

2024
DIGESTIVE
HEALTH
FOUNDATION

Gala

TRANSFORMING DIGESTIVE DISEASE INTO DIGESTIVE HEALTH

MAY | 11 | 2024



THANK YOU

Dr. Stephen and Jayne Hanauer
for your leadership and friendship.
We congratulate you both on this
well-deserved recognition.

The Eleven Eleven Foundation
Wendy and Jim Abrams

Celebrating the
transformational work of the
Digestive Health Center



P R I T Z K E R
F O U N D A T I O N

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear Friends,

On behalf of the Digestive Health Foundation Board of Directors, it is my privilege and pleasure to welcome you to our 2024 Gala. This year is especially significant as we honor our beloved Dr. Stephen Hanauer by announcing the **Northwestern Medicine Stephen B. Hanauer, MD, Inflammatory Bowel Disease Center**. Just as Dr. Hanauer is one of a kind, the Hanauer IBD Center will be the first of its kind, providing patients with access to leading-edge GI care. A guiding member of the DHF Science Advisory Council since our inception in 2015, Dr. Hanauer has had a profound impact on our organization as well as his many friends, colleagues, and patients, including those gathered here tonight.

Innovative research and education have been hallmarks of Dr. Hanauer's career. Under his leadership, the Northwestern Medicine Digestive Health Center has ranked in the top ten *U.S. News and World Report* Hospital Rankings the past three years. DHF is proud to continue to support the efforts of Dr. Hanauer and the team of world-class physician scientists at the DHC. Their important discoveries help prevent, treat, and ultimately cure digestive disorders including colon, pancreatic and esophageal cancers, ulcerative colitis, Crohn's disease, celiac disease, hepatitis, and other liver diseases.

Just this year, DHF funded seven research studies (highlighted on pages 95-98), for a total of 89 grants in the past nine years. Many of these studies have provided early-stage findings that were leveraged into much larger grants focusing on digestive diseases. Additionally, we fund the **DHF BioRepository**, providing researchers across the country with tissue samples to innovate research. These groundbreaking studies are changing the landscape of digestive health - providing hope for patients and their families.

In addition to research funding, DHF support enables the DHC to develop new diagnostic tools and paradigm shifting treatments, including:

- Utilizing **Artificial Intelligence** and new virtual platforms for optimal treatment options
- Advancing **translational microbiome research** to better understand the fundamental role of the microbiome in human health and disease
- Creation of a **universal platform** that allows patients from around the world to access DHC's leading-edge care
- **Improving access to IBD** care in underserved communities

None of this would be possible without our loyal supporters, sponsors, and donors. Thank you for partnering with us to help make a difference in the lives of those living with digestive disease. Please enjoy this wonderful evening!



Diane Saltoun, President

KEYNOTE SPEAKER



Maria T. Abreu, MD

Professor of Medicine
Professor of Microbiology and Immunology
Director, Crohn's & Colitis Center
University of Miami Miller School of Medicine

Dr. Maria T. Abreu is a gastroenterologist who specializes in inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). She completed her medical degree at the University of Miami, Miller School of Medicine. Her postdoctoral training included an internship and residency in medicine at the Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, Massachusetts, and a clinical and research fellowship in gastroenterology at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). She was an Associate Professor of Medicine at Mount Sinai School of Medicine, NYC, and head of the IBD Center. She is currently the Director of the Crohn's and Colitis Center, Professor of Medicine, and Professor of Microbiology and Immunology at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine.

Dr. Abreu has more than 20 years of leadership experience in basic, translational, and clinical research and mentoring. She was elected to the American Society for Clinical Investigation in 2010 and to the Association of American Physicians (AAP) in 2018. She completed a three-year term as Chair of the International Organization for the Study of Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IOIBD) in 2022. In 2019, she was elected Councilor-at-Large of the American Gastroenterological Association (AGA) Governing Board for a term of three years. Most recently, she is President-Elect of the AGA, on the path to becoming President in 2024. She will be the fifth woman and first Latina to hold this position.

Dr. Abreu is a recipient of the 2019 Sherman Prize, created by The Bruce and Cynthia Sherman Charitable Foundation for outstanding achievements in IBD. In 2020, she received the Mentoring Award from the IMIBD section of the AGA as well as the Healio's Lifetime Disruptor Award which recognizes gastroenterologists or hepatologists who consistently push the GI field forward through innovative treatments, practice management, patient care, or research. In 2023, Dr. Abreu received the Women Empowering and Embracing Women Award. She is the 30th alumna inducted into the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine Hall of Fame.

Northwestern Medicine Celebrates Stephen Hanauer, MD

A Better Future for Patients With Digestive Health Conditions



Thank you to Digestive Health Foundation for your continued collaboration as we ensure a legacy of extraordinary patient care with the creation of **Northwestern Medicine Stephen B. Hanauer, MD, Inflammatory Bowel Disease Center**. Your support is helping us amplify Dr. Hanauer's mission to advance innovation, enhance patient care and train future physician-scientists.

Patients at Northwestern Medicine Stephen B. Hanauer, MD, Inflammatory Bowel Disease Center will benefit from:

- Innovation in diagnostics, treatments and techniques, including the use of artificial intelligence to increase accuracy and efficiency
- Multidisciplinary care, including nutrition therapy, behavioral health support and connections to other medical specialties
- Access to early-phase clinical trials and high-quality care – regardless of their location or ability to pay

IBD treatment is better.

Among the world's leaders in the treatment of inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), Dr. Hanauer cares for patients by incorporating clinical research, state-of-the-art diagnostics, nutritional and behavioral support, and the latest proven and investigational therapies. His contributions to his field have led to the development of many leading IBD treatments and have inspired generations of physicians and nurses to provide better patient care.

Northwestern Medicine is better.

Dr. Hanauer brought his visionary approach to Northwestern Medicine 10 years ago, elevating our program through his collaborative approach and helping our team achieve national recognition as a top destination for gastroenterology and gastroenterological surgery. Under his leadership, the program has expanded its commitment to research and innovation, attracted top-level physician talent and improved the lives of patients with digestive diseases.

Patients are better.

Thank you to Dr. Hanauer and to Digestive Health Foundation for your continued dedication to patients around the world. Your work is lifesaving and life-changing — and patients are better because of you.

Thank you to Dr. Hanauer for his visionary leadership and to Digestive Health Foundation for your shared commitment to exceptional patient care.

Tonight's Menu

HORS D'OEUVRES

Smoked Salmon Tart with Caviar and Chive on Potato Pancake with Crème Fraiche
Tuna Tartare in Wonton Cone with Citrus Soy Sauce
Golden Gazpacho Shooter
Blackened Cocktail Shrimp with Pineapple Rum Salsa
Summer Roll with Plum Sauce
Spinach, Tomato and Goat Cheese Flatbread

BREAD BASKET

Flatbread Crisps, Multigrain Roll, Pretzel Roll

SALAD

Fire Roasted Eggplant, Beefsteak Yellow and Red Tomatoes, Buffalo Mozzarella
with Herb Emulsion, Ciabatta Crostini, and Herb Vinaigrette

COMBINATION ENTRÉE

Slow Roasted Strip Loin with Port Wine Reduction and Sauteed Scallops with Lemon Butter Sauce
Celery Root Puree, Grilled Colorful Baby Peppers, Grilled Asparagus and Artichokes

VEGETARIAN ENTRÉE

Seared Sweet Chili Tofu Steak
Shitake Mushrooms and Assorted Vegetables,
Scallion Fried Rice and Sesame Seeds, Asian Sauce

WINES

Domaine Patrick Javillier Cuvée des Forgets Bourgogne 2021
Clos Sainte Anne Premiere Côtes de Bordeaux 2018

DESSERT BUFFET

Mini Churros with Caramel Sauce	Miniature Mousse Cones – Chocolate and Mango Passionfruit
Warm Chocolate Chip Cookie Skillet	Sliced Fruit and Berry Platters
Warm Sea Salt Caramel Cookies	Mini Berry Tarts – Assorted Berries, Lemon Cream, Strawberry Almond
Mini Seasonal Eclairs	Miniature Root Beer Floats
Cake Pops – S'mores, Berry Cake, and Chocolate & Vanilla with Praline Sprinkles	Miniature Milk Shakes – Chocolate Malt, Strawberry, Cookies & Cream

Tonight's Program

WELCOME

REMARKS

John E. Pandolfino, MD, MSCI

Hans Popper Professor of Medicine

Chief, Division of Gastroenterology & Hepatology

Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine

Northwestern Medicine

Maria T. Abreu, MD

Professor of Medicine

Professor of Microbiology and Immunology

Director, Crohn's & Colitis Center

University of Miami Miller School of Medicine

HONOREE

Stephen B. Hanauer, MD

Clifford Joseph Barborka Professor of Medicine

Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine

Medical Director, Digestive Health Center

Northwestern Medicine

LIVE AUCTION

MUSIC & DANCING

ENTERTAINMENT THROUGHOUT THE EVENING

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A photograph of a restaurant interior. In the foreground, there is a round, tufted leather booth with a small round table in front of it. The table is set with plates, glasses, and a small metal pitcher. In the background, there is a bar with shelves of wine bottles and a display of wine glasses. A chandelier with several white shades hangs from the ceiling. The lighting is warm and ambient.

CONGRATULATIONS

to

DR. STEPHEN HANAUER

We salute you for your lifetime contributions
to digestive health and your parental contribution
to the world of wine via Richard!

With love and admiration
from our family to yours,

THE MELMAN FAMILY



Our vision

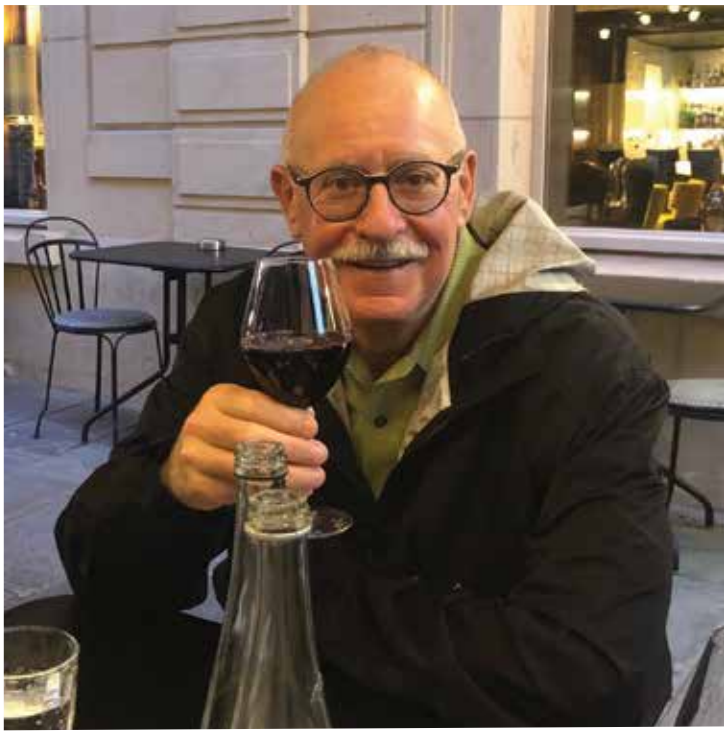
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We are honored
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The Digestive Health Foundation
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Stephen B. Hanauer, MD,
Inflammatory Bowel
Disease Center
in loving memory of
Michael S. Tepper,
lifelong friend,
and Founding DHF
Board Member.



Steve,

CONGRATULATIONS!

As a remarkable doctor
and as a cherished friend,
thank you for always
being there for all of us.

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A photograph of a dining table. In the foreground, a light-colored plate holds a round, green-topped vegetable terrine garnished with sliced pink onions and green herbs, a piece of seared salmon with a dark charred top, and a dollop of orange sauce. In the background, a wine glass filled with a golden liquid sits on a white tablecloth. The text 'private dining by SEPIA' is overlaid on the right side of the image, flanked by decorative flourishes.

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CONGRATULATE DR. STEPHEN HANAUER

*on the well-deserved
recognition of his
extraordinary contributions
to the field of digestive health
and a special shout out to*

DR. MICHAEL RUCHIM



Jamie and David Schwartz
congratulate **Steve Hanauer** on his leadership,
vision and well-deserved recognition.

We also salute **Michael Ruchim**
and the extraordinary team
at the Digestive Health Center.



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Congratulations to Dr. Stephen Hanauer
on the establishment of the
Northwestern Medicine Stephen B. Hanauer, MD,
Inflammatory Bowel Disease Center.

We are amazed by your accomplishments
and inspired by your vision for the future:

Dr. Stephen B. Hanauer


Dr. John E. Pandolfino

Dr. Michael Ruchim

Dr. Scott Strong

We are honored and proud to support all
the physicians of the Digestive Health Center,
the DHF Board members and DHF Staff
in their pursuit of transforming digestive disease
into digestive health.

The Elrad Family



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

Andi & Jim Gordon

WE PROUDLY SUPPORT

**the Digestive Health Foundation
and the newly announced
Northwestern Medicine
Stephen B. Hanauer, MD,**

Inflammatory Bowel Disease Center.

**We applaud DHF's mission to transform
digestive disease into digestive health.
Special thank you to Dr. John Pandolfino,
Dr. Stephen Hanauer, Dr. Scott Strong,
Dr. Michael Ruchim, the physicians of
the Digestive Health Center,
and the DHF Board members and
the DHF Ambassador Board members
for their tireless efforts to ensure
success of this year's exciting events.**

STEPHANIE AND MICHAEL BAUM



**The Bluhm Family Foundation
and the Skurnick Family**

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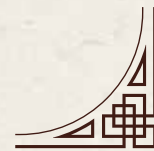
Digestive Health Foundation

**in its important work to further the
well-being of current and future generations**



Our sincere gratitude
to Dr. Hanauer
for his care
and all he
continues to do.
We are honored
to support your work!

The Duffey
Family Foundation





*The Renee and Todd Schilling family
are honored to support
the amazing researchers and physicians at
Northwestern's Digestive Health Center.*

*Special thanks to
Dr. Stephen Hanauer
and Dr. John Pandolfino
for your continued efforts to
transform your patients' lives.*



Thank you

“ Our gratitude and appreciation to Dr. Stephen and Jayne Hanauer for their tireless work improving the health of so many over the years. ”

Traci, Valerie and Lee Shapiro

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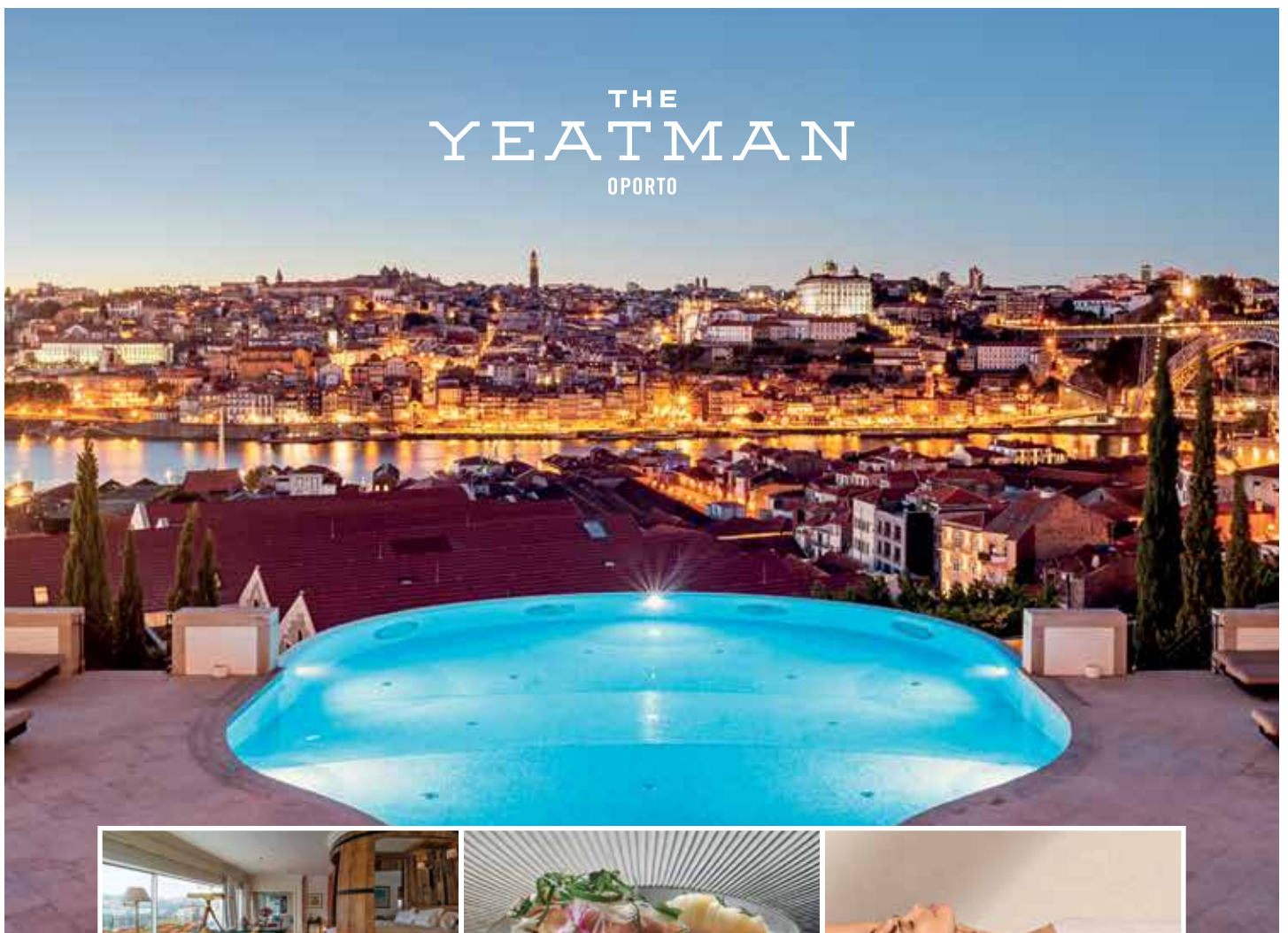


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Congratulations!

On announcing the Northwestern
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Inflammatory Bowel Disease
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Thank you

To the entire Digestive Health Center doctors and staff
for your dedicated leadership to transform digestive
disease into digestive health.

Sharon and Lee Oberlander

Well-deserved congratulations to

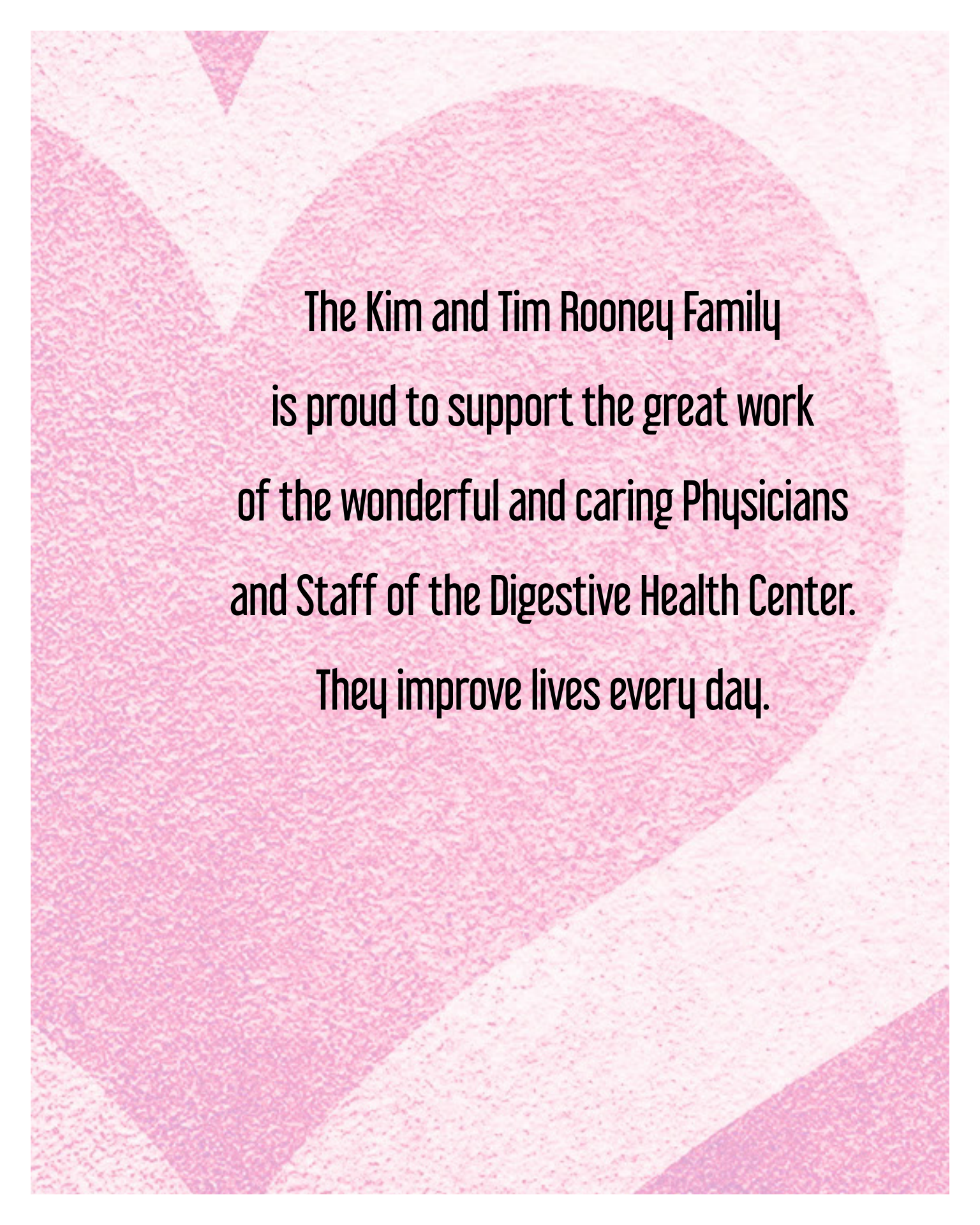
Dr. Stephen Hanauer

Our family is deeply grateful
for your thoughtful care,
strong vision,
and extraordinary skill.

Much appreciation as well to
Dr Pandolfino, Dr. Ruchim, Dr. Strong,
and the terrific medical team
at the DHC.

Diane Saltoun & Bruce Braun





**The Kim and Tim Rooney Family
is proud to support the great work
of the wonderful and caring Physicians
and Staff of the Digestive Health Center.
They improve lives every day.**

**TONIGHT WE CELEBRATE
A SIMPLE TRUTH:**

**Because of Dr. Hanauer's work,
yesterday's impossibilities will be
tomorrow's accomplishments
at the Digestive Health Institute.**

THANK YOU, STEVE!

Cindy and Dave Rosenbloom



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Thank you to everyone
involved in the
Digestive Health Foundation.

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into digestive health.
Looking forward to
a bright future for
all those affected.

D.J. and Emily Hoffman



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The background of the page is a dynamic, abstract composition of blue brushstrokes. The strokes vary in intensity from light sky blue to deep navy blue, creating a sense of movement and energy. They are layered and overlap, with some appearing as thin, delicate lines and others as thick, textured bands. The overall effect is reminiscent of a painter's palette or a digital brush tool, with the strokes generally moving from the top left towards the bottom right.

Congratulations to
Dr. Stephen Hanauer

and thank you to

Dr. John Pandolfino, Dr. Scott Strong

and all of the great physicians at

Northwestern Medicine

Digestive Health Center for their

dedication and hard work.

Lynne Levey & David Schreibman



SIDLEY IS PROUD TO SUPPORT THE

Digestive Health Foundation

in amplifying efforts to transform
digestive disease into digestive health and
cultivate brighter futures for patients and
their families. We congratulate

Dr. Stephen Hanauer

on his inspirational vision and
contributions to medical excellence.

BRUCE R. BRAUN and DIANE SALTOUN*

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GASTROENTEROLOGY

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Digestive diseases are common, impacting millions of Americans every year.^{1,2} Challenges remain for many — especially in under-resourced communities — as the journey to diagnosis and the right management can be complex, frustrating and slow.^{3,4,5}

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Despite advances that have been made, there is still so much more to be done. In many ways, we're just getting started.

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1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Center for Health Statistics. FastStats – Digestive Diseases page. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Website. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/digestive-diseases.htm>. Accessed January 19, 2023. 2. Mathews SC, Izmailyan S, Brito FA, Yamal JM, Mikhail O, Revere FL. Prevalence and financial burden of digestive diseases in a commercially insured population. *Clin Gastroenterol Hepatol*. 2022;20(7):1480-1487. 3. Singh ME, James SP, Germino GG, Rodgers GP. Achieving health equity through digestive diseases research and scientific workforce diversity. *Gastroenterology*. 2022;162(6):1597-1601. 4. Kinnucan J, Binlon D, Cross R, et al. Inflammatory bowel disease care referral pathway. *Gastroenterology*. 2019;157(1):242-254. 5. Popov J, Farbod Y, Chauhan U, et al. Patients' experiences and challenges in living with inflammatory bowel disease: a qualitative approach. *Clin Exp Gastroenterol*. 2021;14:123-131.

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US-NON-9097v1.0 1/23





SPECIAL THANKS
TO DR. HANAUER AND THE
NORTHWESTERN MEDICINE TEAM
FOR YOUR DEDICATION,
CARE AND COMPASSION.

JACKIE AND BILL SHINER



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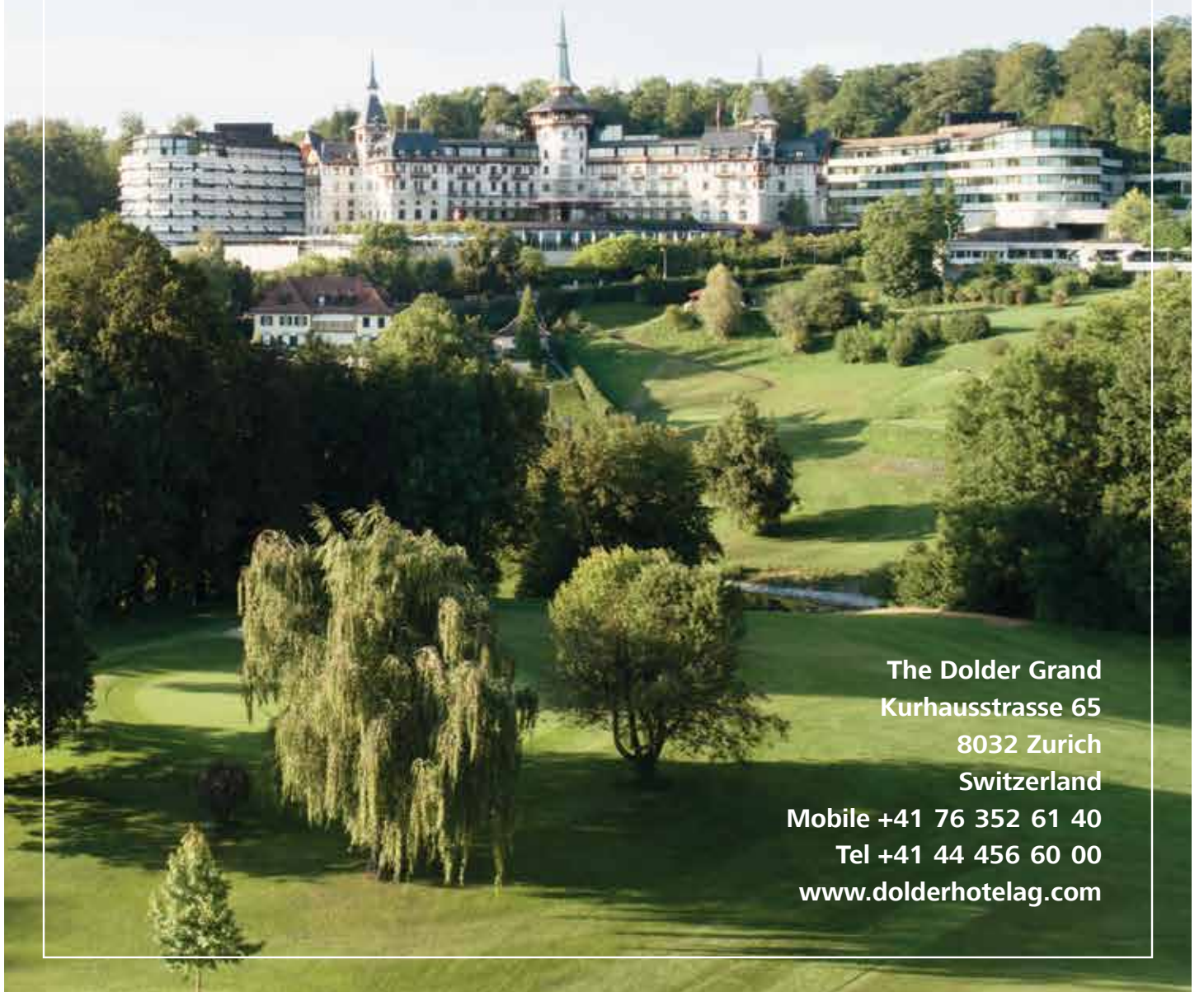


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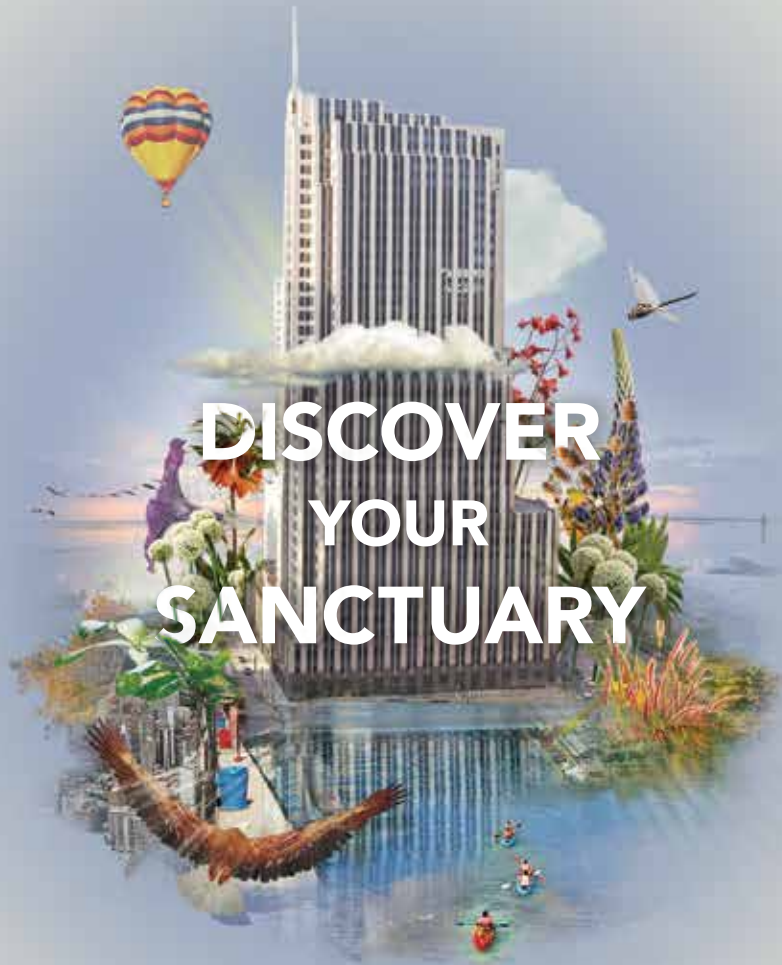
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Changing the Future of Medicine

Thanks to the support of our generous donors, the Digestive Health Foundation (DHF) has been able to launch and continue to underwrite two leading-edge projects at Northwestern Medicine's Digestive Health Center (DHC) – the signature DHF BioRepository and the Artificial Intelligence and Mathematics in Gastroenterology (AIM-GI) – DHC houses 1 of 10 in the world! Both provide researchers accelerated pathways for scientific discovery, allowing the team at the DHC to react to treatment realities for patients as quickly and effectively as possible.


DHF BIOREPOSITORY

Launched six years ago with a Signature Grant Award from the Digestive Health Foundation, the DHF BioRepository is a hybrid database and specimen (tissue, blood, serum, urine, stool) collection system that links the specimen with physiologic and psychometric data, making that data available in real time to Northwestern investigators and their collaborators. Historically, researchers have recruited study participants individually or over the course of months or years. All of that has changed with the DHF BioRepository, which instantaneously provides scientists with thousands of patient samples and related data for analysis.

Due in a large part to continued funding from DHF, the BioRepository has supported multiple initiatives across the Northwestern Medicine GI and Hepatology Divisions, and has helped to foster collaborations across the University and with GI industry and pharmaceutical companies.

Esophageal Research Program: The DHF BioRepository has served as the major translational support for a comprehensive NIH-funded research program defining disease classifications in achalasia. The samples collected over the last five years have allowed for the creation of a new disease classification model for eosinophilic esophagitis (EoE), which has been demonstrated to predict response to therapy and will allow for an unprecedented ability to personalize treatment decisions. This methodology is being applied to other esophageal diseases, such as scleroderma and gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD).

Inflammatory Bowel Disease Program: The BioRepository is directly supporting Northwestern Medicine Gastroenterologist Dr. Parambir Dulai's translational research program for his NIH-funded \$12 million grant to study hyperbaric oxygen therapy in ulcerative colitis. The capabilities of the DHF BioRepository have been expanded due to this funding to now collect novel and never before categorized or profiled bacteria from the GI tract to study how bacteria drive inflammation.



Hepatology: The DHF BioRepository is supporting early expansions with hepatology research, including studies to identify novel biomarkers of transplant rejection and/or liver inflammation, and research into how the microbiome may promote inflammation in the gall bladder and biliary drainage system. It has also fostered collaborative research projects to study the immune cells in primary sclerosing cholangitis (PSC).

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND MATHEMATICS IN GASTROENTEROLOGY (AIM-GI)

Imagine a virtual, fully-functioning stomach that lives inside a mega computer and can be tested with new medications and surgical procedures for real-life application. How about combining the experience of world-class physicians with the precision of machine-learned data analysis to offer patients diagnoses approaching 90% accuracy? Thanks to support from DHF, these dreams are becoming a reality at the DHC.

Gastroenterologists and computer scientists in the DHC's AIM-GI program are developing the latest in Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology to revolutionize the way clinicians manage diseases. The program focuses on three main initiatives designed to improve patient care with unprecedented accuracy and diversity of solutions:

- Developing virtual organs, which can be used to study the effects of surgery and medications
- Inventing new hybrid diagnostic tools that use AI and machine learning to enhance diagnoses
- Building machine learning and neural networks to predict disease outcomes

The Northwestern team not only develops novel AI algorithms, they also lead research into how those algorithms can be utilized to transform clinical care for patients. Researchers are identifying ways AI can improve the quality of screening colonoscopies in rural healthcare settings, how AI can assess the severity of IBD in patients, and how AI and mathematics can reduce delayed diagnoses of motility disorders in the esophagus.

THE GIFT OF HOPE

Both the BioRepository and AIM-GI Grant represent DHF's commitment to supporting the physician scientists at the DHC in their pursuit to research and identify advanced treatment options for digestive health patients. Continued funding will bring hope to patients across Northwestern and around the globe.



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*Congratulations to tonight's honoree
Dr. Stephen B. Hanauer*

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We proudly support the **Digestive Health Foundation** and the **DHF Ambassador Board**, as it continues to strengthen its mission to transform digestive disease into digestive health. Special thank you to **Dr. John Pandolfino, Dr. Stephen Hanauer, Dr. Scott Strong, Dr. Michael Ruchim**, the physicians of the Digestive Health Center, and the DHF Board members and the DHF Ambassador Board members for their tireless efforts to ensure success of this year's exciting events.

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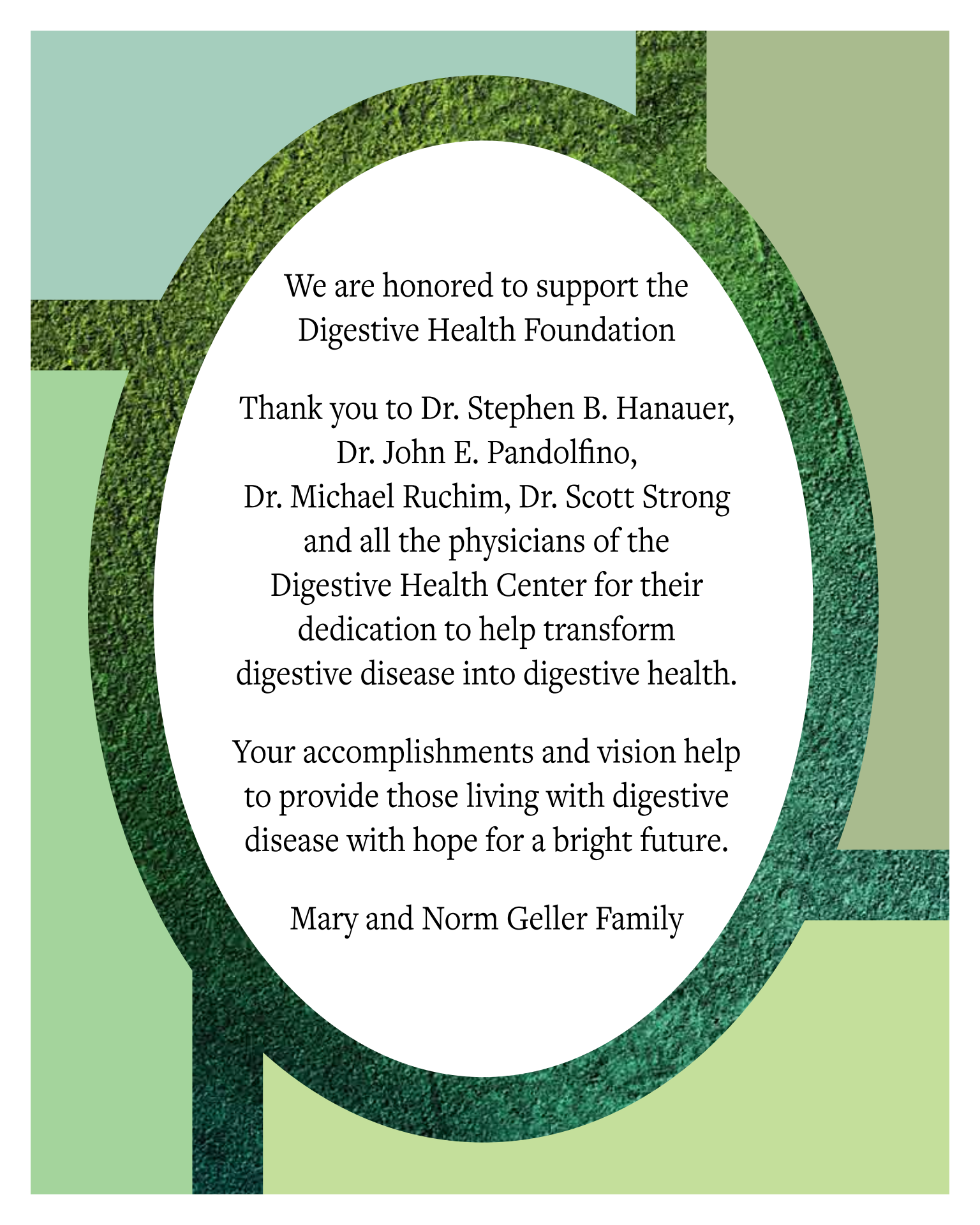
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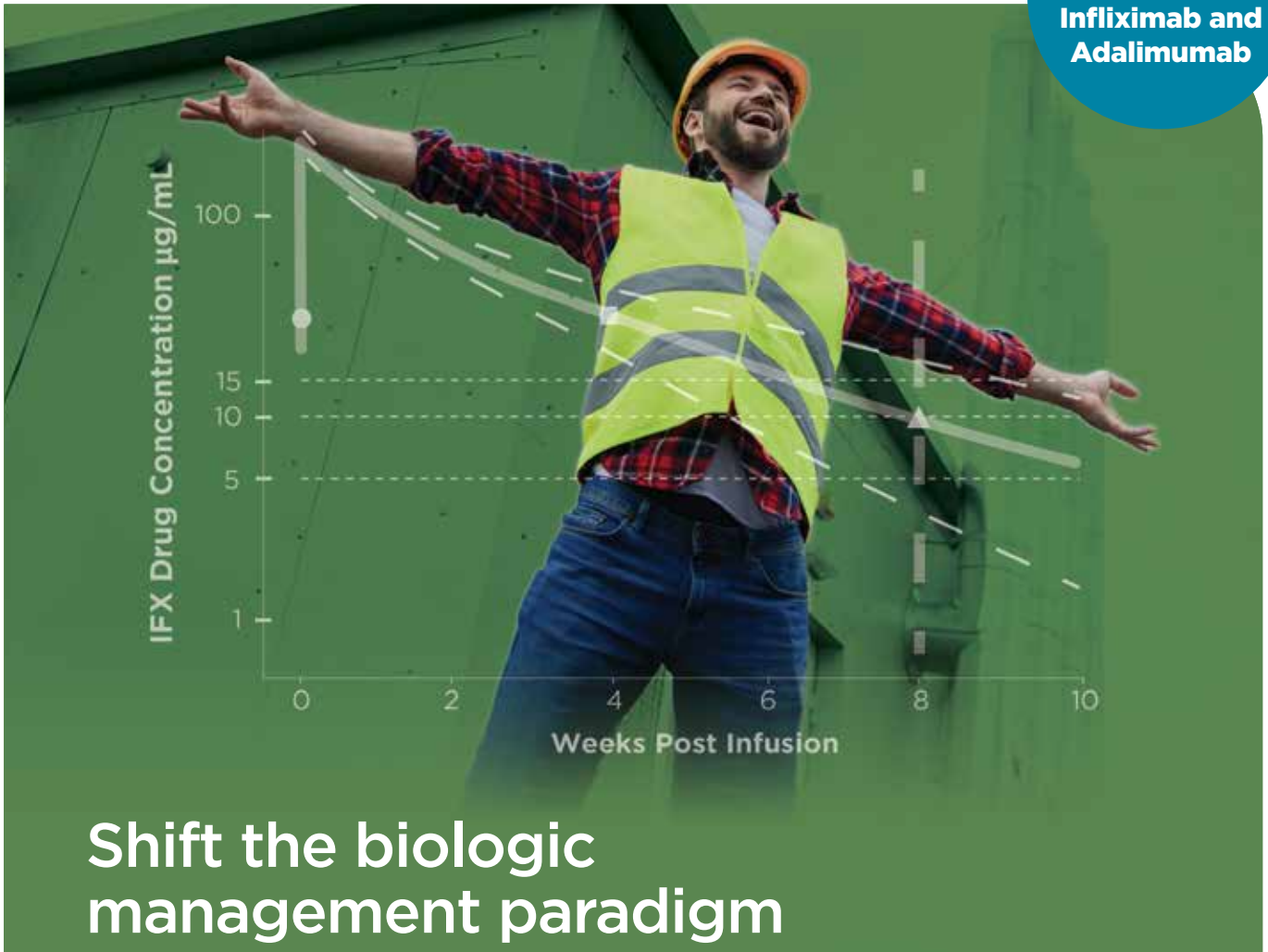


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Thank you to Dr. Stephen B. Hanauer,
Dr. John E. Pandolfino,
Dr. Michael Ruchim, Dr. Scott Strong
and all the physicians of the
Digestive Health Center for their
dedication to help transform
digestive disease into digestive health.

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to provide those living with digestive
disease with hope for a bright future.

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A GREAT FRIEND

STEVE, YOU MAKE THE
WORLD A BETTER PLACE
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THANK YOU!

*Dr. Hanauer, Dr. Pandolfino, Dr. Strong, and the doctors
at the Northwestern Medicine Digestive Health Center
for their dedication, talent and tireless work.*

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Colleen and Dave Seidman



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Congratulations to the exceptional Physicians and Staff
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Your tireless dedication, care and research give the
greatest gift of hope.

And thank you, Dr. Hanauer, for your unmatched care
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Steve,

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† American Cancer Society. American Cancer Society Guideline for Colorectal Cancer Screening. Cancer.org. Published November 17, 2020. <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/colon-rectal-cancer/detection-diagnosis-staging/acs-recommendations.html>

‡ Repici A, Badalamenti M, Maselli R, et al. Efficacy of real-time computer-aided detection of colorectal neoplasia in a randomized trial. Gastroenterology. 2020; 159:512-520.e7

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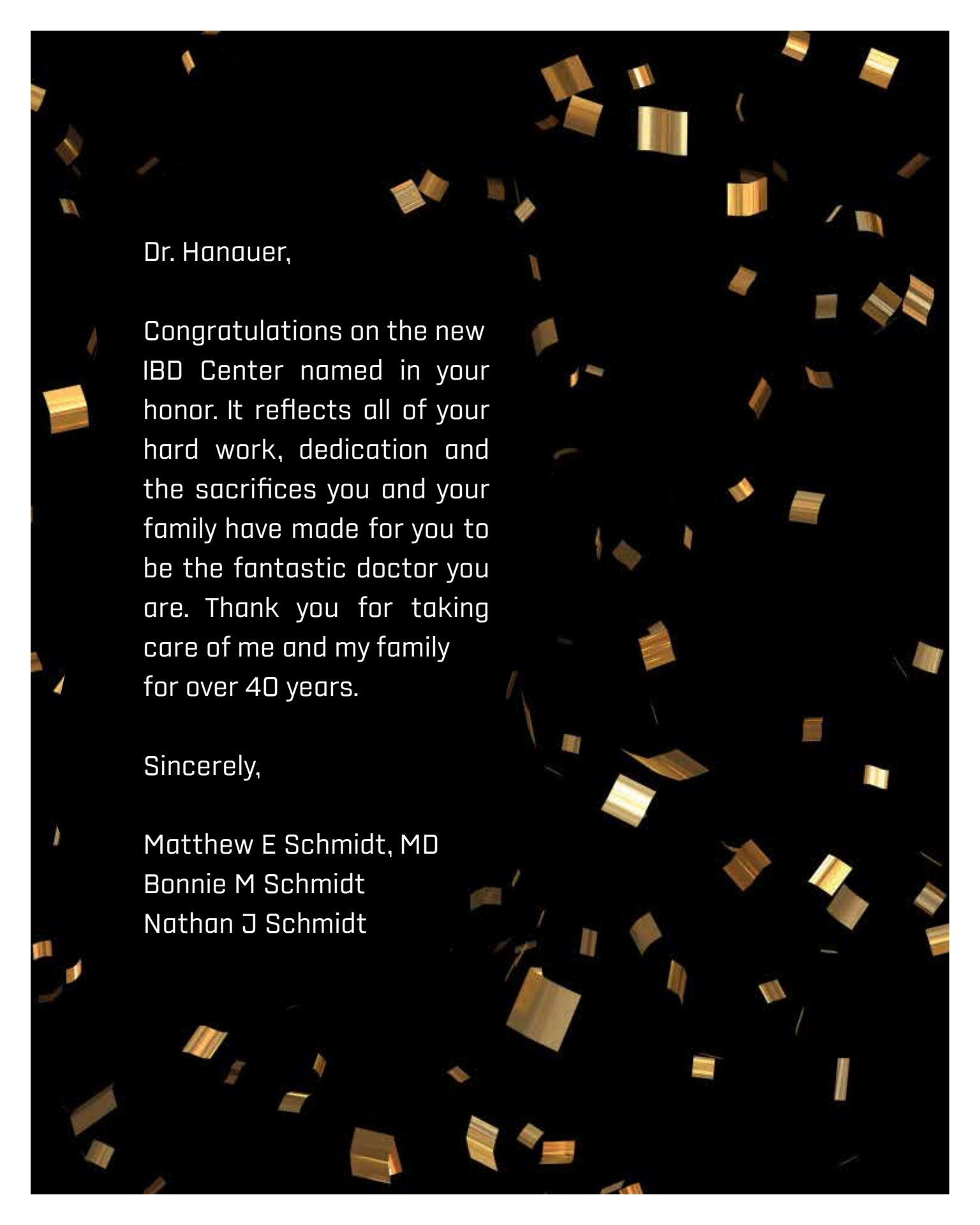


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Dr. Hanauer,

Congratulations on the new IBD Center named in your honor. It reflects all of your hard work, dedication and the sacrifices you and your family have made for you to be the fantastic doctor you are. Thank you for taking care of me and my family for over 40 years.

Sincerely,

Matthew E Schmidt, MD
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**Congratulations to the DHF Gala Committee,
Board, and Science Advisory Council on
a successful 2024 Gala!**

Empowered Nonprofits is grateful for your partnership. We look forward to seeing the Northwestern Medicine Stephen B. Hanauer, MD, Center for Inflammatory Bowel Disease come to life. We know how hard you all have worked!

**With gratitude,
Stefanie Pessis Weil and Ilissa Berz**

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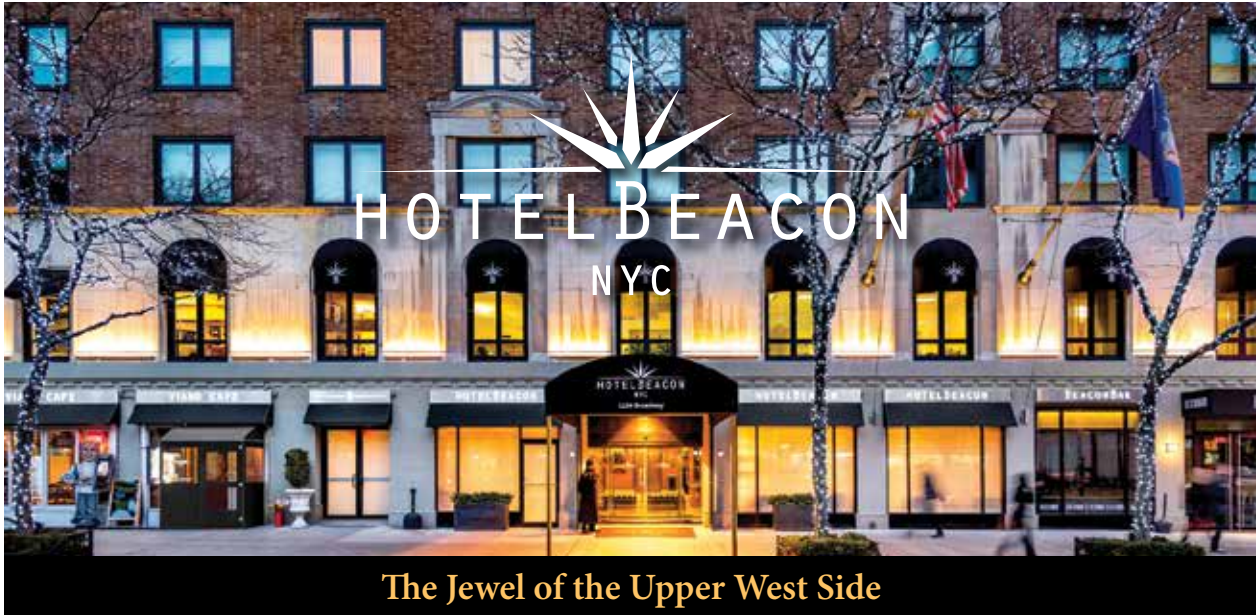
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I AM ABLE FOUNDATION

This was an extremely successful year for the I Am Able Foundation mentees. All students were able to significantly improve their baseline MCAT scores, with three scoring between the 92nd to 99th percentile and two scoring greater than the 70th percentile, which is well above the national average. This year's students were accepted to several top medical schools and three mentees received full ride scholarships.

DHF would like to congratulate the following students for their hard work and acceptance to medical school:



Imani Bah
Rush University
Rosalind Franklin
University of Medicine
and Science

MCAT Cohort 2022



Isaiah Lasisi
Northwestern University
Wayne State University
UIC College of Medicine

*MCAT Cohort 2022
MCAT Instructor 2023-2024*



Justin Banks
University of Chicago - Full Ride
Wayne State University
University of Illinois

MCAT Cohort 2022



Adaeze Olikagu
Northwestern University - Full Ride
University of Pennsylvania - Full Ride
Medical College of Wisconsin
The Ohio State University
University of Michigan
St. Louis University
SIU
University of Illinois
Indiana University
Case Western Reserve University
University of Cincinnati

CAT Instructor 2023-2024



Nakia Chapelle
Baptist Health College of
Osteopathic Medicine



Tayo Omoniyi
Wayne State University
University of Wisconsin - Madison
Robert Wood Johnson
Medical School
University of Illinois
The Ohio State University
University of Michigan



Gabrielle Cole
University of Pennsylvania
Loyola Stritch School of Medicine
Howard University
Northwestern University
UIC
SIU
Wayne State University

*MCAT Cohort 2022 (Independent Study)
MCAT Instructor 2022-2024*



Kristen Williams
University of Illinois
Meharry Medical College
Howard University

I AM ABEL

Communities across America need doctors to provide quality medical care and there are many aspiring, hardworking students who, given the opportunity, are eager to meet those needs. However, one of the determining factors for medical school admissions is the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT), and many at-risk communities lack the resources necessary to enable their students to score competitively on the exam. To help address this issue, the Digestive Health Foundation supports the I Am Abel MCAT Prep Program, which provides much needed funds, mentorship and infrastructure to underrepresented students as they prepare for the MCAT.

The I Am Abel Foundation seeks to bridge socioeconomic gaps and promote achievements amongst minority inner city youth. The Foundation realized that while many of their students were performing well in the classroom, they were still scoring below the 50th percentile on the MCAT exam. In 2021, with support from DHF, they launched an intensive MCAT preparation program that provides qualifying students with personalized and group tutoring and coaching, as well as access to third party test prep materials and resources at no cost to the student. These initiatives have enabled I Am Abel students to improve their MCAT scores, and the program is already proving successful in facilitating their acceptance into medical school, launching these talented and diligent students on the path toward becoming future physicians.

Since its inception, more than 30 students have participated in the I Am Abel MCAT Prep Program and almost all have successfully raised their MCAT scores into a competitive range. Many MCAT course alumni, scoring well above the 92nd percentile, are now MCAT instructors and coaches and have been accepted into top medical schools like Northwestern, Penn, University of Chicago, University of Michigan and many more wonderful schools with full scholarships. Further funding from DHF would help even more promising students pursue their dreams of attending medical school and serving the communities that they call home.

2024 GRANT AWARDEES

Congratulations to the 2024 Digestive Health Foundation Grant Awardees!

On behalf of the DHF Grants Committee that does a phenomenal job of organizing the process - special thanks to Committee Chair Tim Rooney, Board Director Julia Merpi, and Ilissa Berz from Empowered - the DHF Science Advisory Council is proud to approve an outstanding slate of seven research projects totaling \$320,000.

This year's research grants once again demonstrate the breadth and depth of the Northwestern Medicine Digestive Health Center (DHC) and affiliated clinical, translational and basic research projects. From animal models of inflammation and single cell human models of disease, to Artificial Intelligence, and important medical and surgical projects, the research being funded involves the entire digestive system - including esophageal disorders, liver diseases, Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD), and psychosocial/family support for patients undergoing bowel surgery. These studies will both advance our understanding of the complex underpinnings of GI diseases and immediately impact outcomes for patients.

As in prior years, we will monitor these investments into digestive health and continue to expand our efforts to diagnose, treat, prevent and ultimately cure both common and uncommon GI tract disorders.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen B. Hanauer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Stephen B. Hanauer, MD, DHF Chief Medical Advisor
Clifford Joseph Barborka Professor of Medicine,
Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine;
Medical Director, Digestive Health Center,
Northwestern Medicine

2024 GRANT AWARDEES



Vasilios Kalas, MD, PhD

Vasilios Kalas, MD, PhD, Gastroenterology & Hepatology Fellow, PGY-4, Physician-Scientist Training Program, Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine

“Harnessing Artificial Intelligence (AI) to Engineer Protein Therapeutics for Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD)”

- 2.5 million Americans suffer from IBD, which includes Crohn’s disease and ulcerative colitis.
- IBD is an autoimmune disease characterized by inflammation, infection, pain, diarrhea, and life-threatening complications.
- IBD patients often develop immunity to their medications and risk running out of alternative treatment options.
- Using AI, Dr. Kalas is developing a **completely new, potent,**

targeted IBD medication based on mini-proteins that can be easily taken by mouth rather than by IV infusions like many other IBD drugs.

Ronen Sumagin, PhD, Associate Professor, Department of Pathology, Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine*

“Identification of a Novel Neutrophil Subtype as a Prognostic Marker for Sustained Remission in ulcerative colitis (UC)”

- 1 million Americans live with UC, the most common form of IBD (see above).
- Dr. Sumagin has discovered a **new sub-type of immune cell** (neutrophil) in the human body that can be used to predict which UC patients are more likely to remain in remission from active disease.
- **Predicting remission** in UC can drastically affect treatments plans and long-term prognosis for patients.
- This study uses tissue and data from the DHF BioRepository, housed at Northwestern and home to thousands of patient samples.



Ronen Sumagin, PhD

* Repeat Awardee

2024 GRANT AWARDEES



Marie-Pier Tétreault, PhD

Marie-Pier Tétreault, PhD, Assistant Professor of Medicine, Division of Gastroenterology & Hepatology, Department of Medicine, Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine*

“Unraveling the Molecular Landscape of Basal Cell Hyperplasia (BCH) in Eosinophilic Esophagitis (EoE): A Pathway to Personalized Therapies”

- 150,000+ Americans live with EoE, a chronic immune/allergic condition in adults and children that can cause severe pain and interfere with swallowing/eating.
- BCH is linked to disease severity and progression, and, even with recent advances, many patients struggle to find treatments that work or keep working.
- Dr. Tétreault’s study will reveal the molecular underpinnings of BCH to enable better, powerful, **personalized therapies** for patients.

Sourav Halder, PhD, Postdoctoral Scholar, Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology, Department of Medicine, Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine

“Optimizing the Classification of Eosinophilic Esophagitis (EoE) with Functional Lumen Imaging Probe Using Machine Learning”

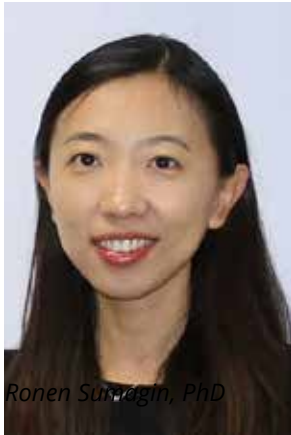
- EoE can cause dysphagia (difficulty of food passing through esophagus) with complications of food impaction and dangerous esophageal perforation.
- Currently, clinical evaluation of esophageal function focuses solely on primary peristalsis (involuntary muscular contraction to move food down the digestive tract).
- Dr. Hader’s study focuses on the additional, important function of the esophageal wall through Functional Lumen Imaging Probe (FLIP) to more accurately diagnose/stage EoE and provide the best opportunity for doctors to effectively treat EoE.



Sourav Halder, PhD

* Repeat Awardee

2024 GRANT AWARDEES



Xiaoying Liu, PhD

Xiaoying Liu, PhD, Research Assistant Professor, Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology, Department of Medicine, Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine*

“The Protective Role of XBP1 in Patients with Primary Sclerosing Cholangitis (PSC)”

- PSC is a chronic disease of the bile duct and liver that affects over 50,000 Americans.
 - 70-85% of PSC patients ALSO have ulcerative colitis and Crohn’s disease.
 - PSC can progress to liver cirrhosis and require liver transplantation for survival.
 - Currently, there aren’t any effective medical treatments for PSC.
- Dr. Liu’s study identifies a specific protective protein and how it functions to offer pathways for scientists to **slow or stop disease progression** in PSC patients.

Dempsey L. Hughes, MD, Assistant Professor of Medicine, Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology, Department of Medicine, Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine



Dempsey L. Hughes, MD

“Determining Effective Use of Endohepatology in Fontan-Associated Liver Disease (FALD): An Innovative Multimodal Assessment for Liver Disease Staging in an Emerging Patient Population”

- Children born with congenital heart disease undergo corrective surgery to prevent heart failure (Fontan palliation).
- Unfortunately, that life-saving surgery eventually leads to the development of advanced liver disease due to abnormal blood flow from long-standing heart disease.
- FALD patient population is expected to double by 2030, and the only known cure is a heart transplant or combined heart-liver transplant.
- Dr. Hughes’ study uses the Endo-hepatology procedure to track disease stage and provide doctors with the best chance for **intervention and patient survival**.

* Repeat Awardee

2024 GRANT AWARDEES



Vitaliy Y. Poylin, MD, MBA

Vitaliy Y. Poylin, MD, MBA, Associate Professor of Surgery, Division of Gastrointestinal Surgery, Department of Surgery, Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine*

“Impact of Spousal Support and Resiliency Training on Quality of Life and Adjustment of New Ostomy Patients”

- Over 100,000 ostomy surgeries are performed in the United States each year for a number of digestive diseases, from IBD to cancer to diverticulitis.
- Ostomies save lives by allowing bodily waste to pass through an opening in the abdomen into a prosthetic bag, or ‘ostomy pouch,’ or into an internal pouch created surgically.
- There are physical and psychosocial implications (short and long term) on both the patient and partner, which require pre- and post-education and support.
- Dr. Poylin’s study aims to standardize education and resilience training to help ostomy patients and their partners better cope with their new stoma, improving their quality of life.

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By involving our team members in **creative volunteer and fundraising activities**, as well as through **direct financial contributions**, we are pleased that our actions lead to **meaningful results in the communities** where we work and reside.

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OUR DIRECTION

We are helping to transform digestive disease into digestive health for patients and families by generating resources to accelerate medical discoveries.

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