

THE MICHIGAN DIFFERENCE

Gifts in support of medicine at Michigan

A Partner in Pediatrics

Daughter's care at the U-M prompts Janette Ferrantino to give back

In 1986, when Janelle Williams was just 5 years old, she developed a rare blood disease that proved difficult to diagnose and treat. After consulting a number of doctors at several hospitals, her mother, Janette Ferrantino, came to the University of Michigan.

"From the moment we arrived, I experienced a tremendous feeling of trust with every doctor, every nurse," says Ferrantino, president and chief executive officer of the Detroit Salt Company. "As a result, I felt like the whole world was lifted off my shoulders."

Janelle underwent emergency surgery that helped her return to a normal, active life. Out of gratitude for the care Janelle received, Ferrantino began to make annual gifts to the Department of Pediatrics and Communicable Diseases.

Ferrantino's support has been integral in fostering success in a department that boasts some of the highest survival rates in the nation for children suffering from pulmonary diseases, multi-system organ failure and cancer. As her involvement grew, she was invited to learn more about some of the department's latest pediatric research.

Ferrantino was impressed by a presentation given by Valerie Castle, M.D. (Residency 1990), then a young assistant professor, who discussed her ongoing work to better understand and treat neuroblastoma, a childhood cancer that most often begins in children younger than 5.

Although Ferrantino didn't understand all the complexities of Castle's highly experimental research, she was deeply impressed by her intensity and dedication. She asked Castle to draft a proposal describing the funding she would need to further her research goals.

Castle produced a modest proposal, suggesting \$10,000 for research support, hoping Ferrantino might be willing to provide at least a portion. Ferrantino studied the proposal carefully before asking if \$10,000 was enough to



Photo: Martin Vogel

Janette Ferrantino (second from right) and her children (from left) Angela Williams, Janelle Williams, Sean Williams and Elise Williams

accomplish her goals. Castle admitted that it was not really enough, but that she had been reluctant to ask for more.

"So tell me," Ferrantino said, "what do you really need?"

Castle returned to the drawing-board and came back with a "best-case scenario" for a fully-funded research project. Ferrantino agreed to fund the full \$250,000 price tag.

"Without Janette's early support, we would not have been able to make research progress and achieve the advances we have in fighting neuroblastoma," says Castle, who is the Ravitz Foundation Professor and Chair of Pediatrics and Communicable Diseases.

Ferrantino's establishment of the Janette Ferrantino Pediatric Hematology Research Fund was just the beginning of a long and successful collaboration with the U-M. The next step in that evolution was the establishment, in 2002, of the Janette Ferrantino Investigator Award Fund, which has helped support the research careers of six outstanding junior, instructional-track faculty in the department.

Most recently, she established the Janette Ferrantino Research Professorship in Pediatrics, awarded to Thomas P. Shanley, M.D., an associate professor of pediatrics and communicable diseases.

Support like Ferrantino's is more important than ever because of a steady decline in research funding available from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) — the primary funding source for much of the cutting-edge research that drives significant biomedical breakthroughs, particularly in areas such as cancer, where Castle says many of the most important advances have occurred in pediatrics. Philanthropy such as Ferrantino's is particularly crucial for young researchers because it provides an important source of seed money to catalyze promising new research, as well as

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"bridge funding" for researchers navigating the challenges of securing NIH support.

And gifts like Ferrantino's help the U-M attract and retain the brightest and most talented students, faculty and researchers, such as Shanley.

"In the current climate of limited and increasingly competitive research funding in general, and pediatric critical care, specifically, this endowment provides substantial support. I remain indebted to Janette for this, as well as for her enormous commitment to pediatrics," says Shanley, who directs the Pediatric Critical Care Medicine program, as well as its Pediatric Critical Care Medicine Fellowship Program.

Ferrantino says she has long been fascinated by the field of medicine. Before she decided to stay home to care for her four children — Janelle, Elise Williams, Sean Williams and Angela Williams — she had been a registered nurse with experience working in both intermediate- and intensive-care units.

"If I had taken a different path, I might well have become a doctor myself," she says. "But having the chance to be so closely involved in Valerie's career, and in the careers of these talented young doctors, has allowed me to enjoy the experience vicariously, and I have found that to be very gratifying." 

—Glen Sard

Brandon Gifts Support Children's Health, Prostate Cancer Survivors

U-M Regent Emeritus and Domino's Pizza CEO and Chairman David Brandon and his wife, Jan, have made a \$2 million gift to the U-M Health System supporting construction of the neonatal intensive care unit in the new C.S. Mott Children's Hospital and Women's Hospital. The unit will be known as the Nick and Chris Brandon Neonatal Intensive Care Unit in honor of the Brandons' twin sons, born with a rare blood disorder and treated successfully at Mott in 1980.

"The University of Michigan has made a profound impact on my life," says Brandon. "My family and I are pleased and proud to be supporting The Michigan Difference campaign in this way." David and Jan Brandon are co-chairs of the "Champions for Children" campaign, part of the University's \$2.5 billion fund-raising effort.

The Brandons also have established, with a \$250,000 gift, the David and Jan Brandon Prostate Cancer Survivor Fund, supporting the Prostate Cancer Survivorship Clinic.

Cohen Family Funds Research on Sleep and Depression

The U-M Depression Center recently received a \$200,000 gift from the Cohen Family Fund to support the research of Roseanne Armitage, Ph.D. The third gift of this size from the Cohen family continues funding for Armitage's innovative research on sleep and depression (see page 19). A key study supported by the Cohens focuses on children and adolescents known to be at high risk for depression and examines ways this illness can be prevented or mitigated through sleep and biological rhythm regulation.

'Founding Father' of U-M Family Medicine Bestows Endowed Chair

George A. Dean, M.D., one of the founding fathers of the family medicine specialty at the U-M, has given a \$1.5 million gift honoring the department he helped establish. Through his gift, Dean, a physician in Southfield, Michigan, has established the George A. Dean, M.D. Chair in Family Medicine at the Medical School. Thomas L. Schwenk (M.D. 1975), currently head of

the Family Medicine Department, will be the first to hold the professorship.

Through the President's Donor Challenge, a program launched by U-M President Mary Sue Coleman to create endowed professorships and support need-based financial aid, Dean's gift is being matched by an additional \$500,000, bringing the total value of his gift to \$2 million.

Kesselring Gift Supports Construction of New Hospital

Lance and Maureen Kesselring, of Ann Arbor, have provided a gift of \$100,000 to the University of Michigan to assist with the construction of the new C.S. Mott Children's Hospital and Women's Hospital.

Klein Family Gift Promotes Research in Thoracic Surgery

John and Carla Klein, of Easton, Connecticut, have provided a \$1 million gift to the U-M to create the John A. and Carla S. Klein Family Research Professorship in Thoracic Surgery. The professorship will be awarded to a faculty member whose research is in the field of diseases of the esophagus. Upon the retirement of current Section Head of Thoracic Surgery Mark Orringer, M.D., the fund will be renamed the John A. and Carla S. Klein Family/Mark B. Orringer Research Professorship in Thoracic Surgery.

Trimby Scholarship Fund Supports Medical Students

Dorothy Trimby, of East Lansing, Michigan, has provided the U-M Medical School with a gift of \$50,000 to create the Dr. Robert H. and Dorothy E. Trimby Scholarship Fund. The fund will provide support for gifted students to pursue medical education, and contributes to the school's goal of relieving the burden of debt experienced by so many of today's medical students.

New Hospital Chapel to Carry Vlasic Name

Michael and Helen Vlasic, of Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, have provided a \$1 million gift to the U-M, supporting construction of the new C.S. Mott Children's Hospital and Women's Hospital. In recognition of their gift, the chapel in the new children's hospital will be named the Helen and Mike Vlasic Family Chapel. 

Bo Schembechler, 1929-2006

Legendary coach impacted Wolverine football, medicine at Michigan

Glenn E. "Bo" Schembechler, the winningest head football coach in University of Michigan history and longtime supporter of the U-M Health System, died November 17, 2006, due to heart failure at Providence Hospital in Southfield, Michigan. He was 77.



Bo and wife, Cathy Schembechler, in 2006

Schembechler had suffered from serious heart disease. After experiencing an episode October 20, 2006, while taping a television program, he was outfitted with a defibrillator to work alongside a previously implanted pacemaker to regulate his heart. He first suffered a heart attack in 1969 just prior to the Rose Bowl.

Schembechler retired from his coaching position in 1989, though he continued his strong relationship with the University and remained an icon of U-M athletics. He coached 194 wins, 13 Big Ten championships and two Rose Bowl victories during his tenure at Michigan, and he continued to be actively involved with the team.

But his U-M legacy extends beyond the football field. Among the many ways he gave back to the University was by establishing a named professorship in the Medical School, the Millie Schembechler Professor of Adrenal Cancer, named after his first wife who died in 1992 of

the rare form of cancer that strikes about 200 Americans each year.

Schembechler's Heart of a Champion Fund to support much-needed research in cardiovascular medicine was established in 2006, and a golf outing in October honored the former coach for his efforts to raise awareness about cardiovascular disease and his involvement with the Cardiovascular Center.

"His ability to serve other people, I think, was the reason he lived so long," says Kim Eagle, M.D., Cardiovascular Center clinical director

and one of Schembechler's personal physicians. "He had a purpose in life. He was the most courageous patient I ever met. He defied all odds in his survival with remarkably bad heart disease. He made me a better doctor and a better person."

Memorial gifts may to be made to the Bo Schembechler Heart of a Champion Fund, University of Michigan Cardiovascular Center, Office of Gift Administration, 3003 S. State St., Suite 8000, Ann Arbor, MI, 48109. Gifts also may be made by calling (734) 647-6179. [m](#)

Wilpons' \$5M Gift Will Create Sport Injury Prevention Center

The Department of Orthopaedic Surgery and the Division of Kinesiology have received a \$5 million gift from the Judy and Fred Wilpon Family Foundation to create a Sport Injury Prevention Center at the U-M.

Focused on preventing sport-related injuries and promoting the health of athletes of all ages and abilities, the interdisciplinary center will bring together specialists in such disciplines as kinesiology, orthopaedic surgery, bioengineering, public health and sports medicine to generate new insights into the root of injuries and the means to prevent them.

Fred Wilpon is chairman and chief executive officer of the New York Mets, and co-founder and chairman of the board of Sterling Equities. Wilpon played baseball for the Wolverines until an arm injury

ended his career. He and his wife, Judy, are U-M alumni.

"Through my own life experiences, I know how much happiness that sports activities, both as a player and fan, can bring a person," Fred Wilpon says. "Judy and I wanted to help create this center at Michigan through our family foundation to ensure that children and adults who love sports can enjoy them to their fullest with reduced risk of injury and impairment. Educating them and providing the best medical advice available helps make this a possibility."

The Wilpons, of Locust Valley, New York, also have made significant gifts supporting the rebuilding of the baseball and softball stadiums, as well as scholarships for undergraduates with financial need. [m](#)