

2019
DIGESTIVE
HEALTH
FOUNDATION

Gala

TRANSFORMING DIGESTIVE DISEASE INTO DIGESTIVE HEALTH

JUNE 8, 2019 • 6:00PM



Celebrating the Power of Family



Karen Malkin Health Counseling
& The Malkin Family

are proud to support

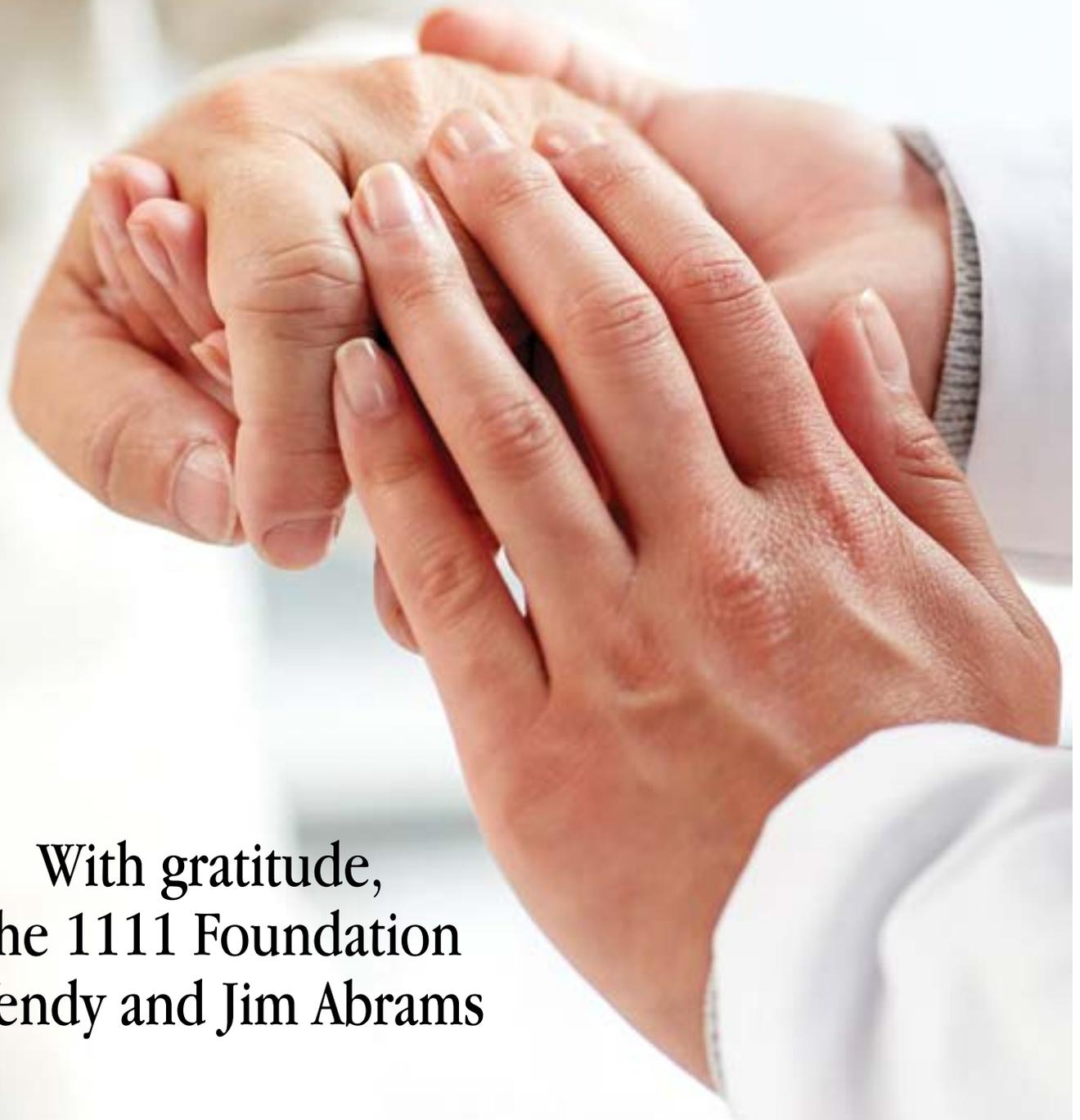
The Digestive Health Foundation

*and the tireless efforts
and leadership of*

Becky and Michael Elrad



**Thank you Dr. Stephen Hanauer
for your leadership and friendship.**



**With gratitude,
The 1111 Foundation
Wendy and Jim Abrams**

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear Friends,

On behalf of the Digestive Health Foundation (DHF) Board of Directors, it's my pleasure to extend a warm welcome to our fourth annual gala, which raises critical funds to accelerate the delivery of medical discoveries at the Northwestern Medicine Digestive Health Center. We extend a special thank you to Becky and Michael Elrad for chairing this year's gala.

In just four years, because of our close-knit and passionate community, DHF has raised more than \$9.5 million in support of the Digestive Health Center. Through our DHF Grant Awards Program, we are funding more than 40 diverse projects, including: the DHF BioRepository, a unique resource providing blood and tissue samples from patients diagnosed with digestive disorders; two endowments for digestive disease and gastrointestinal surgery research; and advanced specialized inflammatory bowel disease and esophageal fellowships.

I am pleased that, this year, we come together to celebrate The Power of Family. Family is a foundational pillar in my life. Every day, I strive to be there to support my family in every way possible. I can't overstate how important it is that we can lean on each other for all issues that affect our lives, including my Crohn's disease. There are many potentially embarrassing moments associated with being a Crohn's patient. Knowing that my family will accept those issues without judging me – so that the issues remain merely symptoms to be dealt with and not devastatingly embarrassing moments – provides comfort, a place that I can just be me, disease and all.

No one is perfect, and those of us who suffer from chronic diseases are reminded daily of our imperfections. I don't believe in allowing Crohn's disease to define me, and I try not to let it control many of my daily activities, but there are days that the disease is stronger than I am...days that I lean on family to provide the extra strength needed to get through the day. My late father, who understood my struggle, used to say, "Some days are tougher than others. You need to rest and heal to give your body a chance to overcome them, because tomorrow will be a better day." Only family lives that reality with me and helps me to enjoy better tomorrows.

So today, to both my biological and digestive health families, I extend my heartfelt thanks for being an instrumental part of my journey to health. Here, together this evening, we have the power to unite like never before in support of our mission to ensure that individuals who find themselves on this same health journey will be able to look forward to tomorrow and a better day.

I thank you all for your support of the Digestive Health Foundation and I wish you an exciting and memorable evening.



Lee Gould, President

Tonight's Program

WELCOME

Bonnie Hunt, Actress and Comedian

REMARKS

Dr. Stephen B. Hanauer, Chief Medical Advisor, DHF Science Advisory Council

REMARKS

Becky and Michael Elrad, Gala Co-Chairs

REMARKS

Mike McCready, Lead Guitarist for Pearl Jam

DINNER

LIVE AUCTION

MUSIC & DANCING

**ENTERTAINMENT THROUGHOUT THE EVENING
PROVIDED BY TVK ORCHESTRA**

OUR GALA CHAIRS BECKY AND MICHAEL ELRAD

Dear Family and Friends,

Thank you for joining us tonight at the 4th annual Digestive Health Foundation Gala. Tonight we Celebrate the Power of Family.

Over 40 years ago, my sister Amy was diagnosed with a severe case of Crohn's disease, an illness she still courageously battles today. Throughout this time, my parents, Debbie and Marty Elrad, have not only dedicated themselves to providing care for my sister, but have also made an unwavering commitment to support and raise resources for others afflicted with digestive diseases.

In deep appreciation of their leadership and dedication toward helping so many others with digestive diseases, we are honoring them tonight by establishing the Deborah and Martin Elrad Research Fund for Hereditary Digestive Diseases. The Elrad Research Fund will provide resources for specific research priorities of the DHF.

We are so proud of the exceptional patient care provided by the world-class physicians at the Northwestern Medicine Digestive Health Center and the cutting-edge, innovative medical research performed by the DHF grant recipients. As the DHF completes its 4th year, it has funded 40 crucial, front-line research projects. It is not only our hope, but also our belief, that these studies will transform digestive disease into digestive health for so many people suffering from a variety of digestive disorders.

We are humbled and honored by your generosity and for the extraordinary support you have shown to us, our family and the DHF. We have learned that facing major challenges requires a vast network of love, compassion, determination and bravery. We are so grateful you are here with us tonight as we Celebrate the Power of Family together.

Warmly,

Becky and Michael Elrad

Event Chairs

OUR HONOREES DEBORAH AND MARTIN ELRAD



Becky and Michael Elrad with their sons Jack, Max and Sam. Becky and Michael began raising resources for patients suffering from digestive disease 25 years ago. They both joined the DHF at its inception four years ago. After living in Glencoe for 23 years, they now reside in Chicago.



Debbie and Marty Elrad with their daughter Amy, grandsons Grant, Jack, Max and Sam and Linda and Steve Margolin (Becky's parents). Debbie and Marty formed the Northeastern Ohio Chapter of the CCFA out of their Cleveland home in the late 1970s. They now reside in Boca Raton, Florida where they continue to be active in raising needed support for digestive disorders. Amy and Grant live in Highland Park.

OUR EMCEE BONNIE HUNT



Hunt is a versatile and accomplished writer, director, producer and an Emmy, Golden Globe and SAG Award-nominated actress, earning critical acclaim in film, television and theater.

Growing up in one of Chicago's blue-collar neighborhoods, Hunt started her writing, acting, and directing career shortly after having graduated Nursing School. Working days as an Oncology nurse at Northwestern's Lurie Hospital, she performed 8 shows a week at night on the famous Second City Theater's main stage.

Hunt has built an impressive film resume, co-starring with Tom Hanks, Tom Cruise, Harrison Ford, Robin Williams and Steve Martin. Bonnie has received rave reviews for her roles in: Jerry Maguire, The Green Mile, Cheaper by the Dozen 1 & II, Only You, Beethoven 1 & II, Rain Man, Dave, Random Hearts, Kissing a Fool, Now and Then, and Jumanji to name a few.

Bonnie wrote and directed the beloved MGM feature film Return to Me.

Bonnie's independent film work includes Stolen Summer, Loggerheads, Hurricane Season, and I Want Someone To Eat Cheese With.

Hunt's many television accomplishments are considerable and innovative. Bonnie's first job as a series regular on NBC's sitcom "Grand" led to her starring on ABC's "Davis Rules."

Hunt looked to broaden her knowledge of the creative aspects of television and its production process and made television history with "THE BUILDING" on CBS, making her the first person to single handedly create, write, produce and star in a prime time television series.

Hunt campaigned to incorporate improvisation and overlapping dialogue into prime time. Bonnie's ambitious vision soon became a popular trend. But she didn't stop there. Hunt went on to innovate. Creating, writing, producing, directing and starring in "Life with Bonnie" for ABC, earning Emmy and Golden Globe nominations. Her scripts attracted many wonderful guest stars over the years, including Tom Hanks, George Clooney, David Letterman, and Robin Williams,

As a director, Hunt sought to give sitcoms a more "authentic feel," so she directed her shows using between two to five cameras, yet giving it a single camera look, thus making the process more efficient. Hunt elected not to use the then-standard canned laugh track and created screening nights of completed episodes for live audiences, to record authentic reactions. Today, Hunt's techniques are now standard in multi-camera and single camera shows.

Bonnie added Talk Show host to her resume, with the nationally syndicated daytime talk show The Bonnie Hunt Show, receiving Emmy® nominations for Best Talk Show Host and an

Emmy nomination for Outstanding Writing and was awarded the highly respected GRACIE Award for "Best Daytime Talk Show".

Her long association with Disney/Pixar has included roles in the animated features: A Bug's Life, Monsters Inc. CARS, Toy Story 3 and Zootopia. Hunt voices the beloved singing "Aunt Tilly" on Disney's Sofia the First.

Bonnie can currently be seen in the Golden Globe nominated SHOWTIME drama series, ESCAPE AT DANNEMORA and is now recording for PIXAR'S Toy Story 4.

Ms. Hunt was honored with the SPIRIT OF HOPE award for her work with The Multiple Myeloma Research Foundation. Most recently the scientists of the ICRF celebrated Bonnie by honoring her for "so generously sharing her intelligence, talents, efforts and energy in the fight against cancer." Hunt continues to apply her nursing background in dedicating herself to patients, volunteering as a patient advocate, also raising funds for medical research and other causes near and dear to her heart: Northwestern Brain Tumor Institute, ICRF, American Veterans, Arthritis Foundation, The Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center, City of Hope, and The Casa Colina Hospital & Centers for Healthcare.

In appreciation of Bonnie's efforts on behalf of veterans and traumatic brain injury patients, a plaque at the entrance of Casa Colina's rehab center dedicated in Bonnie's honor reads:

"BONNIE HUNT - Movie Star, Director, Producer, Writer, Television Celebrity, Comedienne, Entrepreneur and Media Innovator... but always a Nurse."

SPECIAL GUEST MIKE MCCREADY

Mike McCready is the lead guitarist for and one of the founding members of Rock & Roll Hall of Fame inducted Pearl Jam. McCready has also been a member of Temple of the Dog, Mad Season, The Rockfords and Levee Walkers. Additionally, McCready plays with friends in Flight to Mars, a UFO tribute band that hosts charity events for the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation's Camp Oasis program and the Jennifer Jaff Care Line.

When not performing live, McCready scores TV and film projects, which have included The Searcher (Elvis Presley Documentary), The Glamour & the Squalor, Shameless, Fat Kid Rules the World, Hawaii Five-O, We Bought A Zoo, Horrible Bosses & Fringe. In 2013, McCready founded HockeyTalkter Records, a small vinyl record label and media outlet specializing in limited edition 7-inch singles with releases from Brandi Carlile, Thunderpussy, Star Anna, Danny Newcomb, Stereo Embers, and several film score releases.

In 2018 Mike started collaborating with artist Kate Neckel and co-founded Infinite Color & Sound, an interactive art and music project.



Tonight's Menu

HORS D'OEUVRES

Tuna Tartare, Asian Vegetables on Cucumber
Vegetable Spring Roll, Hawaiian Cashew Hoisin Sauce
Shrimp Cocktail Shooter
Baby Lamb Chops, Mint Sauce

BREAD BASKET

Mini Baguettes, Pretzel Rolls, Flatbread Crisps

SALAD

Sun-Dried Tomato Hummus, Field Greens
Heirloom Tomatoes, Cucumbers
Goat Cheese Crostini
Balsamic Pearls, Balsamic Vinaigrette

COMBINATION ENTRÉE

Roasted Filet Of Beef, Cabernet Sauce
Roasted Sea Bass, Mango Relish
Forbidden Rice
Rapini, Grilled Baby Peppers

VEGETARIAN ENTRÉE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

DESSERT BUFFET

Miniature Milkshakes – Strawberry, Chocolate, Vanilla
Key Lime Tarts
Honey-Lavender Macarons
White Chocolate-Mint Macarons
Passion Fruit Macarons
Brownie Bites
Fruit Tarts
Chocolate Dipped Strawberries
Chocolate Chip Cookies
Sea Salt Cookies

WINES

Elena Walch Chardonnay Alto Adige 2017
Browne Family Vineyards Heritage Cabernet Sauvignon Columbia Valley 2017

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Karen Malkin Health Counseling**

Becky and Michael Elrad

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D

Mom and Dad:
We are so proud of you
for throwing such an
amazing event for an
incredible cause

HI

Nanny and Poppa:
Congratulations on being
tonight's honorees and for your
passion to help the
Digestive Health Foundation

F

We love you!
Max, Sam and Jack
Elrad



Congratulations

to

Deborah and Martín Elrad

on their lifetime commitment
to digestive health and

The Digestive Health Foundation

and

Becky and Michael Elrad

on chairing such a successful Gala

*We are so proud of you
and the example you set for our family*

Linda and Steve Margolin

A big thank you to

Our wonderful DHF Gala Committee:

*Sally Garon Lee Gould Jayne Hanauer
Marsha Levin Bonnie Orzoff Nina Schroeder*

*And those who worked passionately
behind the scenes to help us:*

*Sarah Burke Jennifer Edgcomb Gladys Falcon
Abbey Jennings Julie Kaplan Kelsey Loveless
Nicole Riccardini*

*We are so grateful for all you did to
make tonight such a special evening!*

Becky and Michael Elrad



Congratulations to Debbie and Marty

for this well-deserved honor
in recognition of
more than 40 years
of helping those
with digestive health issues

Lynn Elrad



We are proud to support
The Digestive Health Foundation

Our heartfelt appreciation
for your wonderful work
and accomplishments
Deborah and Martin Elrad

Congratulations to the gala chairs
Becky and Michael Elrad

Mary and Norm Geller
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Rachel, Max and Jordan Kaplan
Jamie Geller and Daniel Schwarz

GTI is proud to support the
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CONGRATULATIONS
ON A SUCCESSFUL YEAR AND MAKING
A POSITIVE IMPACT. WE LOOK FORWARD TO CELEBRATING
"THE POWER OF FAMILY"
AT THIS YEAR'S GALA!



Congratulations
to the Elrad family and DHF
on a wonderful event.

Best wishes for
continued success.

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Congratulations to The Elrad Family!

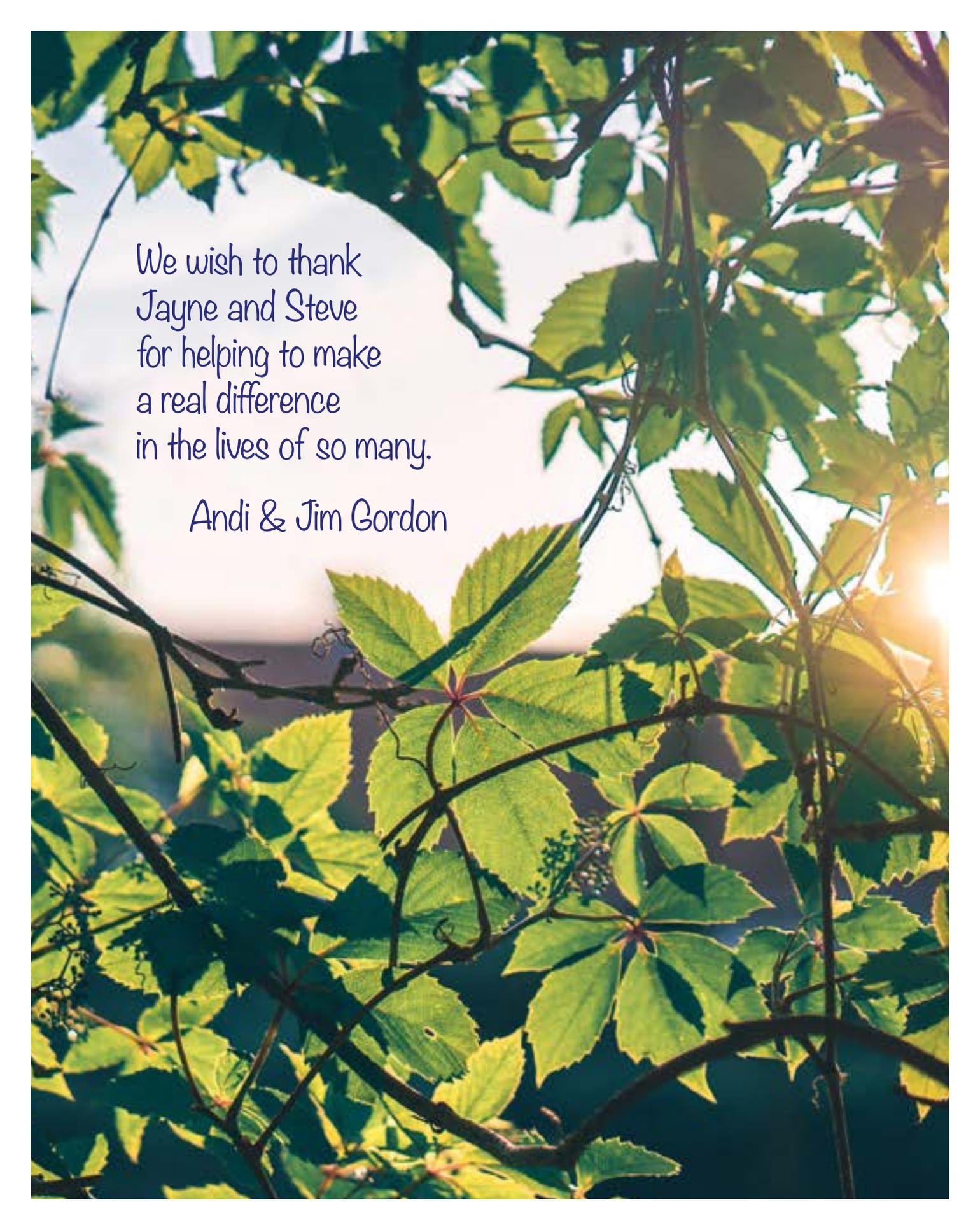
*We salute your dedication to the pursuit
of digestive health for current and
future generations.*



Thank you Dr. Hanauer
and all of the other doctors
and researchers involved in the
Digestive Health Foundation
for all that you do.

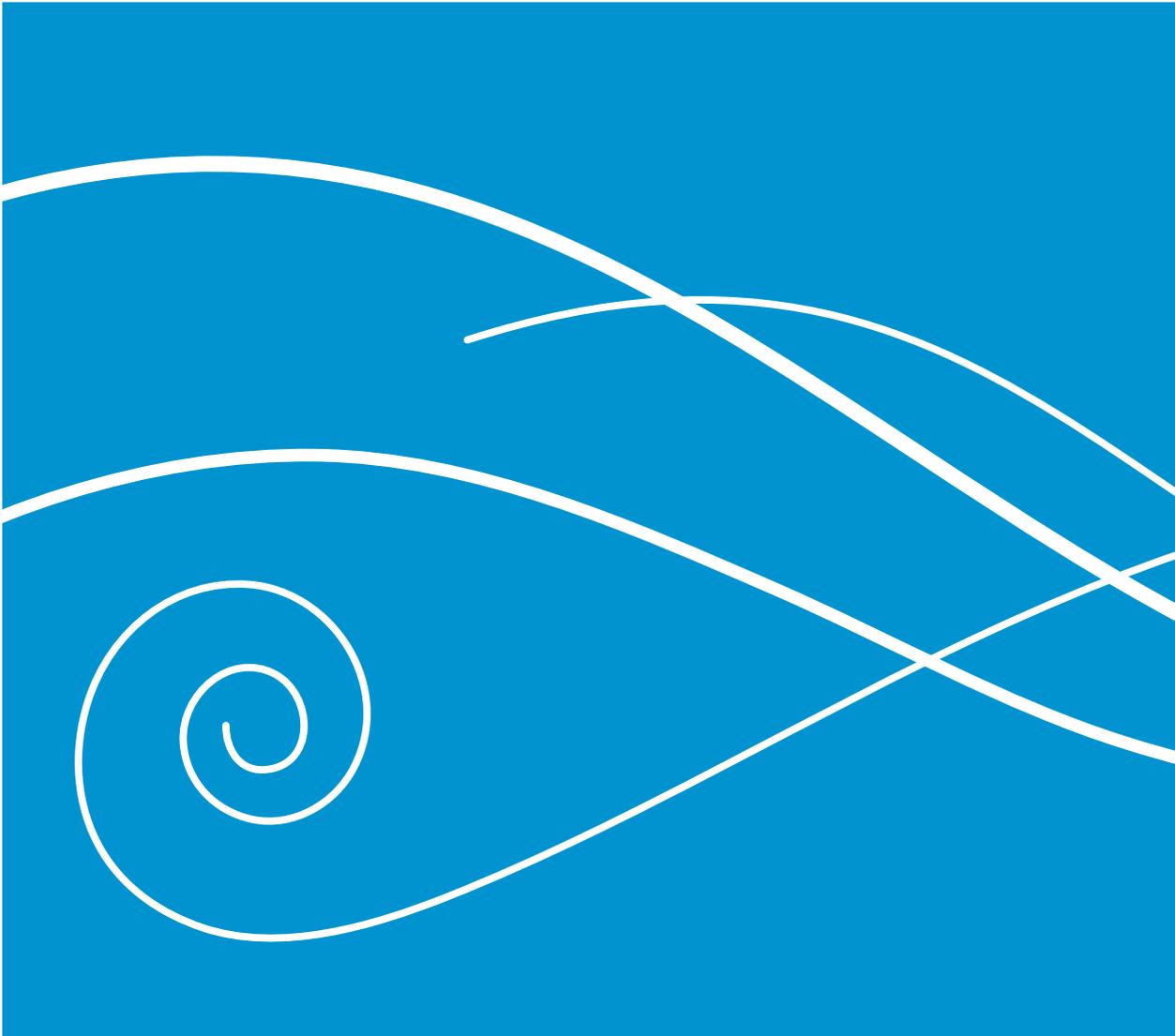
The Duffey Family





We wish to thank
Jayne and Steve
for helping to make
a real difference
in the lives of so many.

Andi & Jim Gordon



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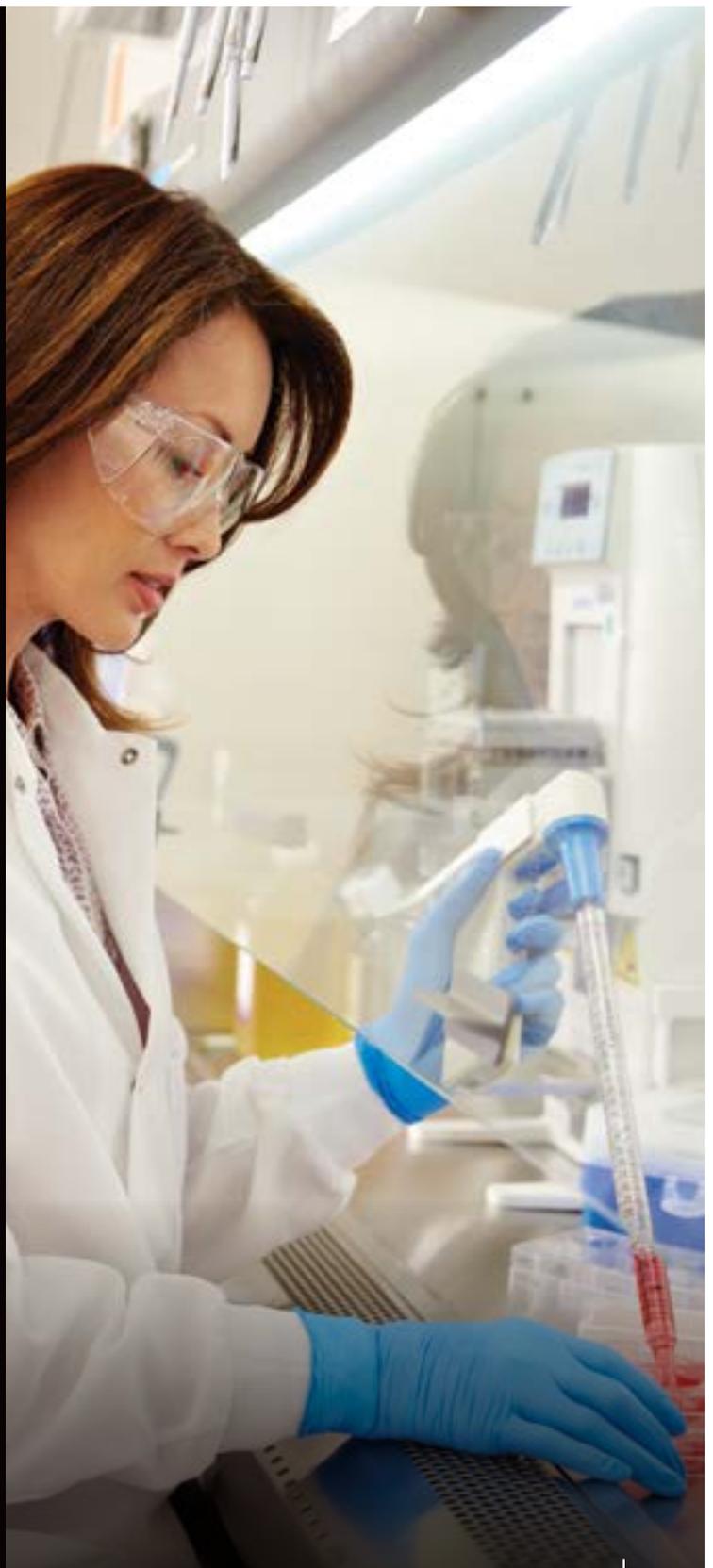
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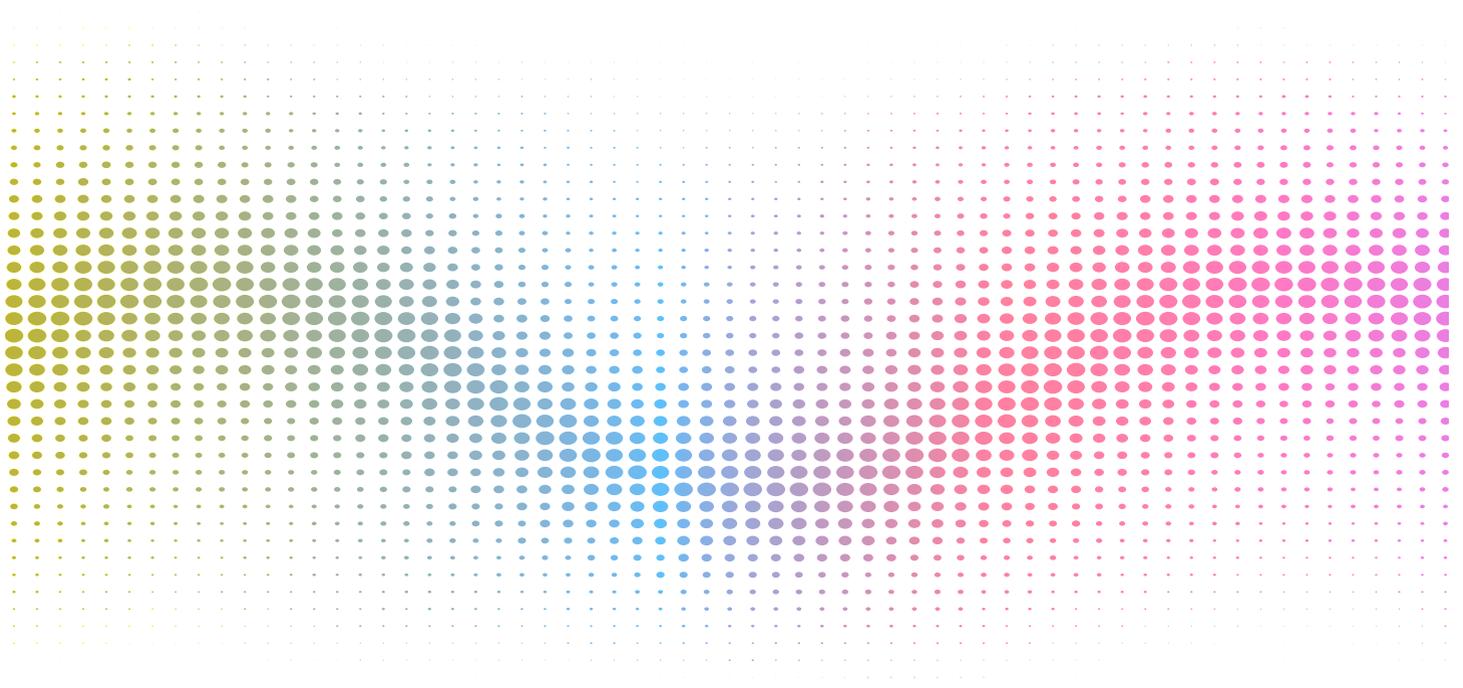
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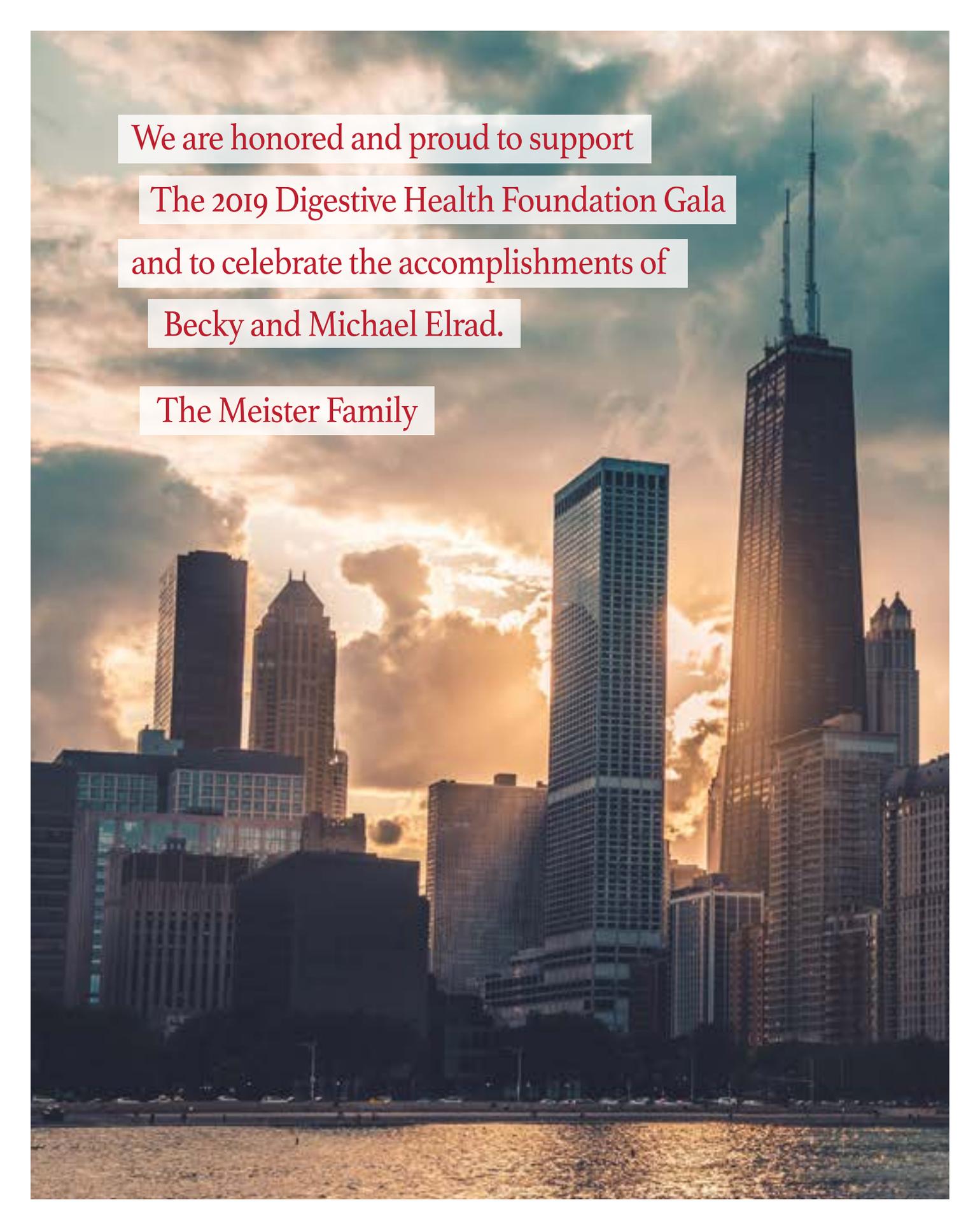
CELEBRATING THE TRANSFORMATIONAL WORK OF THE DIGESTIVE HEALTH CENTER.

PRITZKER PUCKER FAMILY FOUNDATION



PRITZKER PUCKER

FAMILY FOUNDATION

A photograph of the Chicago skyline at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm, golden glow over the city. The sky is filled with dramatic, dark clouds. The water in the foreground is dark, with some reflections of the buildings and the sky. The overall mood is serene and majestic.

We are honored and proud to support

The 2019 Digestive Health Foundation Gala
and to celebrate the accomplishments of

Becky and Michael Elrad.

The Meister Family



JHL is proud to support the Digestive Health Foundation. Their tireless efforts continue to improve the quality of life for people facing all types of digestive health diseases. We also want to give a special thank you to the entire Elrad Family for their years of generosity to the Digestive Health Foundation.

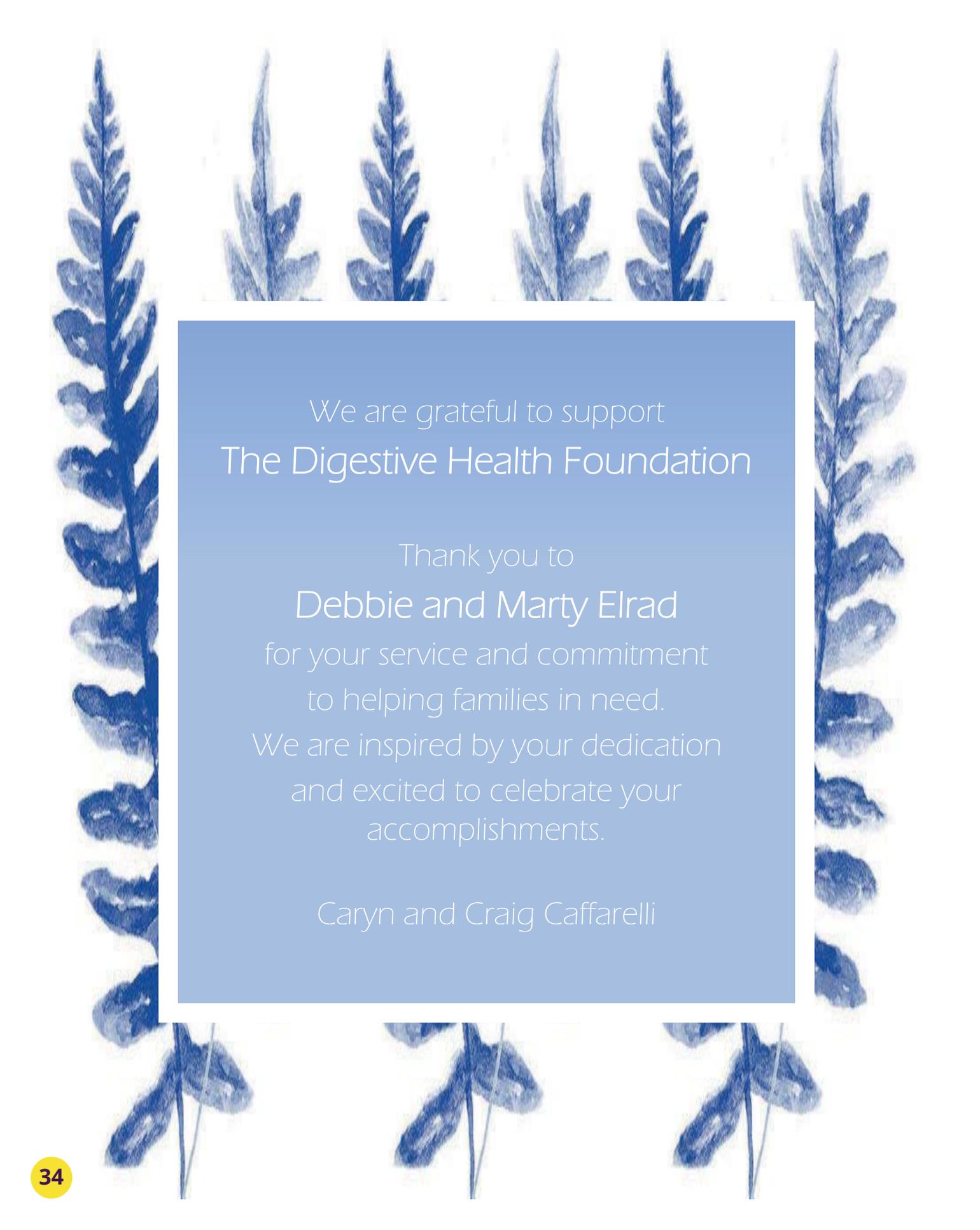
Congratulations

*and a big thank you
to the Elrad family.*

*Who better than you
to demonstrate the Power of Family.*

*Thank you for all you do
and for inspiring each of us
to be the best we can be.*

*With our greatest admiration,
The Gutman Family*



We are grateful to support
The Digestive Health Foundation

Thank you to
Debbie and Marty Elrad
for your service and commitment
to helping families in need.
We are inspired by your dedication
and excited to celebrate your
accomplishments.

Caryn and Craig Caffarelli

We are proud to support the
Digestive Health Foundation

and thank

Deborah and Martin Elrad
for their dedication to improving digestive health
for generations to come.

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**Allergan congratulates
DHF for supporting
cutting-edge research
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A large, multi-story hotel building with a classic architectural style, featuring arched windows, balconies, and a central courtyard with a fountain and manicured gardens. The building is light-colored with dark accents around the windows and arches. The sky is a clear, deep blue.

Montage

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Carrie, living with Crohn's disease

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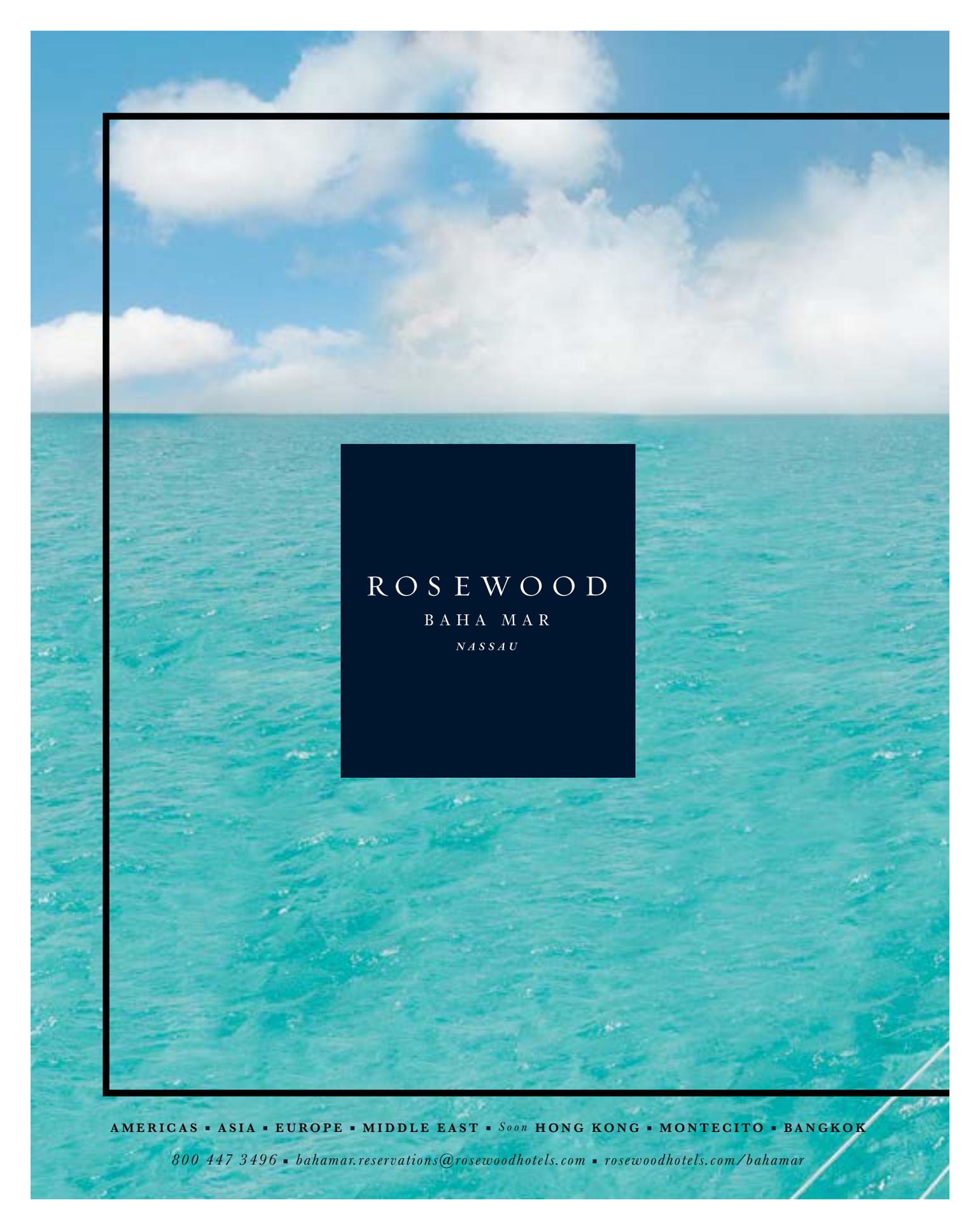
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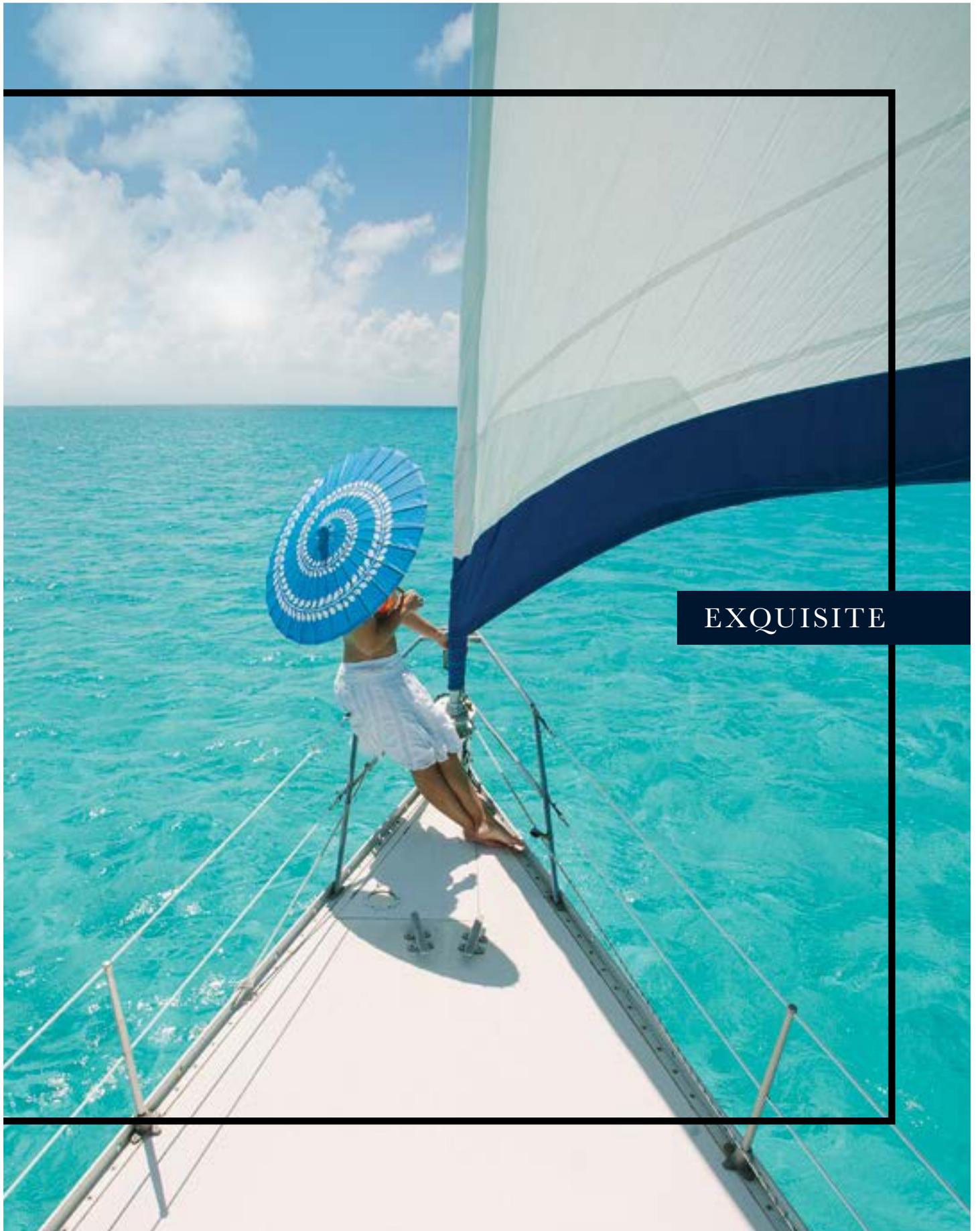
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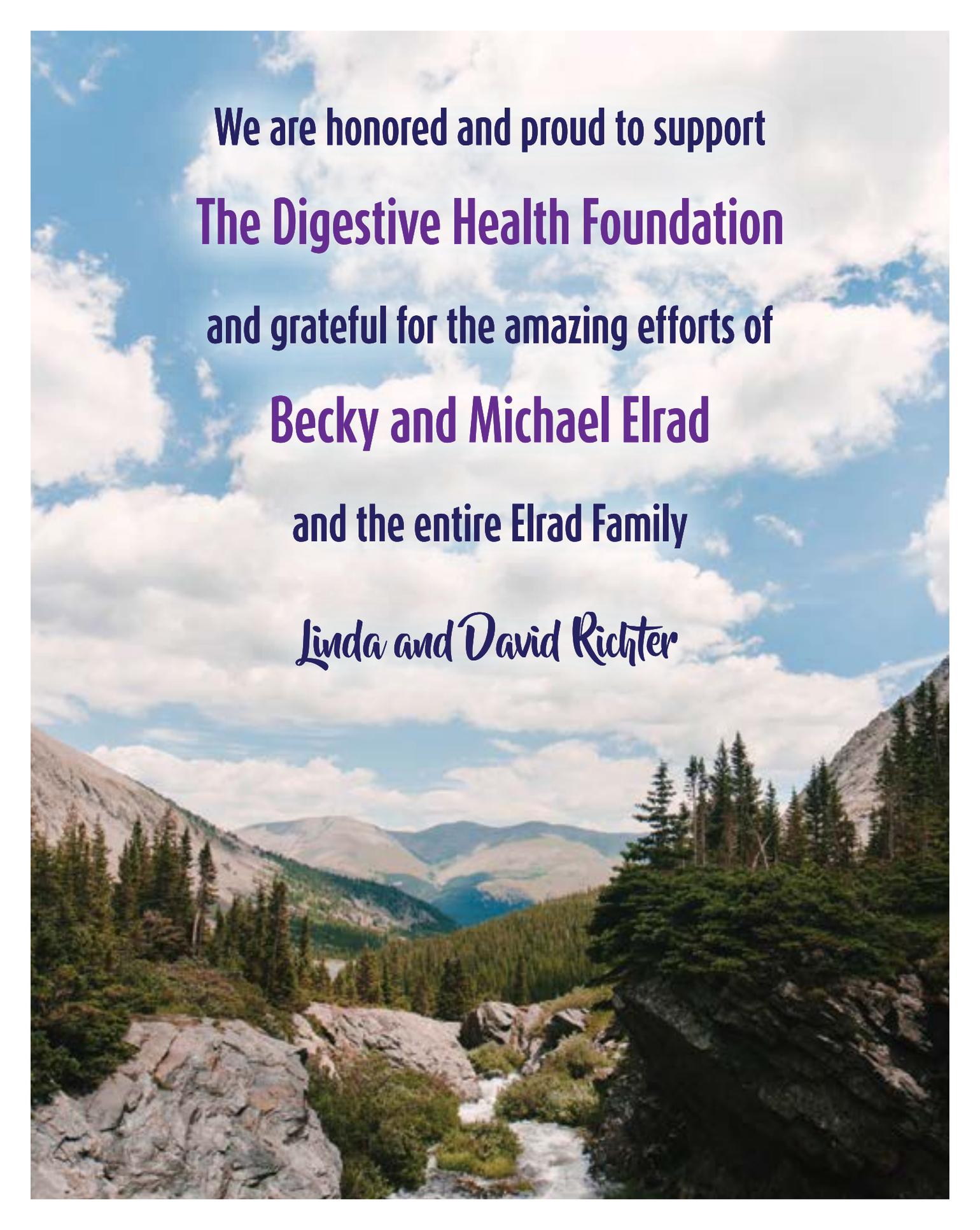
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and grateful for the amazing efforts of
Becky and Michael Elrad
and the entire Elrad Family

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Ours is one of many families
that can celebrate tonight
because of the commitment
and compassion of all the
Northwestern Medicine
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professionals.

Thank you all!

The Rosenbloom Family

Thank you to the
Digestive Health Foundation
Board of Directors & Gala Task Force
for all your hard work and dedication.

Congratulations
Deborah and Martin Elrad
and the entire Elrad Family!

Lee Gould and Cathy Bialy



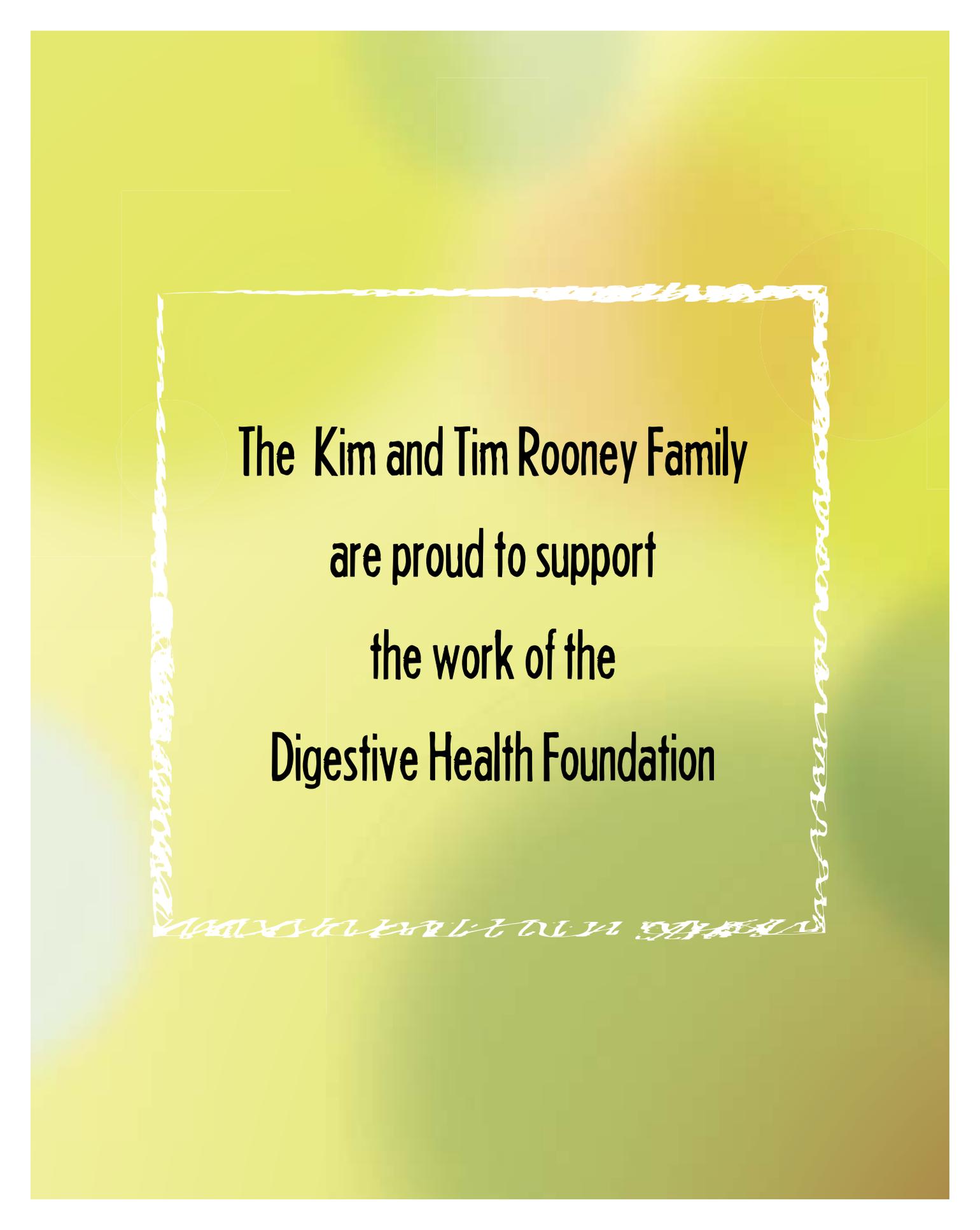
Our deep gratitude to all
the physicians and staff at the
Digestive Health Center.

Your dedication to your patients
and perseverance in finding cures
is creating a better life for so many.

Very special thanks to
Dr. Stephen Hanauer
for the amazing care and commitment
he has shown our family.



The Saltoun Braun Family



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**CONGRATULATIONS
TO BECKY AND MICHAEL ELRAD
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Thank you Digestive Health Center
doctors and staff for your
dedicated leadership in transforming
digestive disease to digestive health.

Your expertise, devotion to research
and excellence, inspire compassionate care
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Thank you Dr. Hanauer,
Dr. Strong and Dr. Pandolfino
for your passion, dedication
and commitment in the pursuit
of improving digestive health
and patient care!

We are profoundly grateful.

Warmly,

Liz and Harry Feirstein

Jamie, David, Sam, Kayla and Charlie
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Congratulations to our cousins,
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for all their hard work and dedication
in enabling the success of the
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A special tribute to our
Uncle Marty and Aunt Debbie
for their commitment
and devotion over the years
to helping others with digestive diseases.
And of course, hats off to our
courageous cousin and hero, Amy Silver.

Let's continue to celebrate
the power of our awesome family!

Abe & Andi Morris

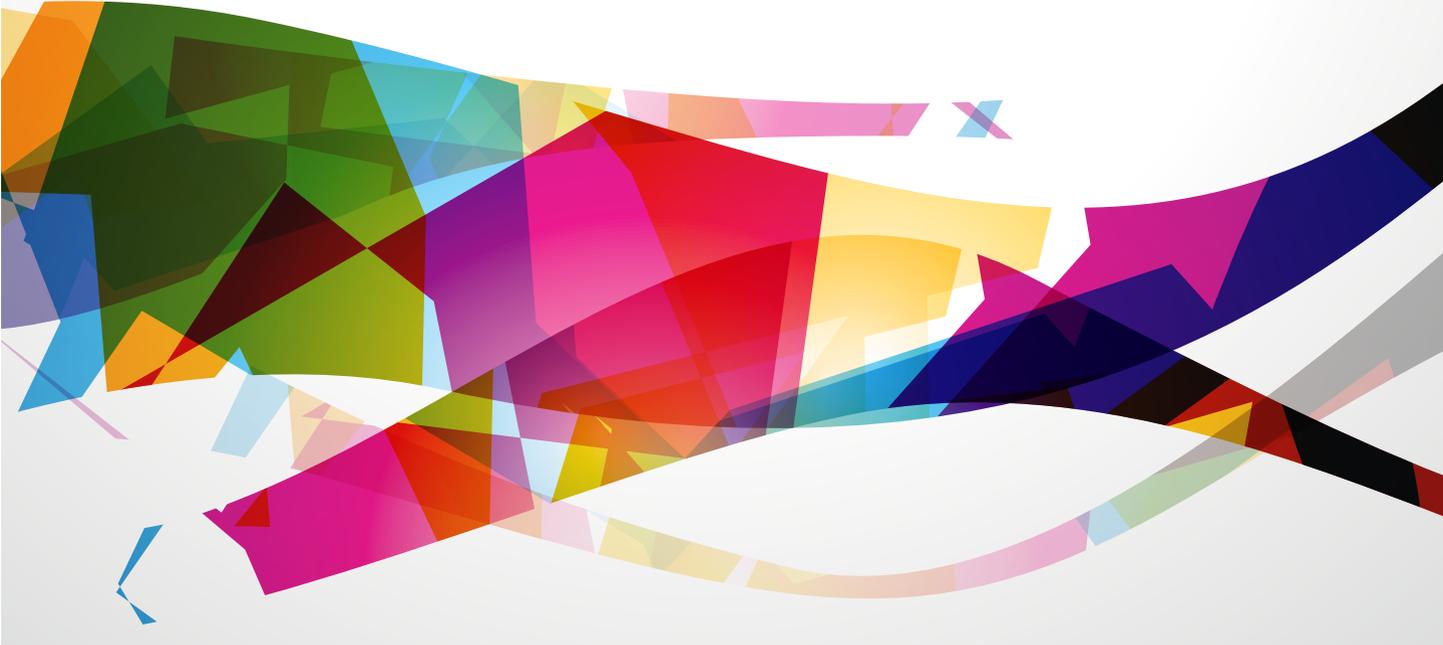


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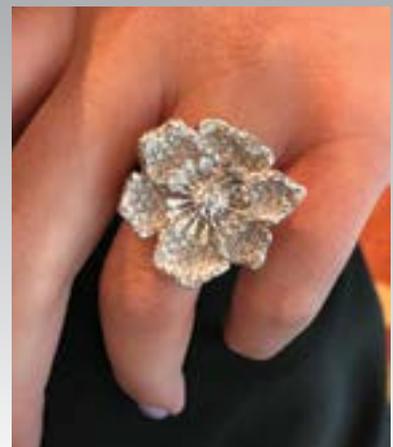
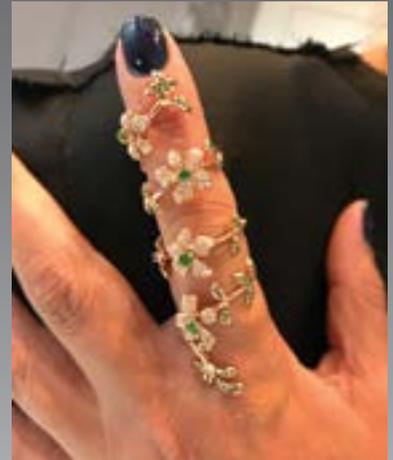
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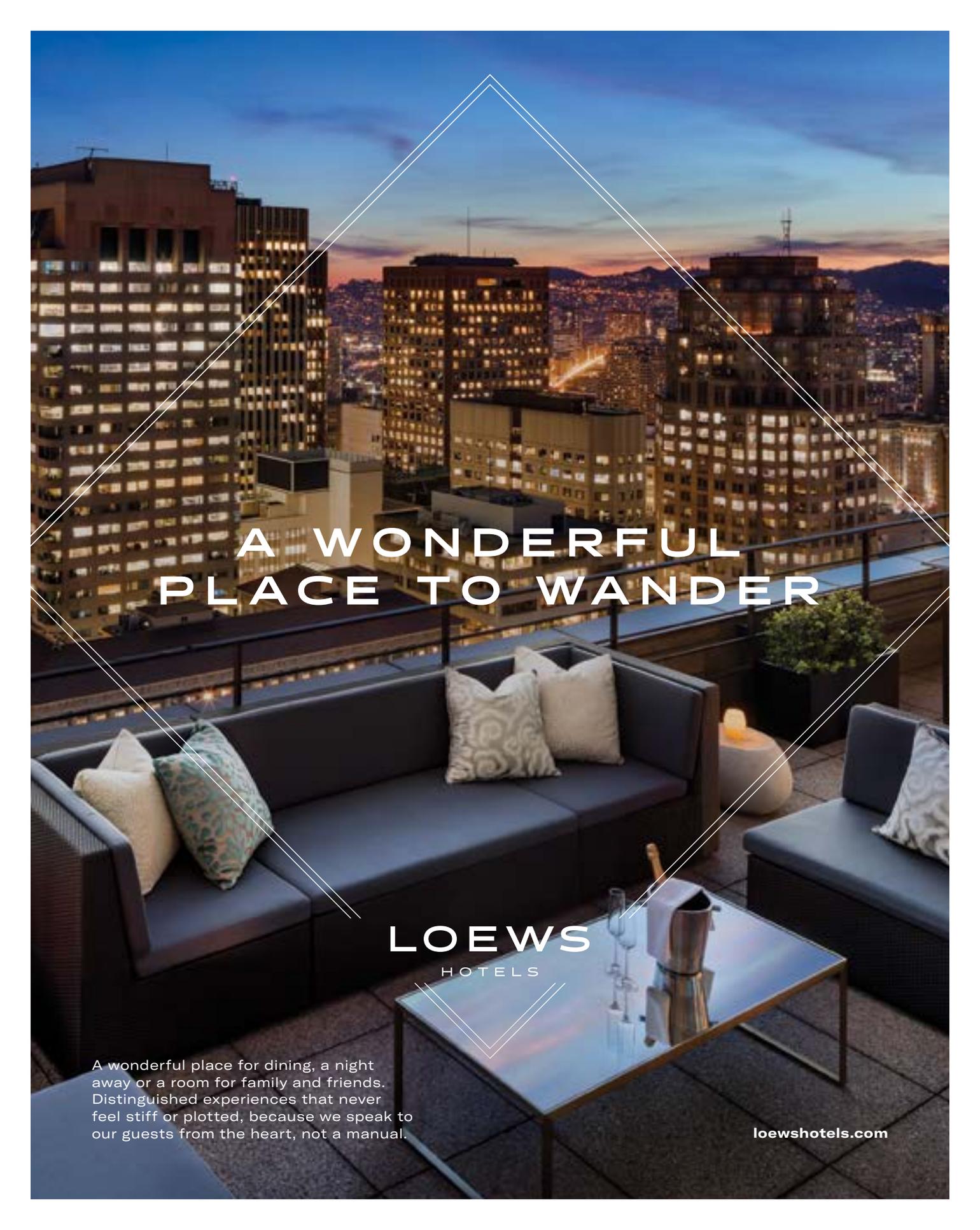
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**Thank you, Dr. Hanauer,
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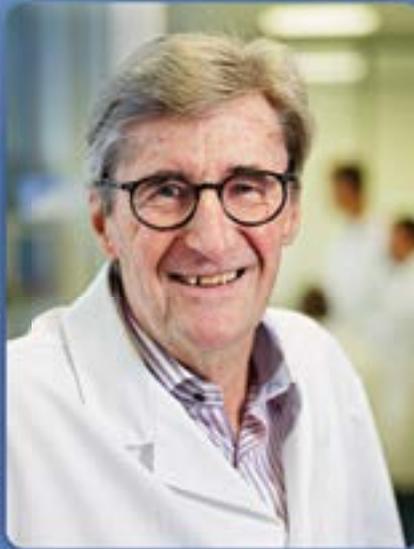
Thank you

to Dr. Stephen and Jayne Hanauer
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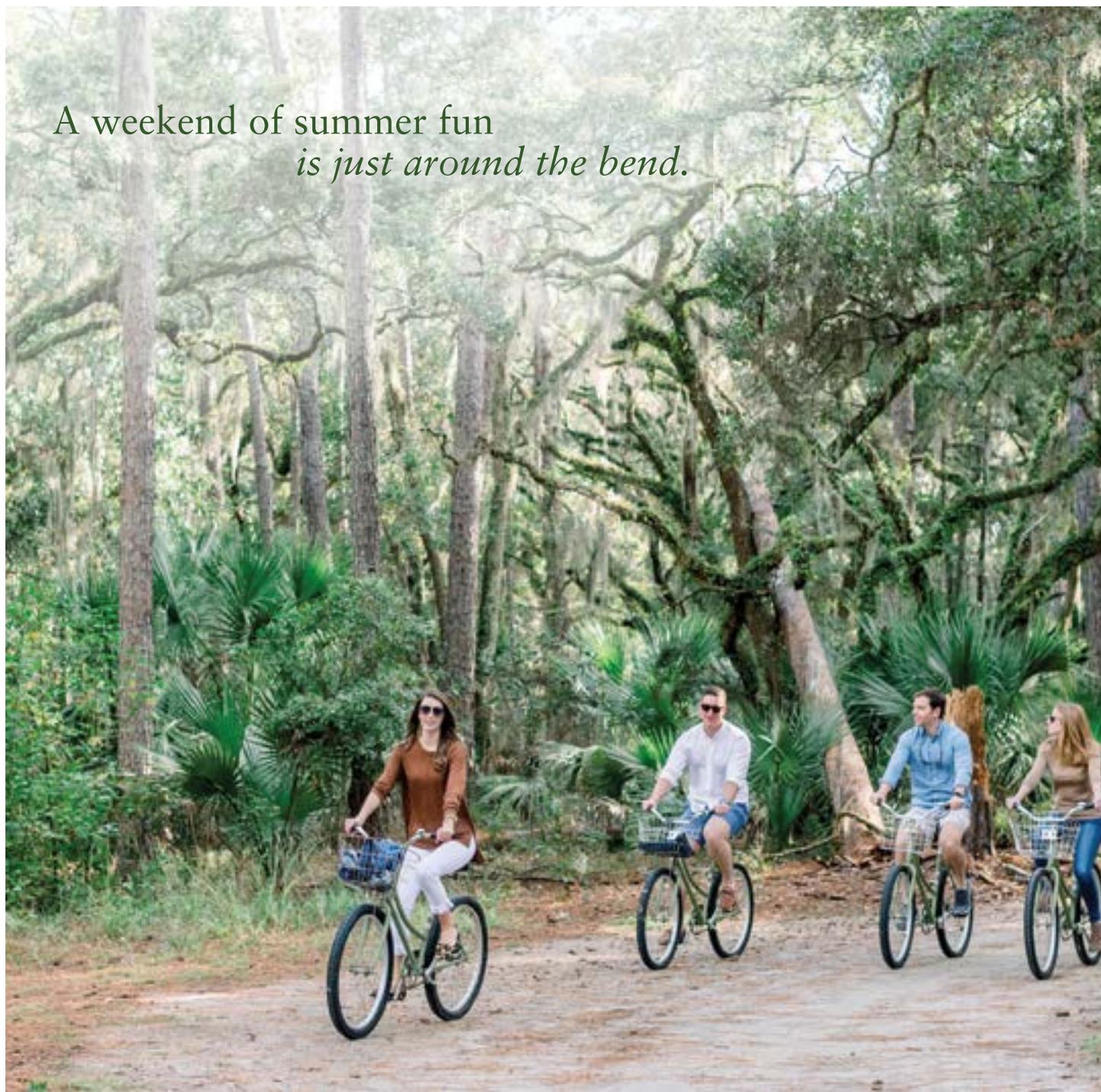
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OF THE WONDERFUL WORK THEY DO
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and commitment to digestive health!

—
The Berkmans



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the Digestive Health Foundation.

Lori and Michael Nash



**Congratulations to the
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the DHF team!**

**With love
and gratitude,**

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A heartfelt thank you to
Dr. Stephen Hanauer | Dr. Ikuo Hirano
Dr. John Pandolfino | Dr. Michael Ruchim
for your devotion to research and
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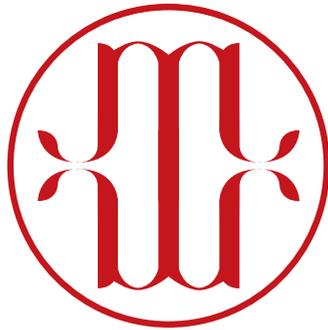
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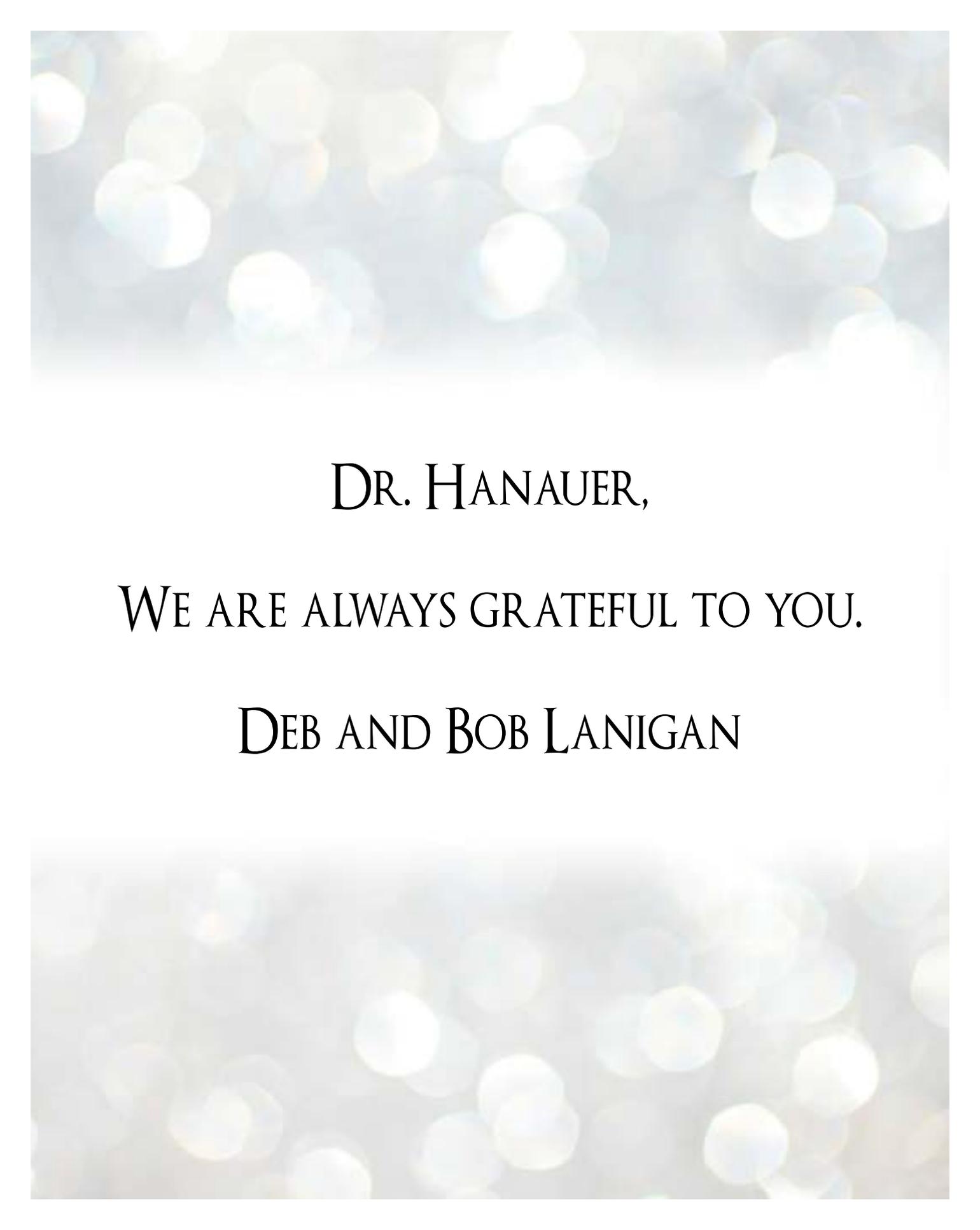


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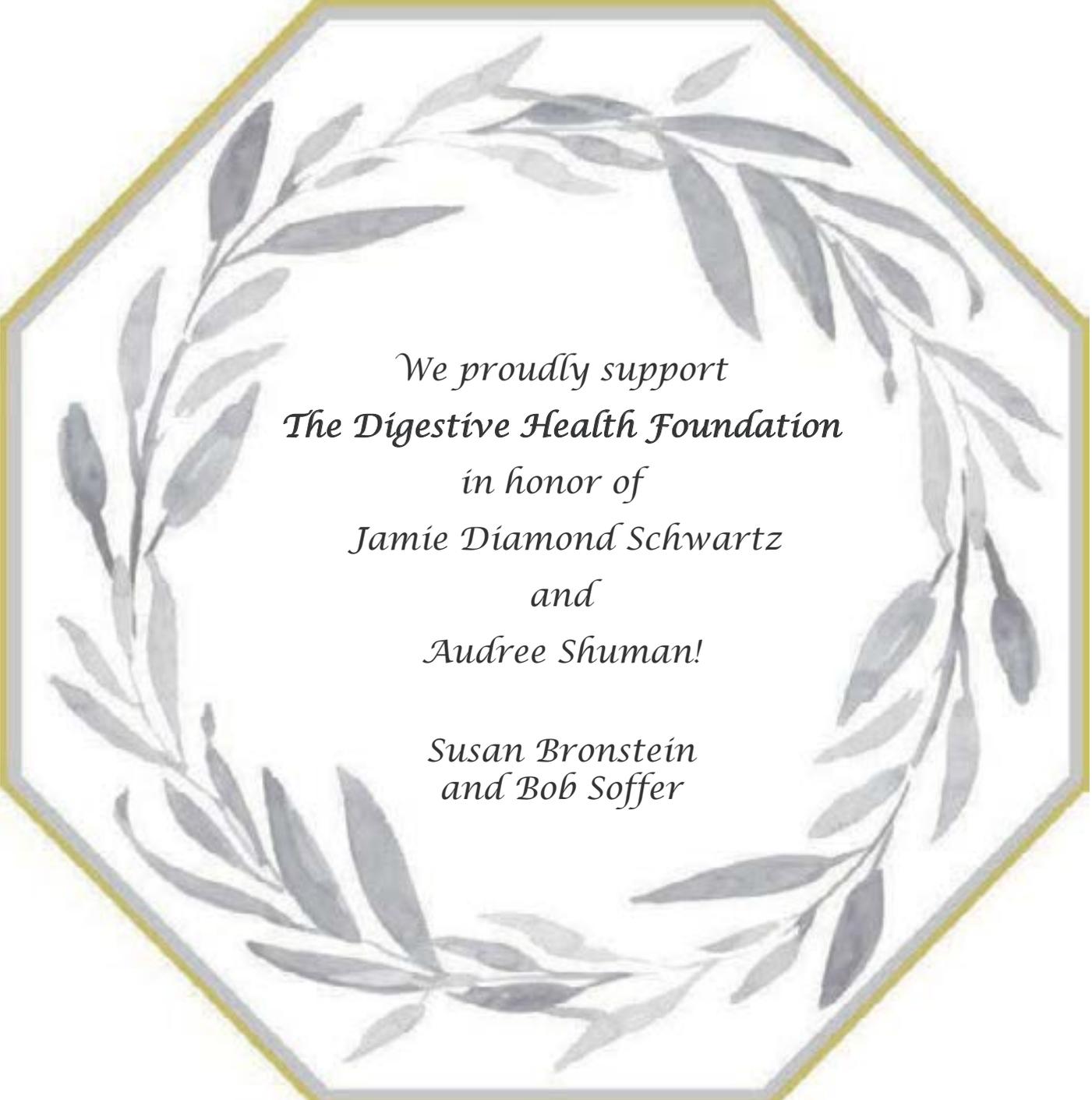


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Steve,
Through your dedication
to excellence and
our many years
of friendship and caring,
we salute you.

Lois Zoller and Jim Mills

Dr. Hanauer,

Your care and dedication to your patients has given our family so much- the ability to become parents and grandparents, the opportunity for joy and good health through the ups and downs of life, and the confidence to pursue our dreams.

We wake up every day knowing you are there for us, patients and loved ones alike. These are truly family diseases, and we survive and thrive with digestive health challenges because of you.

Thank you, Dr. Hanauer. Thank you.



- The Merpis and Patzelt

DHF RESEARCH MILESTONES

The Digestive Health Foundation focuses on improving the quality of life for anyone facing a digestive disorder by supporting cutting-edge medical research, physician training, and education at the Northwestern Medicine Digestive Health Center. As DHF enters its **fifth year**, we have raised **more than \$9.5 million** in support of **40 independent research studies** by the Northwestern Medicine Digestive Health Center's world-class physician scientists. Together, we are changing the landscape of digestive health.

DHF Research Milestones

\$9.5+ MILLION raised since 2015

40 INDEPENDENT RESEARCH STUDIES on a broad spectrum of topics, such as:

- Many GI diseases and conditions, including: inflammatory bowel disease (Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis, and non-specified), esophageal diseases (achalasia, Barrett's esophagus, gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), esophageal cancers, eosinophilic esophagitis (EoE), swallowing and motility disorders), pancreatic diseases, colon and pancreatic cancers, celiac disease, hepatitis, fatty liver disease (NAFLD/NASH), and more.
- Physician training and evaluation programs using both 1.) existing technologies, such as endoscopy, in new ways to minimize risk and improve prognosis, and 2.) the newest technological tools, such as FLIP (Functional Lumen Imaging Probe) that measure esophageal diameter with greater accuracy.
- Progressive online programs to encourage patient follow through with crucial testing, such as colonoscopies.
- Complex interplays between GI conditions and diseases in other parts of the body, such as the heart.
- Effects of nutrition, psychosocial factors, and innovative emerging software and in-person programs to support patient management of their disease, especially in pediatric and adolescent patients.
- Efforts to improve the utilization and disposal of opioids for surgical patients.
- One of the first large scale studies on cannabis and IBD outcomes.

DHF RESEARCH MILESTONES

DHF BIOREPOSITORY: a unique resource that collects, catalogues, and stores blood, tissue, and microbiome from patients, providing valuable biosamples available to GI and other collaborating researchers.

- BioRepository samples have already led to groundbreaking discoveries regarding inflammation and cancer, and are actively being utilized in translational and basic (laboratory) research projects.
- The BioRepository integrates with cutting-edge projects related to genetics and the microbiome, and is being used to recruit internationally recognized physician scientists to the Northwestern Medicine Digestive Health Center.

2 FELLOWSHIPS for top GI Residents looking to gain the highest level of training available in specialties of Inflammatory Bowel Disease and Esophageal Disease

2 ENDOWMENTS to ensure significant future research in the areas of Digestive Disease and Gastrointestinal Surgery Research

4 PUBLICATIONS of DHF funded studies, resulting in new patient care recommendations, advanced physician training, improved preventative approaches, and better patient outcomes

2 DHF STUDIES have received **ADDITIONAL FUNDING** from major sources like the NIH (National Institutes of Health) to continue and expand their important work as a result of DHF's initial launch investment (see details below in the "Additional Funding" list)

DHF Studies Already Published

FY2018

Neutrophil-induced genomic instability impedes resolution of inflammation and wound healing. (How does inflammation increase the risk of cancer in intestinal tissues?)

Principal Investigator: Ronen Sumagin, PhD

Publication: *The Journal of Clinical Investigation*

FY2017

The Influence of Methotrexate Treatment on Male Fertility and Pregnancy Outcome After Paternal Exposure (Does use of methotrexate impact male fertility in IBD patients?)

Principal Investigator: Anne Grosen, PhD; Co-PI: Stephen B. Hanauer, MD

Publication: *Inflammatory Bowel Diseases, Volume 23, Issue 4, 1 April 2017, Pages 561–569*

FY2016

Benchmarks for the Interpretation of Esophageal High-Resolution Manometry (Developing a Standardized Training System for Interpreting Esophageal Manometry Exams)

Principal Investigator: Rena Yadlapati, MD; Co-PI: Rajesh Keswani, MD

Publication: *WILEY, Neurogastroenterology & Motility*

Evaluation of Esophageal Motility Utilizing the Functional Lumen Imaging Probe (Assessing a new imaging probe to evaluate gastroesophageal reflux)

Principal Investigator: Dustin Carlson, MD

Publication: *American Journal of Gastroenterology. 111(12):1726-1735, DEC 2016*

DHF Studies Expanded by Additional Funding Sources

FY 2018

Digestive Health Foundation BioRepository

Principal Investigator: John E. Pandolfino, MD

In 2017, DHF became the founding supporter of a powerful new resource for digestive health medical research: The Digestive Health Foundation BioRepository. As one of only a few GI biorepositories of its kind in the world, the DHF BioRepository stores, organizes, and makes accessible (digitally, and in real time) blood and tissue samples from patients and family members diagnosed with one or more of the digestive disorders treated at the Northwestern Medicine Digestive Health Center.

FY2016

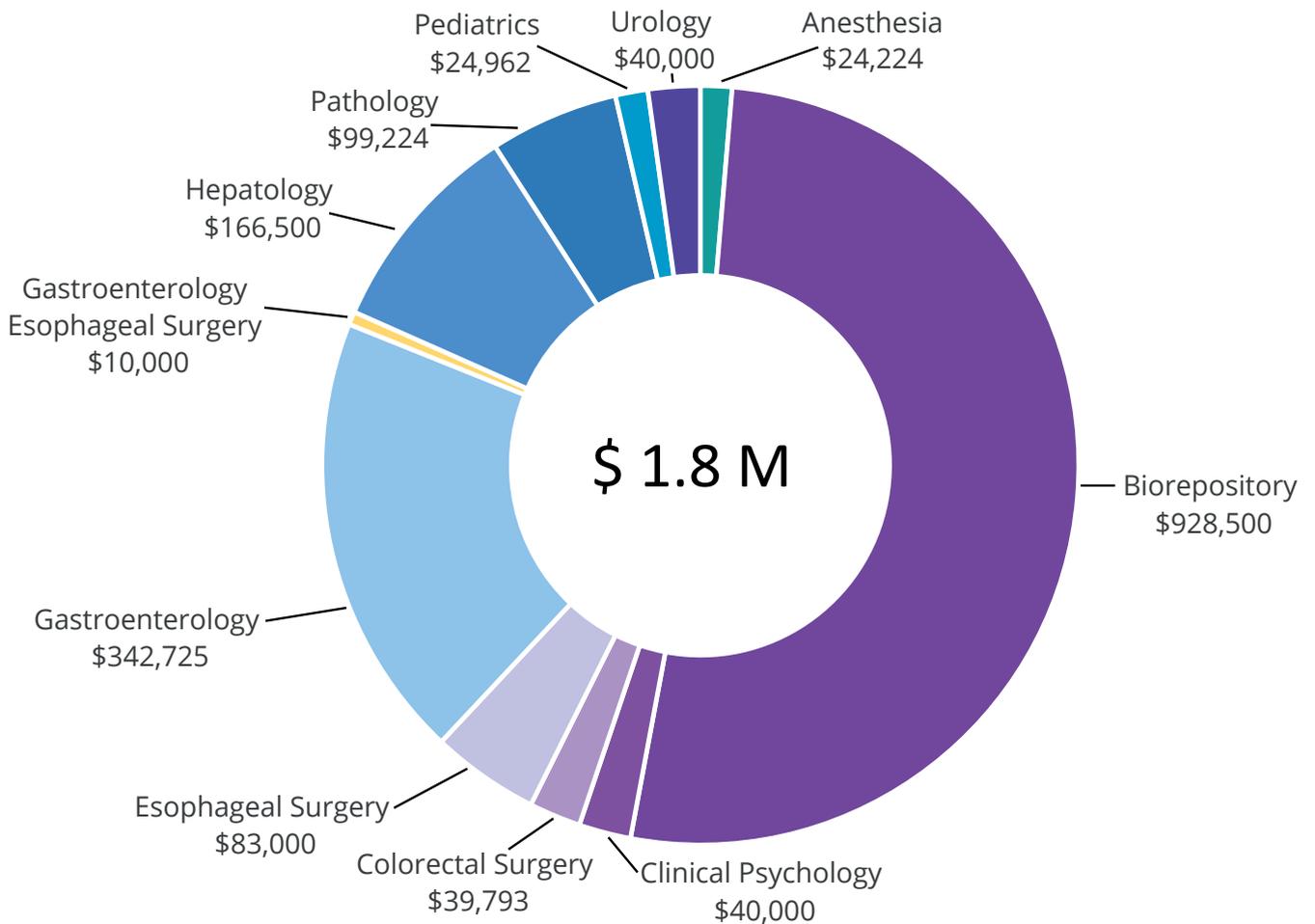
Enhancing Physician Competency for High-Resolution Esophageal Manometry: Developing a High-Quality Standardized Training System & Measuring Physician Learning Curves

Lay Title: Developing a Standardized Training System for Interpreting Esophageal Manometry Exams

Principal Investigator: Rena Yadlapati, MD; Co-PI: Rajesh Keswani, MD

RESEARCH GRANT FUNDING

2016 – 2019



Congratulations to the 2019 Digestive Health Foundation Grant Awardees

We are extremely excited about the novelty and diversity of the grant applications. Ten grants have been approved for approximately \$250,000.

We received two grants regarding the liver and both related to a therapy called TIPs. The portal vein carries blood from digestive organs to the liver. Portal hypertension occurs when pressure increases within this vein due to blockage in blood flow through the liver. Cirrhosis, or scarring, of the liver is the most common cause. This condition often results in fluid build-up in the abdomen and bleeding from veins in the esophagus that can impair quality of life and even lead to death due to intestinal bleeding or infection. The procedure also increases blood flow to the heart. Dr. Lisa Van Wagner and colleagues are assessing how to predict heart failure due to the increased blood flow. Conversely, TIPs can also lead to worsening liver function and what is known as hepatic encephalopathy, which can cause debilitating confusion and dementia. Drs. Justin Boike and Daniel Ganger are going to study whether a simple and novel blood test can predict the negative effects on liver function.

We also have two grants related to the esophagus. Dr. Marie-Pierre Tetreault has developed a mouse model of eosinophilic esophagitis and will evaluate the immune functions related to this food allergy induced condition. Dr. Dusty Carlson, who received the ACG Junior Faculty Career Development Award will be mentoring Dr. Erica Donnan on a project to investigate how opiates cause disabling motility disorders that can mimic other esophageal diseases, and to prevent invasive testing in patients on opiates.

Two IBD grants were awarded. Dr. Tiffany Taft, who has published an initial study of the prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorders in patients with IBD, will assess factors associated with the development of post-traumatic stress that will lead to studies of how to prevent the disorder based on predictive factors. A second study by Dr. Emanuelle Bellaguarda will continue work with a Danish colleague at Aarhus University to investigate the impact of newer IBD therapies on sperm function in men. They have already completed studies with methotrexate and will expand to the newest drugs approved for IBD.

Two studies come from our interventional endoscopy group. Dr. Aziz Adam will be studying whether a temporary shunt between the stomach and duodenum will improve outcomes of stomach emptying for patients who are undergoing a procedure to cut the pyloric muscle to allow the stomach to empty in patients with gastroparesis, a motility disorder that causes delayed emptying and symptoms of nausea and vomiting. Dr. Sri Komanduri will be assessing how to non-invasively biopsy the pancreas in patients with pancreatic growths to better diagnose malignancies.

Drs. Ronen Sumagin and Veronika Butin-Israel received a DHF grant that has led to an important discovery and publication in one of the most prestigious medical journals. Their team is continuing to study how immune cells in chronic inflammation increase the risk of colon cancer by signaling to adjacent cells with factors that inhibit DNA repair. They are one of the first groups to have used the BIOREPOSITORY for human tissues to confirm work done in animals.

Finally, Drs. Mehul Rahul and Salva Balbale will be looking at improving pediatric surgery outcomes by using features already in place in the DHC to enhance recovery after IBD surgery in children. Avoiding or limiting opioids and both pre- and post-operative feeding protocols markedly reduce time in the hospital and surgical complications and costs. They will be working with a national group of pediatric surgeons to improve outcomes in children with IBD needing surgery.



Stephen B. Hanauer, MD, Chief Medical Advisor

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen B. Hanauer". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.

The Digestive Health Foundation would like to congratulate the recipients of the research grant awards for 2019. We look forward to the success of your projects.

1. **Impact of an artificial liver shunt procedure for the treatment of high pressure in the vein that carries blood from the digestive organs to the liver on the function of the heart**

Principal Investigator: Lisa B. VanWagner, MD

The portal vein carries blood from digestive organs to the liver. Portal hypertension occurs when pressure increases within this vein due to blockage in blood flow through the liver. Cirrhosis, or scarring, of the liver is the most common cause. This condition often results in fluid build-up in the abdomen and bleeding from veins in the esophagus that can impair quality of life and even lead to death due to intestinal bleeding or infection. An artificial shunt procedure known as TIPS (transjugular intrahepatic portosystemic shunt) helps reduce portal hypertension. It works by connecting two veins: the portal vein that carries blood from the digestive organs to the liver and the hepatic vein that carries blood from the liver to the right part of the heart. While the lifesaving procedure may cause heart failure in some patients because of increased blood flow directly to the heart, others experience improvement in heart function. However, predicting outcomes for these patients is currently unknown. Dr. VanWagner's study aims to better understand changes in heart function after a TIPS procedure to better intervene and prevent heart failure in these at-risk patients.

2. **Examining whether a stent helps stomach emptying after cutting the pylorus muscle in patients with delayed stomach emptying**

Principal Investigator: Aziz Adam, MD; Co-Principal Investigator: Kevin Liu, MD

Gastroparesis is a condition where the stomach does not empty correctly due to lack of stomach muscle coordination. Many patients with chronic gastroparesis experience symptoms ranging from persistent nausea and vomiting to the inability to eat or drink. Lacking effective treatment options, patients with gastroparesis are at risk for inadequate nutrition and repeated hospitalizations. Endoscopic targeted therapies, including placement of a tube to allow the stomach to empty into the small intestine (transpyloric stent) and G-POEM, an advanced minimally invasive procedure to cut the sphincter muscle in the pylorus, have recently shown promise by improving gastric emptying for patients. The Adam team intends to examine whether patients who improve with transpyloric stenting, which provides temporary relief, will also demonstrate improvement with G-POEM, which can provide a more durable, long-lasting solution. Northwestern is one of the few centers in the nation performing G-POEM and has one of the highest volumes for both advanced endoscopic therapies. This study offers great potential for significantly impacting this patient population.

3. **Semen quality in males with inflammatory bowel disease: Influence of medication treatment for IBD**

Principal Investigator: Emanuelle Bellaguarda, MD; Co-Principal Investigator: Stephen B. Hanauer, MD

Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) often affects people in their reproductive years, with little known about the impact of anti-inflammatory and immunosuppressive therapies on reproductive health. Men with IBD and their partners often request information on the effect of medication on male fertility. Fears and doubts significantly affect family planning, as well as impact adherence to drug treatment and disease control. Fertility concerns emphasize the need to investigate the safety of drug treatment in these patients. Investigating the impact of two novel IBD treatments on sperm quality and genetic structure in male patients, Dr. Bellaguarda hopes to improve future patient care by ultimately enhancing patient counseling. Her team at Northwestern Memorial Hospital has joined forces with Aarhus University Hospital in Denmark to take advantage of the expert knowledge in the different centers within reproduction, medical treatment in IBD, and drug interactions.

4. **How do opioids affect the esophagus?**

Principal Investigator: Dustin Carlson, MD; Co-Principal Investigator: Erica Donnan, MD

In 2017, more than 191 million opioid prescriptions were dispensed in the United States. Opioids frequently cause many gastrointestinal side effects such as bloating, reflux and constipation, yet not much is known about how opioids affect the esophagus and swallowing. Opioids can lead to symptoms that mimic esophageal disorders, such as achalasia, that could result in unnecessary invasive procedures including surgery. The largest study of its kind, this project will look into how opioids affect esophageal motility. Using the Esophageal Center of Northwestern's motility registry, Drs. Carlson and Donnan have access to some 4,000 patients who have undergone high-resolution manometries to assess esophageal function. The team will look at patients who have had motility studies at Northwestern while on opioids and evaluate volunteer patients on opioids without swallowing symptoms. Given the widespread use of opioids, patients with opioid-induced swallowing problems will become more common. This study is essential in determining how opioids affect the esophagus so that clinicians can correctly evaluate and treat these patients.

5. **How immune cells promote tissue injury to increase risk of colon cancer**

Principal Investigator: Ronen Sumagin, PhD; Co-Principal Investigator: Veronika Butin-Israeli, PhD

Immune cells called neutrophils protect our body against invading pathogens, but when they accumulate in tissue, they can also cause recurring injury to cells of the gastrointestinal tract. The resulting chronic inflammation in the colon is a hallmark of inflammatory bowel diseases (IBDs). It is also a well-recognized risk factor for the development of colorectal cancer. Dr. Sumagin's preliminary findings suggest that neutrophils may influence the transformation of normal cells into cancerous ones by increasing the occurrence of mutations, inhibiting the ability of cells to repair themselves and ultimately promoting cancer development. The team is focusing on specific mutations in the tumor suppressor gene TP53—the most frequently mutated gene in Colitis-associated colon cancer. The goal of this project will be to determine whether immune cell-mediated inflammation results in specific mutations in TP53 and to identify these mutations. If successful, this study will open the door to future prognostic biomarkers of inflammation-induced colorectal cancer. Funding will partially support the research personnel involved in this work and for purchases of essential reagents needed to complete these studies.

6. **Which molecular changes are causing the development of eosinophilic esophagitis?**

Principal Investigator: Marie-Pier Tetreault, PhD

Patients with eosinophilic esophagitis (EoE), a chronic immune/allergic condition affecting children and adults, develop difficulty swallowing food and food obstructions in the esophagus (food tube between the mouth and stomach). Dr. Tetreault's team has created a new mouse model that more accurately replicates the disease process of EoE and exhibits all the features observed in patients with the disease. This game changing animal model offers a unique opportunity to better understand the molecular mechanisms driving EoE. By performing "single-cell RNA sequencing," Dr. Tetreault hopes to determine how changes in specific molecules in epithelial cells control the development of eosinophilic esophagitis. The team will perform these studies in mice that currently have the disease, as well as in mice that have yet to show any obvious signs or symptoms. Dr. Tetreault believes that the early-stage disease models will help identify the initiating molecular events that lead to EoE and provide insight into the development of earlier intervention strategies now lacking in the field of EoE.

7. **Measuring which aspects of living with IBD, including its treatments, may contribute to a patient developing post-traumatic stress (PTS), a chronic psychological reaction to a traumatic event characterized by flashbacks, nightmares, and hypervigilance**

Principal Investigator: Tiffany Taft, PsyD

Living with inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) is both physically and psychologically challenging and has the potential to negatively impact patient lives. As many as one-third of individuals with IBD demonstrate significant post-traumatic stress (PTS) symptoms, according to the first study of IBD-related PTS in the United States conducted by Dr. Taft and her team. Negative hospital experiences may play a substantial role. Further advancing this research, Dr. Taft aims to identify targets for early psychosocial counseling to better intervene and prevent the potential impact of undiagnosed PTS on patient outcomes. The novel study will include the use of online patient surveys to better understand PTS prevalence in IBD and to assess differences in illnesses and demographics traits between IBD patients with and without PTS. The next step will involve in-depth interviews with patients recruited from Northwestern's and Rush University's gastroenterology clinics. A clinical psychologist who specializes in working with adult IBD patients will conduct these interviews to gather information not easily collected via standardized tests to better evaluate PTS causes and guide treatments.

8. **Improving surgery recovery for children undergoing surgery for inflammatory bowel disease: Laying the groundwork**
Principal Investigator: Mehul V. Rahul, MD; Co-Principal Investigator: Salva N. Balbale, MS, Doctoral Candidate

Enhanced Recovery Protocols (ERPs) are evidence-based interventions that utilize perioperative education and counseling provided through surgery and recovery to safe discharge. ERPs have been found to decrease hospital length of stay, in-hospital costs, and complications among a variety of adult surgical populations, including those undergoing abdominal and gastrointestinal tract surgery. As many as 17 percent of the 70,000 children with IBD in the United States need surgery within five years of diagnosis to manage their disease. ERPs offer an opportunity to enhance the care of these young patients, yet these strategies are currently lagging in the pediatric setting. This study will lay the groundwork and provide a baseline assessment of ERPs in 15 pediatric surgical practice sites across the country. The investigators will evaluate the effectiveness and impact of ERPs on outcomes, and use their findings in the development of an implementation toolkit.

9. **Evaluating a novel endoscopic ultra sound-guided technique for tissue acquisition for diagnosing pancreatic tumors**
Principal Investigator: Sri Komanduri, MD; Co-Principal Investigator: Robert Schenck, MD

The thought of potentially having cancer is stressful enough without undergoing an invasive biopsy to diagnose it and finding out that the procedure needs to be repeated due to inadequate sample collection. This project aims to optimize strategies for acquiring tissue samples to assist gastroenterologists (and pathologists) in diagnosing many diseases, including cancers. Relying on endoscopic ultrasound guidance, the two methods currently utilized are fine needle aspiration, which is the gold standard, and a new method called fine needle biopsy. Drs. Komanduri and Schenck are conducting the largest study to date to compare these different strategies. After collecting data from patients who have undergone one of these procedures over a five-year period, the investigator will perform advanced statistical modeling to determine the strategy that best optimizes patient outcomes (including obtaining accurate diagnoses and minimizing repeat invasive procedures) and costs. Once identified, this strategy will ultimately be implemented throughout the Northwestern Digestive Health Center to enhance patient care.

10. **Can a blood test predict patients at risk for significant confusion and disorientation after a shunt through the liver?**

Principal Investigator: Daniel Ganger, MD; Co-Principal Investigator: Justin R. Boike, MD

Chronic liver disease remains a significant burden on society, despite the ability to treat and cure hepatitis C. With the growing obesity epidemic in the United States, fatty liver disease will soon overtake hepatitis C as the primary cause of chronic liver disease and cirrhosis. While liver transplantation offers a cure, it is not an option for many individuals who face complications of cirrhosis, such as excessive fluid retention and internal bleeding. Transjugular intrahepatic portosystemic shunt (TIPS) procedures offer an effective tool for treating these complications. In some patients, though, TIPS can worsen liver failure and sometimes cause debilitating confusion called hepatic encephalopathy. It is believed that excessive shunting of blood flow from the liver may be the culprit. In this study, the researchers will study the ability of a new laboratory test to measure the percentage of blood shunted away from the liver to better predict those patients at greatest risk for hepatic encephalopathy after a TIPS procedure. This tool could dramatically help guide the use of TIPS and promote earlier use of TIPS in low-risk patients.

Past Digestive Health Foundation Grants Awardees

In our first four years, the Digestive Health Foundation funded 30 research studies, two advanced physician fellowships, two endowments to further significant research in the areas of Digestive Disease and Gastrointestinal Surgery Research, and the Digestive Health Foundation (DHF) BioRepository at the Northwestern Medicine Digestive Health Center.

Each year, physician scientists at Northwestern Medicine present their hypotheses for exploration to a panel of scientific advisors who then select and approve the most promising studies to receive research grants funded by the DHF. Our fundraising dollars go directly into research, turning scientific studies into patient treatments and ultimately cures for the digestive diseases that affect one in five people at some point in their lives. Full project descriptions are available at DigestiveHealthFoundation.org/research-projects/.

Funded Grants

1. **Assessing a New Imaging Probe to Evaluate Gastroesophageal Reflux**

Principal Investigator: Dustin A. Carlson, MD

Funded by the Digestive Health Foundation, researchers at Northwestern Medicine's Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology are investigating the expanded use of a new device, the functional lumen imaging probe (FLIP). FLIP is already commercially available and FDA-approved. Because the FLIP can be quickly performed during a sedated upper endoscopy, it is much more comfortable for patients than previous techniques.

2. **How do Genetic Differences in Immunosuppressive Drug Metabolism Impact Outcomes for Liver Transplants?**

Principal Investigator: Pranab Barman, MD

Thanks to a grant from the Digestive Health Foundation, researchers at Northwestern Medicine's Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology are studying blood samples previously collected from 50 Northwestern liver transplant recipients and stored in the DHF BioRepository to examine the connection between patient genetics and drug metabolism.

3. **How Do We Improve Transitioning of Pediatric IBD Patients into Adult Practices?**

Principal Investigator: Itishree Trivedi, MD

Thanks to a grant from the Digestive Health Foundation, a researcher at Northwestern Medicine's Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology is using a systematic approach to adapt the GotTransition toolbox (developed by the Center for Health Care Transition Improvement) specifically for youth with inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) to track and improve their transition from pediatric to adult care.

4. **Developing a Standardized Training System for Interpreting**

Esophageal Manometry Exams

Principal Investigator: Rena Yadlapati, MD

Funded by the Digestive Health Foundation, researchers at Northwestern Medicine have designed a web-based training program that they used to observe learning curves for high-resolution esophageal manometry (HREM) among 20 gastroenterology trainees. These researchers are now applying their methodology to a larger group of physicians to validate the data and determine competency benchmarks for HREM.

5. Use of Health Coaches to Improve the Effectiveness of Behavioral Therapies for GI Conditions

Principal Investigator: Sarah Quinton, MD

Thanks to funding from the Digestive Health Foundation, Northwestern Medicine researchers are evaluating the usefulness of health coaching paired with standard health psychology services directed by a GI health psychologist. Behavioral interventions for digestive health conditions are highly effective, yet while the majority of patients are interested in these treatments, there are many barriers to accessing this care. Integrating health coaching to assist patients in making lifestyle changes and managing their health conditions may increase access to care by reducing the number of sessions needed with GI health psychologists.

6. Assessing a New Liver Function Tool to Predict Outcomes of Liver Failure in Patients with Heart Disease

Principal Investigator: Daniel R. Ganger, MD

Awarded a grant from the Digestive Health Foundation, Northwestern Medicine investigators are studying patients born with a rare congenital heart condition, single ventricle disease, who receive a common surgery known as the Fontan procedure. While it helps these young patients to overcome their heart problem, unfortunately the Fontan procedure can lead to liver problems—from cirrhosis and liver cancer to even liver failure. Researchers see a potential solution to providing effective screening and treatment for this chronically-ill population: the HepQuant-SHUNT test. Safe and non-invasive, the HepQuant-SHUNT test has shown promise by yielding easily reproducible and accurate measurements of liver function. In studies involving Hepatitis C patients, the novel test has begun demonstrating its strength for predicting important hepatic clinical outcomes, including liver-related death. The HepQuant-SHUNT test may offer a more accurate as well as tolerable test for patients.

7. Using a Video Education Tool to Impact Patient Satisfaction and Perceptions

of Cancer Risks for Patients with Barrett's Esophagus

Principal Investigator: Amanda Guentner, MD

Supported by the Digestive Health Foundation, researchers in Northwestern Medicine's Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology are evaluating the use of multimedia to enhance the patient experience pre- and post-endoscopic eradication therapy (EET). Recent studies have shown multimedia to be successful with patients who have undergone general and orthopaedic surgical procedures. The investigators plan to create an educational video for patients undergoing EET for Barrett's esophagus through Northwestern's Digestive Health Center and measure its impact on reducing patient anxiety.

8. Does Use of Methotrexate Impact Male Fertility in IBD Patients?

Principal Investigator: Anne Grosen, MD

Funded by a Digestive Health Foundation grant, Northwestern Medicine researchers plan to shed light on the effects of Methotrexate (MTX), a commonly prescribed drug treatment for IBD. Linked to birth defects, though, MTX is not recommended for pregnant women. However, how the drug affects a man's ability to start a family remains a mystery. Researchers will examine several markers of male fertility, including sperm quality and reproductive hormones. The investigators hope to determine if MTX makes a clinically relevant impact on male fertility.

9. Developing Video Teaching Tools for Endoscopic Removal of Large Polyps

Principal Investigator: A. Aziz Adam, MD

Introduced in the 1990s in Japan, minimally-invasive endoscopic submucosal dissection (ESD) has become the standard of care for not only treating but also, most importantly, curing early gastrointestinal cancers. While widely accepted practice in Japan and eastern countries, ESD hasn't yet gained a foothold in western countries—mainly due to lack of available training from specialists skilled in performing ESD. Supported by a grant from the Digestive Health Foundation, investigators in Northwestern Medicine's Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology are bringing much-needed training for the minimally-invasive endoscopic submucosal dissection (ESD) closer to home through the creation of six 3D animated videos based on real-world examples.

10. Developing Video-Based Education to Improve Patient Completion of Colorectal Cancer Screening

Principal Investigator: Rajesh N. Keswani, MD

Thanks to a grant from the Digestive Health Foundation, researchers are applying the novel patient portal concept to colon cancer screening. Patient portals have fast become a standard feature of many electronic health records (EHRs) systems. Creating a two-minute English and Spanish-language video on the benefits of colonoscopy screening, the research team is conducting a randomized study of patients scheduled for screening or surveillance procedures. Ahead of their appointment, some will receive the video education through the patient portal; others will receive a standard reminder message via the portal. Encouraging more patients to follow through on their appointments could greatly improve the fight against colorectal cancer, a highly preventable disease.

11. How Does Inflammation Increase the Risk of Cancer in Intestinal Tissues?

Principal Investigator: Ronen Sumagin, PhD

Normally immune cells like neutrophils protect our body against invading pathogens but sometimes they go overboard. Accumulating in tissue, they can cause cell injury in the GI tract leading to the development of inflammatory bowel disease and potentially colorectal cancer. While neutrophils can drive inflammation, it remains unclear just how they contribute to tumor development. Dr. Sumagin and colleagues plan to define the mechanism that allows neutrophils to both promote abnormal cell mutations and inhibit DNA repair genes, and to test if neutralizing these harmful effects can prevent increased mutations and cancer.

12. Can We Use Therapeutic Monitoring of Drug Levels to Improve Long-Term Control of Patients Treated with Infliximab (Remicade) in IBD?

Principal Investigator: Emanuelle Bellaguarda, MD

The drug infliximab (Remicade) offers relief to millions of people with Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis. Yet, which dose is the best dose? The same dose does not work for all patients to prevent flare ups and improve quality of life. Better personalizing the use of infliximab, Dr. Bellaguarda's research team has designed a study to monitor and adjust dosing of the medication during two key times during the therapeutic infusion timeline. The Digestive Health Foundation grant supports a study coordinator to manage patient enrollment, monitoring and outcomes during the one-year project.

13. How to Optimize Control of Acid Reflux to Reduce the Risk of Cancers in Barrett's Esophagus

Principal Investigator: Sri Komanduri, MD

Barrett's Esophagus (BE) occurs when damaging acid reflux causes the lining of the esophagus to change from normal to pre-cancerous tissue. Although BE can be effectively treated with acid-blocking medications, some individuals still progress to advanced disease and even cancer. Using tissue samples already collected during routine surveillance endoscopies, Dr. Komanduri and colleagues hope to identify tissue markers to indicate which BE patients are at high risk of developing cancer. Improving cancer detection in this way could allow for earlier intervention and better outcomes as well as limit the use of costly and invasive procedures.

14. Can we Improve Doctors' Colonoscopy Skills with a "Report Card?"

Principal Investigator: Anna Duloy, MD

Skills matter when it comes to screening colonoscopies for colon cancer. Some doctors are better than others at finding and removing precancerous polyps that may lead to cancer if left to grow. Striving to enhance colonoscopy performance to ensure the best quality care, Dr. Duloy's research team plans to provide feedback to GI specialists at Northwestern Medicine on their technique. The study involves video grading by experts and pre- and post-"report cards" to measure improvement.

15. Developing Laboratory Markers to Predict Recurrence of Fatty Liver after Liver Transplantation

Principal Investigator: Mary Rinella, MD

Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) is associated with obesity and a few other conditions and occurs when extra fat builds up in liver cells. A serious offshoot of NAFLD, nonalcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH) can cause the liver to scar (cirrhosis) and is now the second leading cause of liver transplant. However, patients who undergo liver transplants for NASH are at particularly high risk of redeveloping NASH, which can lead to graft failure and even death. Currently painful and invasive needle biopsies are the only way to diagnose and stage NASH after liver transplant. Dr. Rinella and her co-investigators hope to develop a blood-based alternative by identifying biomarkers that can accurately indicate the onset or recurrence of NASH. A simple blood test would allow for more frequent monitoring and earlier intervention with less discomfort and cost to patients.

16. Can We Improve Lung Function in Cystic Fibrosis by Treating Constipation?

Principal Investigator: Adam C. Stein, MD

Does constipation cause breathing problems? In some individuals with cystic fibrosis (CF), a genetic disorder typically affecting lung function and sometimes the GI tract, the answer is yes-maybe. After undergoing a bowel preparation, much like one used before colonoscopies, some CF patients have reported improvements in their breathing. To determine if there is a connection, Dr. Stein and colleagues are characterizing the effect of a single bowel purge on pulmonary function tests in patients with CF who also have pancreatic insufficiency. They plan to enroll 20 patients in this pilot study.

17. How to Improve the Use of Lidocaine to Reduce Pain for Patients Undergoing Intestinal Surgery

Principal Investigator: Shireen Ahmad, MD

Intravenously-injected lidocaine, a numbing agent, provides pain relief without the side effects of narcotic pain medications after bowel surgery. Northwestern Memorial began using lidocaine in September 2016 at standard doses recommended by experts at other medical centers. A small number of patients, though, experienced side effects. Their metabolism of the drug may have resulted in higher than expected levels of lidocaine in the blood stream. Dr. Ahmad's research team is studying blood levels of lidocaine in 40 patients at various times while they are receiving the medication. The aim is to identify predisposing characteristics that put certain patients at risk for lidocaine-induced side effects to better individualize the dosing, safety and effectiveness of the drug.

18. Developing Ways to Reduce Inappropriate Use of (Leftover) Narcotics Prescribed for Patients Undergoing Bowel Surgery

Principal Investigator: Jonah J. Stulberg, MD

A surplus of prescription pain killers continues to fuel the drug crisis in America. Accidental overdose of opioids have surpassed motor vehicle crashes in this country. Nearly two-thirds of opioid pills prescribed to Digestive Health Center (DHC) patients now go unused, leaving these narcotics vulnerable to abuse or misuse within our own community. Dr. Stulberg's intervention project includes the installation of a one-way drug collection receptacle within the DHC Clinic; provider training on opioid prescribing risks, benefits and alternatives; and patient education materials promoting opioid medication safety.

19. Does Cannabis Reduce Symptoms or Inflammation in Patients with IBD?

Principal Investigator: Madeline McGuire Bertha, MD, MS

Medical marijuana's popularity has grown as a treatment for tamping down the debilitating effects of Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD). However, no one knows if it improves intestinal inflammation—critical to treating IBD. In fact, it could be simply masking symptoms and delaying treatment. To determine if that's the case, Dr. Bertha and colleagues are comparing patients in symptomatic remission (feeling well) who use marijuana to those without symptoms who do not. Using blood and fecal tests, the researchers assess levels of intestinal inflammation in the two groups. Findings of this study could have important clinical and societal implications as medical marijuana becomes more widespread.

20. Molecular Profiling and Associations with Clinical Phenotypes in Adult Eosinophilic Esophagitis

Principal Investigator: Nirmala Gonsalves, MD

Eosinophilic esophagitis (EoE) is a common cause for swallowing problems (dysphagia) in adults. Resulting in inflammation of the esophagus, EoE can severely impede the passage of food, increasing the risk of food impactions that require immediate medical attention. While diet changes and medications work well, matching the best treatment to the right patient remains challenging. Uncovering the genetic differences between EoE patients could lead to better predictors of treatment response and more personalized care. Dr. Gonsalves's research team is mining Northwestern's comprehensive clinical database (NUCATS) in combination with sophisticated genetic testing and analysis to conduct what will be the largest molecular-phenotype association study of its kind for EoE.

21. **Digestive Health Foundation Biorepository**

In 2017, the Digestive Health Foundation (DHF) became a founding supporter of a powerful new resource for digestive health medical research: The Digestive Health Foundation BioRepository. As one of only a few GI biorepositories of its kind in the world, the DHF BioRepository stores, organizes, and makes accessible (digitally, in real time) blood and tissue samples from patients and family members diagnosed with one or more of the digestive disorders treated at the Northwestern Medicine Digestive Health Center. Digestive disease research using the DHF BioRepository will leverage the latest advances in information technology with cutting-edge biologic and molecular research techniques to better understand gastrointestinal diseases and to help develop better treatment options for patients. The Digestive Health Foundation works to help physician scientists improve patient quality of life through research and education at Northwestern Medicine. The DHF BioRepository provides an unprecedented opportunity to create a better future for digestive health for all of us.

22. **Does an Inflammatory Bowel Disease Flare Impact the Results of the Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) Test Used to Screen for Prostate Cancer?**

Principal Investigator: Shilajit D. Kundu, MD

One million-plus Americans have IBD, accounting for more than two million ambulatory and emergency room visits annually. This health care utilization can lead to annual medical expenditures ranging from \$5,000 to \$8,000 per patient. Reducing unnecessary medical costs in this patient group is paramount. Take for example, PSA tests. While PSA screening can reduce prostate cancer deaths, false-positive elevations commonly occur, especially for patients with IBD. The Kundu research group recently found that men 65 and older with IBD, who underwent prostate cancer screening at Northwestern Memorial Hospital, had higher PSA values than non-IBD controls. In addition, men with IBD had a significantly higher risk of prostate cancer. However, whether the elevation in PSA is due to IBD-related inflammation versus a true reflection of an increased risk of prostate cancer remains unclear. Study findings may optimize how men with IBD are screened for prostate cancer by better assessing their risk while at the same time reducing needless medical expenses.

23. **Programmer Analyst to Improve Digestive Health Quality at Northwestern Medicine**

Principal Investigator: Rajesh N. Keswani, MD

Among the busiest digestive disease centers in the country, Northwestern Medicine (NM) manages some 35,000 GI endoscopy procedures and more than 42,000 outpatient clinic visits a year. NM clinicians strive to deliver high quality, patient-centered cost-effective care with every patient encounter. Improving the quality of care relies on measuring clinical performance (i.e., “quality metrics”), implementing interventions to improve care delivery, and then re-measuring quality following the interventions. Our group utilized this approach to markedly improve the quality of colonoscopy at Northwestern thereby reducing the risk of colon cancer death after colonoscopy in the patients we serve, and subsequently published this innovative work in a leading journal (*American Journal of Gastroenterology*, 2015). Although the NM digestive health group has considerable quality improvement expertise, each initiative requires an analyst who has the computer and statistical skills to collect patient and procedure data from the electronic health record and interpret that data in a continuous fashion. The lack of a dedicated analyst has been a persistent bottleneck to replicating this approach to quality improvement research. Funding of the programmer analyst position will now allow the group to support multiple novel quality improvement projects and improve the efficiency of current research efforts.

24. **Inflammatory Lipid Signaling and Eosinophilic Esophagitis**

Principal Investigator: Guang-Yu Yang, MD, PhD

Most patients with eosinophilic esophagitis (EoE) experience an abnormal immune-mediated response to food antigens. Identifying unique biomarkers involved in the pathogenesis of allergic inflammation could significantly improve treatments. The conversion of cell membrane arachidonic acid to ω -6 prostaglandin and ω -6 leukotriene eicosanoids during the inflammatory cascade provides many potential drug targets to impede the inflammatory process in patients with EoE. ω -3 and ω -6 polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFAs) have opposing influences on inflammation. Currently, there is no study on PUFA metabolism and the role these PUFAs metabolites play in the pathogenesis of EoE. Dr. Yang’s study aims to determine the ω -3 and ω -6 PUFAs metabolites/eicosanoids profile in eosinophilic esophagitis using a liquid chromatography tandem mass spectrometry (LC-MS/MS)-based metabolomics approach and to identify the unique eicosanoids or biomarker/s for diagnosis, prognosis and monitoring the therapeutic effect on EoE.

25. How Does Inflammation Affect the Development and Progression of Eosinophilic Esophagitis?

Principal Investigator: Marie-Pier Tétreault, PhD

The epithelial lining of the esophagus serves as the first line of defense to protect the underlying tissue from various external insults. Upon injury and inflammation, a rapid and efficient restoration of the esophageal epithelial barrier is needed. Failure to restore this barrier ultimately leads to pathological consequences. To date, most studies of inflammation have focused in immune cells because they are the paradigmatic inflammatory cell type. Yet immune cells are not the only cell type involved in inflammation and immunity. Epithelial cells sense and initiate inflammation, and also play a key role in the production of inflammatory molecules. It still remains unclear, though, how epithelial cells contribute to inflammation in patients with eosinophilic esophagitis (EoE). The investigators will determine how epithelial cells control inflammation and fibrosis in eosinophilic esophagitis. The Tétreault laboratory will also test how blocking mediators of inflammation can prevent the development and progression of EoE.

26. Do You See What I See? Improving the Reliability of the Evaluation of Swallowing Difficulty

Principal Investigator: Ronak Vashi Patel, MD

Imagine a piece of food becomes stuck in your throat while eating dinner. Unfortunately, for many patients with eosinophilic esophagitis (EoE), this is a symptom that occurs all too often. Dysphagia, or difficulty swallowing, is a gastroenterology “red flag” that often alerts physicians to initiate a work up to determine the cause. Typically, the first step calls for an upper endoscopy to visually assess inflammation and narrowing (strictures) that can be treated. Prior data suggests that visual evaluation is not perfect. Missed strictures can lead to additional testing and delay diagnosis. Other tools have become available to assist in measuring the esophageal diameter such as the Functional Lumen Imaging Probe (FLIP), a novel technology. Dr. Patel’s research project aims to determine how accurately physicians measure esophageal diameter as compared to FLIP in patients with EoE. Better understanding the accuracy of endoscopic assessment by both visual estimation and FLIP assessment will offer insight into which tools should be used in diagnostic and therapeutic treatment of esophageal disease.

27. A Clinical Trial of Standard Repair Versus a Novel Repair for Hiatal Hernia

Principal Investigator: Eric S. Hungness, MD

Muscular weakness at the junction of the diaphragm and esophagus (hiatal hernia) is a common problem that may result in heartburn, difficulty swallowing, or anemia. Current surgical repair techniques have an unacceptably high hernia recurrence rate. A novel surgical material was developed at Northwestern University and has demonstrated promising results in animal and human studies. This project will investigate the efficacy of an innovative mesh suture in hiatal hernia repair, as compared to the current gold standard material. The principle outcome of interest will be measured by a non-invasive x-ray examination 6 months following surgery. The hope is that patients undergoing repair with the novel material will have lower rates of hernia recurrence without an increase in complications.

28. A New Technology to Shine a Light on What Our Pulses Can Tell Us

Principal Investigator: Nikhilesh Mazumder, MD, MPH

Severe damage to the liver can profoundly affect a variety of body systems. Patients with cirrhosis suffer from excess fluid in the legs, abdomen, and chest. Medications can reduce fluid buildup but dosing is not an exact science. Inaccurate dosing can harm the kidneys, cause confusion, and even land patients in the hospital. To avoid these complications, clinicians rely on a multitude of blood and imaging tests that often require expensive equipment, drawing blood, or specially trained staff. Dr. Mazumder's team seeks to simplify the process by testing the benefit of a decades-old technique called the Valsalva maneuver in combination with a finger photoplethysmography device (similar to a noninvasive bedside pulse oximeter). Patients hold their breath for 10 seconds, and the device measures changes in blood flow to the finger. Safely and successfully tested in individuals with heart problems to predict levels of fluid overload, the investigators aim to be the first to show the device's utility in patients with liver disease.

29. A Novel Protective Mechanism in the Bile Ducts of Patients with Primary Sclerosing Cholangitis

Principal Investigator: Richard M. Green, MD

A chronic bile duct and liver disease, Primary Sclerosing Cholangitis (PSC) affects more than 50,000 Americans and can progress to cirrhosis, liver failure, and bile duct cancer. Currently, the only effective therapy is liver transplantation. Better understanding the pathogenesis of PSC is urgently needed to develop new therapies. In recent cell culture and animal studies, Dr. Green and his colleagues focused on a protective cell signaling pathway: the unfolded protein response (UPR). They found that the UPR is activated when bile flow is impaired, and mice lacking UPR genes in their liver are highly susceptible to injury from bile duct obstruction. Now moving forward with the first human investigations examining UPR, Dr. Green aims to determine how it is activated in the bile ducts of patients with PSC. The team plans to study bile duct tissues obtained during endoscopic procedures performed for bile duct obstruction. The identification of "protective" genes and proteins could lead to new drug targets and, ultimately, the development of novel medical therapies.

30. Understanding Immune Signature of Foods in Eosinophilic Esophagitis

Principal Investigator: Joshua Wechsler, MD

In eosinophilic esophagitis (EoE), a variety of foods trigger inflammation in the esophagus. Diet elimination remains a mainstay treatment approach, with the number and type of food triggers varying between patients. Some respond well to eliminating a single food while others require the removal of multiple foods. Although no biomarkers or testing currently exist to help pinpoint specific triggers, previous studies have found a key role for white blood cells known as T-cells. This study will assess the novel association between individual food triggers and T-cell clonality. Dr. Wechsler and his team intend to examine esophageal biopsies for evidence of the specificity of immune response of white blood cells to specific foods. The researchers will use deep sequencing of the T-lymphocyte receptor to identify how frequently unique types of T-cells appear. The team hopes this data will help explain how the immune system "learns" to respond to specific foods and, ultimately, provide a potential screen.

Thank You!

The Board of Directors would like to thank you for your presence this evening and for your contributions to the Digestive Health Foundation. Without our tremendous network of support, including a growing number of patients, families, friends, colleagues, volunteers and donors, we would not be able to invest in groundbreaking research, physician-scientist training, and gastroenterology care at Northwestern Medicine. With your help, we are changing the future for patients and their loved ones.

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