed with Dr. William Worrall Mayo to create Saint Marys Hospital in Rochester, Minnesota, in 1889.

Later in his life, Steve enrolled in the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps and later deployed with the U.S. Army to Korea, about six years after the major conflict.

“It was such an eye-opener, such a growing up and broadening of my horizon,” Steve says.

For a young man from a small town, military service introduced Steve to an incredible range of people and cultures. It also placed him face to face with the realities of poverty and need. When he looks back now, Steve is glad for the experience and its effect on him personally.
“That was really one of the best decisions I ever made — maybe second to marrying Barbara,” he says with a wry smile.

The Seeds of Success
After his military service, Steve joined his father at the family’s insurance, real estate and investment business in Winona. In 1967, he responded to a request from his close friend and former classmate at Cotter High School to invest in a startup company selling nuts and bolts. Steve invested, more for the close bond he had with his friend than the idea that they could be successful selling nuts and bolts.

That company, Fastenal, grew into a national business sensation, praised for its ingenuity, efficiency and sound business ethics. Today, Steve sees a parallel between Fastenal’s core belief, “growth through customer service,” and Mayo Clinic’s primary value, “The needs of the patient come first.”

The success of Fastenal has given Steve and Barb the means to be philanthropic leaders. They’ve dedicated themselves to being active, involved and generous members of their communities, supporting organizations such as Mayo Clinic where they find an alignment of values and purpose.

The most meaningful part of giving back has never wavered: The Slaggies want to see the impact their gifts have on the people around them. Their philanthropy has always been about the personal interactions that give them a sense of fulfillment and belonging.

In the Mayo Clinic Stephen and Barbara Slaggie Family Cancer Education Center, there is a notebook for patients to sign and share their experiences. The Slaggies received a copy of one of these notebooks, filled with notes of gratitude and hope, and it has been a powerful reminder of their role in patients’ lives.

Sometimes, it’s as simple as a conversation over lawn mower repair.

“For our family who have been so fortunate, to have lived the American dream and all its benefits, we have an obligation to support and to share our resources to where it is most needed,” Steve says. “And when we’re able to help, it’s a pleasure on our end.”
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Mayo Clinic trustee Cokie Roberts, a pioneering female journalist with a passion for history, passed away at age 75 in September.

Cokie, who joined the Board of Trustees in 2016, had a deep admiration for the Sisters of Saint Francis.

During her keynote speech at the joint commencement of Mayo Clinic Alix School of Medicine and Mayo Clinic Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences in 2018, she said, “Oh yes, I know all about the marvelous Mayo brothers and their remarkable father … but if it hadn’t been for a pushy nun who wouldn’t take ‘No’ for an answer, Saint Marys Hospital would never have been built, and what became known as Mayo Clinic might not have ever existed.”

From 1996 to 2002, Cokie and Sam Donaldson co-anchored the weekly ABC interview program “This Week.” In her more than 40 years in broadcasting, she won countless awards, including three Emmys. Cokie was inducted into the Broadcasting and Cable Hall of Fame and was cited by American Women in Radio and Television as one of the 50 greatest women in the history of broadcasting.

Cokie held more than 30 honorary degrees, including one from Mayo Clinic. She is survived by her husband of 53 years, Steven, as well as two children and six grandchildren.
Mayo Clinic Magazine launched a new online website this year to complement the print magazine. Read more and share favorites at mayomagazine.mayoclinic.org