

November 2024

Giving Matters



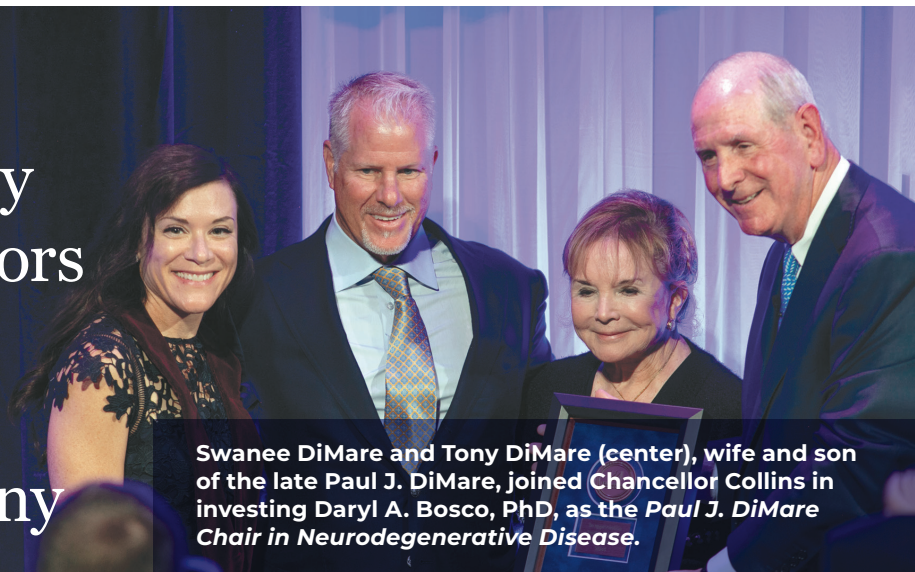
UMass Chan scientist
Victor Ambros wins Nobel Prize



Resilient recovery inspires fund
for stroke rehab education

A newsletter for supporters of UMass Chan Medical School

UMass Chan faculty celebrated and donors honored at 2024 Convocation and Investiture ceremony



Swanee DiMare and Tony DiMare (center), wife and son of the late Paul J. DiMare, joined Chancellor Collins in investing Daryl A. Bosco, PhD, as the *Paul J. DiMare Chair in Neurodegenerative Disease*.

On Thursday, Sept. 12, the 2024 Convocation and Investiture ceremony celebrated the achievement of faculty at UMass Chan Medical School—"the heart and soul of this academic institution"—and the donors who support them. The event capped the end of an annual weeklong celebration marking the start of a new academic year.

In his convocation address, Chancellor Michael F. Collins called for continued teamwork, collaboration and encouragement among students, faculty and staff to fulfill the Medical School's mission.

"In our work, there is no finish line, only new starting points. Let us begin this academic year by rounding the corner, arm in arm, and let us commit together to racing to our most ambitious future. There is much to accomplish," Collins said.

The chancellor listed the largest graduate school classes in UMass Chan's history; the creation of a new regional campus, UMass Chan-Lahey; the enrollment of 32 medical students in the LEAD@Lahey track in its first year; and the opening of the new education and research building, as just some of the momentous

achievements that will carry UMass Chan beyond the goals included in the Impact 2025 strategic plan.

Collins said a stewardship group of faculty and learners will be established early next year, to "chart a new starting point for our medical school."

The 2024 recipients of the Chancellor's Medals for excellence in teaching, scholarship, service and clinical excellence were announced as follows:

Mary Callery O'Brien, MD, associate professor of medicine, received the **Chancellor's Medal for Distinguished Teaching**. Dr. Callery O'Brien was invited to present the 2025 Last Lecture, a celebration of teaching, and received the Manning Prize, a \$10,000 award established by former UMass Board Chair Robert Manning and his wife, Donna Manning, both of whom are UMass alums.

Craig L. Peterson, PhD, vice chair and professor of molecular medicine, received the **Chancellor's Medal for Distinguished Scholarship**. Dr. Peterson will present the plenary lecture at this fall's research retreat.

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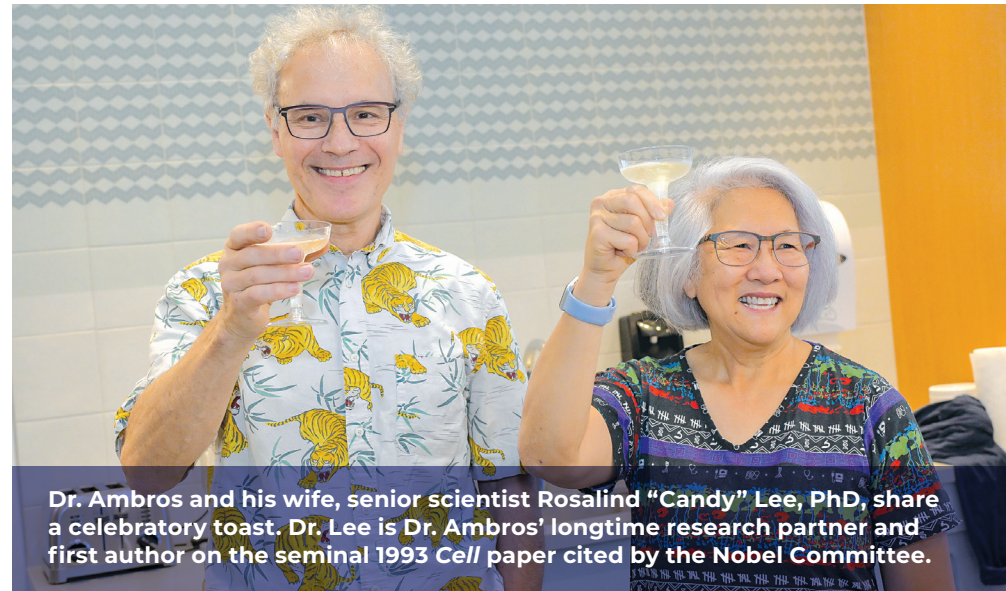
UMass Chan celebrates as scientist Victor Ambros wins Nobel Prize

Oct. 7 was a day of jubilation at UMass Chan Medical School following the announcement that researcher Victor R. Ambros, PhD, will share the 2024 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for his co-discovery of microRNA, the very short, single-stranded RNA molecules that are now understood to play a critical role in post-transcriptional gene regulation.

A central figure in ribonucleic acid (RNA) biology, Dr. Ambros, the *Silverman Chair in Natural Sciences* and professor of molecular medicine at UMass Chan, will share the award with his longtime collaborator Gary B. Ruvkun, PhD, of Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School.

When Ambros and his lab discovered microRNA, also known as miRNA, in the nematode *C. elegans* in 1993, its broad implications for human biology weren't immediately apparent. However, scientists now know the ability of these tiny RNA molecules to regulate or silence gene expression has a profound and far-reaching impact on most biological processes governing health and disease, including development, aging, cancer, diabetes, heart disease, Alzheimer's disease, schizophrenia and many others.

At a press conference following the announcement, Dr. Ambros reflected on the importance of support



Dr. Ambros and his wife, senior scientist Rosalind "Candy" Lee, PhD, share a celebratory toast. Dr. Lee is Dr. Ambros' longtime research partner and first author on the seminal 1993 *Cell* paper cited by the Nobel Committee.

“Victor has had a profound impact on our world-leading RNA community. He is an integral member of a remarkable group of RNA researchers here who together are advancing the world's understanding of biological mechanisms and furthering the field of biomedical sciences. The Nobel Prize confirms what the UMass Chan community already knows of Victor's contributions to scientific discovery and innovation.”

—UMass Chan Chancellor Michael F. Collins

from the UMass Chan community and the public that supports the state's only public medical school.

“I've learned that institutions can really, really work and that leadership matters,” said Dr. Ambros. “This is an institution that is I think getting right as best as any



It is the second time that a UMass Chan scientist has been recognized by the Nobel Assembly. UMass Chan Distinguished Professor Craig C. Mello, PhD, pictured at left with Dr. Ambros, was co-recipient of the 2006 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for his discovery of RNA interference or RNAi.

“You're our champion and in addition to being an incredibly brilliant and critical thinker, you are among the nicest, most humblest human beings that exist.”

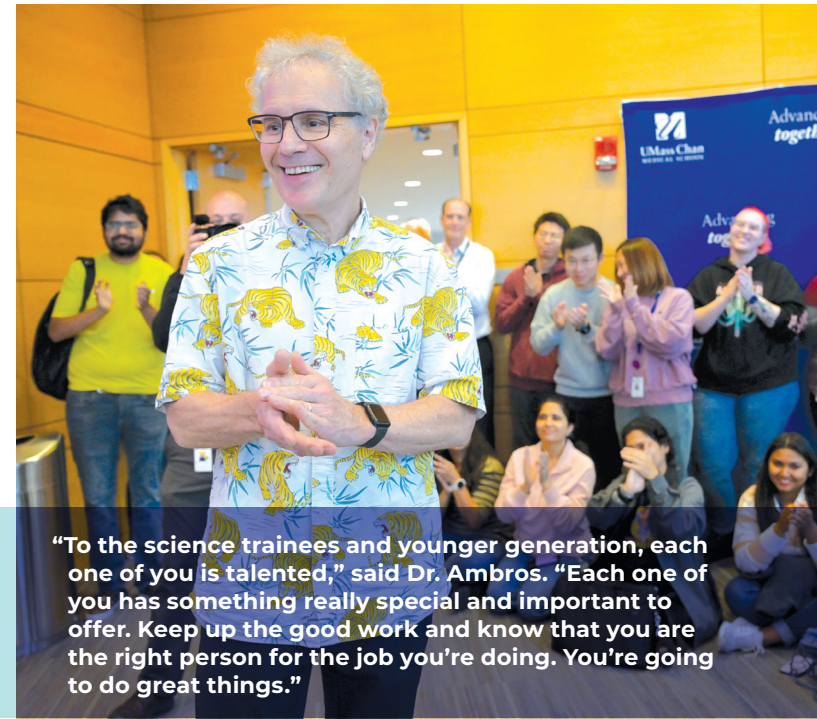
—Executive Deputy Chancellor and Provost Terence R. Flotte

institution can, for making it possible for people of all sorts to come together and really do science in a way that's synergistic, where communication and sharing of ideas is the expectation, not the exception.”

In recognition of Ambros' accomplishments as a scientist and his influence as a mentor, H. Scott Silverman and his father Jeffrey L. Silverman endowed the *Silverman Chair in Natural Sciences* in 2008. The endowment symbolizes the Silvermans' enthusiasm for Ambros' work and arises from a longtime friendship formed in 1994 when the younger Silverman, a venture capitalist and investment fund manager, began his honors research thesis under Ambros' guidance at Dartmouth. ●

“Your work literally will change the world.”

—UMass President Marty Meehan



“To the science trainees and younger generation, each one of you is talented,” said Dr. Ambros. “Each one of you has something really special and important to offer. Keep up the good work and know that you are the right person for the job you're doing. You're going to do great things.”

Faculty members invested as endowed professors

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The **Chancellor's Medal for Distinguished Clinical Excellence** was presented to **Erik Garcia, MD**, associate professor of family medicine & community health. Dr. Garcia is invited to lead the first-year class in the recitation of the Oath of Maimonides at the 2025 White Coat Ceremony.

The **Chancellor's Medal for Distinguished Service** was awarded to **Jean Frazier, MD**, the *Robert M. and Shirley S. Siff Chair in Autism*, professor of psychiatry, and executive director of the Eunice Kennedy Shriver Center. Dr. Frazier is invited to carry the Medical School's ceremonial mace at events throughout the academic year.

The following faculty members were honored and invested as endowed professors, with gratitude to the donors who established the endowed funds that support these positions:

Daryl A. Bosco, PhD, professor of neurology and biochemistry & molecular biotechnology and associate vice chair of research for the Department of Neurology, was invested as the *Paul J. DiMare Chair in Neurodegenerative Disease*.

Swanee DiMare and Tony DiMare, wife and son of the late Paul J. DiMare, joined the stage with Dr. Bosco. Chancellor Collins recognized Paul DiMare, who passed away in 2022 from complications of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, for his “mission to advance lifesaving treatments for neurodegenerative diseases, reflecting a lifelong commitment to helping others and eradicating suffering.”

Kevin Donahue, MD, professor of medicine in the Division of Cardiovascular Medicine, was invested as the *David J. and Barbara D. Milliken Professor of Preventive Cardiology*.

Dale L. Greiner, PhD, professor of molecular medicine and co-director of the Diabetes Center of Excellence, was invested as the *Herman G. Berkman Chair in Diabetes Care Innovation*.

John E. Harris, MD, PhD'05, chair and professor of dermatology, was invested as the *Lambi and Sarah Adams Chair in Genetic Research*.

Elinor K. Karlsson, PhD, associate professor of molecular medicine, was invested as the *Dr. Eileen L. Berman and Stanley I. Berman Foundation Chair in Biomedical Research*.

Danny G. Winder, PhD, chair and professor of neurobiology, was invested as the *Worcester Foundation for Biomedical Research Chair I*.

Jeannette M. Wolfe, MD, professor of emergency medicine, was invested into the *Joy McCann Professorship for Women in Medicine*. ●

Largest incoming medical school class, regional campus at Lahey Hospital & Medical Center opens

The T.H. Chan School of Medicine at UMass Chan Medical School welcomed its largest class of medical students in the fall, directly addressing the acute nationwide shortage of physicians.

Among them is the inaugural cohort of LEAD@Lahey students who are focused on leadership, health systems science and interprofessional education as part of a new regional campus at Lahey Hospital & Medical Center in Burlington.



Newly cloaked medical students recite the Oath of Maimonides at the White Coat Ceremony.

Class of 2028 profile

Class size:	235
DEMOGRAPHICS	
In-state:	63%
Out-of-state:	37%
27 states represented, plus Puerto Rico and Canada	
UMass undergrads:	29
Females:	164
Males:	66
Other:	5
Age range:	21-40
Average age:	24

Economically disadvantaged background:	46
First-generation college student:	23
RACE/ETHNICITY	
Caucasian:	43.8%
Asian:	33%
Latinx:	9.8%
Black/African American:	5.5%
Other/unspecified:	8.1%

EXPERIENCE AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- 137 publications; 157 honors and awards
 - Average of 1,473 hours of research experience per incoming students, with 347,510 combined research hours
 - 30 languages represented including Arabic, ASL, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and Vietnamese
- | | |
|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Worcester campus: | 178 (including 15 MD/PhD) |
| PURCH track: | 25 |
| LEAD@Lahey: | 32 |



Thanks in part to your philanthropic support, UMass Chan Medical School is ranked #1 among all medical schools in the Northeast. Help us sustain this momentum by making a gift today at umassmed.edu/give.

Leading advocate for emergency medicine, David E. Wilcox, establishes research award at UMass Chan

A longtime leader in emergency medicine, David E. Wilcox, MD, FACEP, is funding a new award that will support research in the specialty at UMass Chan Medical School, where he was a valued faculty member for more than 15 years.

Dr. Wilcox was recruited to UMass Chan in 1983 by the late Richard V. Aghababian, MD, founding chair of the Department of Emergency Medicine, to direct New England's first hospital-based air ambulance, Life Flight—a game changer for emergency care in the region.

Emergency medicine had received recognition as the 23rd specialty by the American Medical Association and the American Board of Medical Specialties just a few years prior, in 1979.

"It was a different era back then," Dr. Wilcox said. "We didn't have CT scans and a lot of today's technology. Instead, we relied largely on gestalt [historical facts and physical exams] to make clinical decisions."

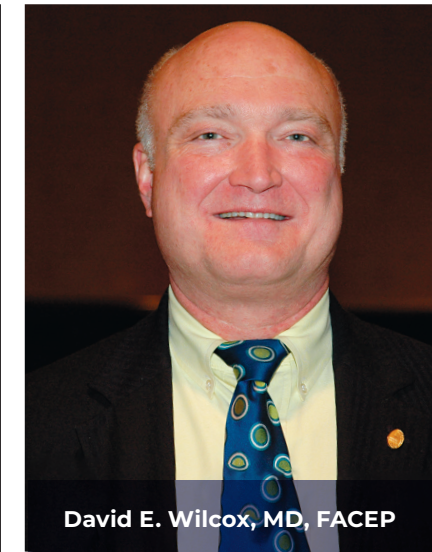
Fast forward 40 years, and emergency medicine has come a long way, underscoring the importance of investing in innovation, for which Dr. Wilcox is a fierce advocate.

"Research defined our position within the house of medicine and continues to redefine practice," he said.

A pioneer in the specialty, UMass Chan continues to lead in emergency medicine research. The Medical School consistently ranks among the top National Institutes of Health-funded emergency departments in the United States, standing at number seven in 2023 (Blue Ridge Institute for Medical Research).

The recent gift from Dr. Wilcox will boost this work by supporting the research efforts of medical students, residents or fellows.

"It's important to fund early-stage projects to get people started," he said.



David E. Wilcox, MD, FACEP

In recognition of his leadership, UMass Chan established the David E. Wilcox, MD, FACEP, National Service Award in 2018. This year's recipient, Gayle M. Galletta, MD, professor of emergency medicine, was selected for her successful work to advance emergency medicine as a specialty in Europe, and for delivering a message of gender equity and diversity on an international platform.

Now working as a health care consultant, Dr. Wilcox found enormous satisfaction as a practicing emergency room physician, where "it's immediate action and immediate result."

"If a patient comes to the ER with a laceration, we suture it; with a broken bone, we set it; experiencing a heart attack, we thrombolysed them; with a traumatic injury, we resuscitate and prep them for the operating room," Dr. Wilcox said. "And while we can't save every patient, our overall success rate is actually very high."

The gift to UMass Chan is part of a larger strategy to support emergency medicine through financial contributions, and while this includes estate planning, Dr. Wilcox is also eager to make an impact today.

"Why wait until I die?" he said. "I prefer to enjoy the fruits of my labor, and see what researchers are able to achieve while I'm still here."

In doing so, he's taking advantage of what's known as the IRA charitable rollover, through which individuals over age 70 ½ can give any amount (up to a maximum of \$105,000) from an IRA directly to a qualified charity such as UMass Chan, without having to pay income taxes on the money.

He hopes that supporting emergency medicine research, and sharing this experience, will inspire others to do the same.

"Part of my intent is to encourage colleagues to fund research," he said. "We all had help along the way, it's only right that we pay it forward to those who will follow." ●



We're thrilled for this opportunity to launch new, innovative research ideas. Dr. Wilcox helped build our department and has long been a tireless advocate and leader within the field of emergency medicine. His generosity is inspiring.

—Gregory Volturo, MD, chair and professor of emergency medicine and the *Richard V. Aghababian, MD'74, Chair in Emergency Medicine*

The contributions of Dr. Wilcox to emergency medicine are far-reaching and include advocacy at the federal level. In the 1990s, he was actively involved in passing the Prudent Layperson Standard, which requires insurance companies to provide coverage for emergency care based on symptoms, not the final diagnosis—a watershed for patient rights.

A devastating stroke—and resilient recovery—inspires a new fund to promote stroke rehabilitation education

In late spring 2022, Dennis Murphy III was enjoying the active lifestyle of an endurance athlete, when a major stroke changed everything. Suddenly, cycling trips and daily two-mile swims were replaced with rehabilitation goals that would help him relearn how to walk and speak at the age of 56.

Inspired by Dennis' remarkable recovery in the two-plus years since—and his drive to support other stroke survivors—Dennis' mother, Julie Murphy, has established a fund named in memory of her husband and Dennis' father, Dennis F. Murphy Jr., to advance stroke rehabilitation education at UMass Chan Medical School.

Stroke rates in younger people rising

Dennis is one of a growing number of younger and middle-aged individuals experiencing a stroke; recent data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show that between 2011 and 2022, stroke prevalence increased 14.6 percent among adults aged 18–44 years and 15.7 percent among those aged 45–64 years.

The increase brings to light the urgency of stroke awareness and advocacy. For a start, younger age groups may be less likely to access critical post-stroke care due to various factors.

“Younger individuals may not think of themselves as needing or deserving of stroke rehabilitation services,” said A.M. Barrett, MD, chair and professor of neurology.

Challenges to accessing post-stroke care may include difficulty finding and/or traveling to services, navigating health insurance, and competing responsibilities such as child care and employment. Stroke survivors may also feel compelled to hide their experience or limitations due to perceived stigma.

“You may not think you know someone who has experienced a stroke, but you probably do,” Dr. Barrett said. “People often suffer silently. To break through these barriers, stroke education and public awareness is essential.”

Filling in the ‘knowledge gap’ in stroke rehabilitation

Stroke rehabilitation is critical to a meaningful recovery and recommended for all people affected by stroke. The goal of rehabilitation is to restore as much independence as possible by helping a patient improve their physical, mental and emotional functions.

Dennis experienced a major stroke that left him unable to speak, walk or move the right side of his body. While strokes are most often associated with health conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes and other risk factors, Dennis' stroke was triggered by a torn carotid artery in his neck, also known as a cervical artery dissection.

Practically overnight, life for Dennis and his wife, Sharon Murphy, shifted dramatically to center almost



Dennis and Sharon Murphy smile for the camera at Polar Park in Worcester.

entirely around Dennis' rehabilitation. After a week in the hospital, Dennis spent three weeks at an in-patient rehabilitation facility before returning to their home in Stow, Massachusetts, where he continued with daily physical, occupational and speech therapy.

More than two years later, Dennis has achieved an approximately 75 percent recovery. The perseverance of both Dennis and Sharon, who has played a key role in Dennis' rehabilitation, has been crucial to his progress. Today, daily life for Dennis once again includes cycling, swimming and work in his office at Murphy Insurance Agency, a family-run business.

While embracing the remarkable progress Dennis has made, he and Sharon are open about the continued challenges they face.

“Rehabilitation is extremely hard,” Dennis said. “Progress is slow. It can be frustrating.”

Sharon stresses that emotional support after a stroke is critical.

“The rehabilitation journey is filled with both happiness and loss,” she said. “While there's a lot to celebrate in the wins, the grief of what's been lost is always there. A stroke takes your identity from you. You have to recreate that.”

Dennis and Sharon give enormous credit to the medical and allied health professionals who have supported

them throughout their journey, including therapists who have followed Dennis' lead in developing goals and services.

“Meeting individuals where they are is so important,” Sharon said.

Community networks can be also transformative, such as the stroke support group at UMass Memorial Medical Center, which connects individuals and supporters impacted by stroke under the guidance of clinicians.

Through a support group connection, Dennis partic-

ipated in a panel at UMass Chan exploring how acute care teams play an early, essential role in stroke recovery, a powerful experience for both him and the students in attendance.

It also largely inspired the creation of the Dennis F. Murphy, Jr. Stroke Education Fund at UMass Chan, which will support educational opportunities for faculty, residents and students while also increasing access to information for the medical and rehabilitation community.

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Community rallies for 26th annual UMass Cancer Walk presented by Harr Toyota

More than 2,000 participants descended on Polar Park in Worcester for the 26th annual UMass Cancer Walk presented by Harr Toyota on Sunday, Sept. 29. The event honored superheroes—researchers, sponsors, volunteers, patients, survivors, family members and health care providers. This year, more than \$650,000 was raised.

Since 1999, participants and supporters have raised more than \$17 million for pediatric and adult cancer research and care at UMass Chan Medical School.

For many teams, the cause is personal, including Team Hercules led by Ben Herk, a stage 4 colorectal cancer survivor, his wife and two sons. Following a cancer diagnosis discovered during a colonoscopy in 2018, Herk received personalized care from a cancer team at UMass Memorial Health.

“My cancer care team made me feel like I would not be fighting this disease alone and that I would get the best treatment possible. They also helped me get into the right mindset to tackle cancer,” Herk said. “I’m so grateful to all the scientists at UMass Chan, who work nonstop to do critical, lifesaving research and help develop the therapies that are transforming cancer care.”

Herk said his recent scans show no evidence of cancer.

In addition to survivors and their families raising money for cancer research, employees did their part as well. ForHealth Consulting of UMass Chan Medical School put together a team called the ForHealth SoleMates. As of Oct. 4, the team has raised \$13,430, making it the fourth highest fundraising team.

“As SoleMates, we’re all in for the fight against cancer,” said Jorge Sanchez, MEd, program director for diversity & inclusion at ForHealth. “By participating in the UMass Cancer Walk, we at ForHealth are not only showing our support but also contributing to groundbreaking research that advances treatment, healing and hope for a cure that will change lives. Together, we’re making a difference.”

“This year’s event was a spectacular success,” said John Hayes, vice chancellor for advancement. “We rely on the community for fundraising to help support the



Stage 4 colorectal cancer survivor Ben Herk walks in the survivor lap.

breakthrough cancer research conducted at UMass Chan Medical School. Thousands of superheroes filled the stands of Polar Park, took to the streets of Worcester and raised hundreds of thousands of dollars to advance cancer research. We are truly grateful for their support.”

*** Donations are being accepted through Dec. 31 at umasscancerwalk.org, with 100 percent of the funds going toward research and clinical trials.**

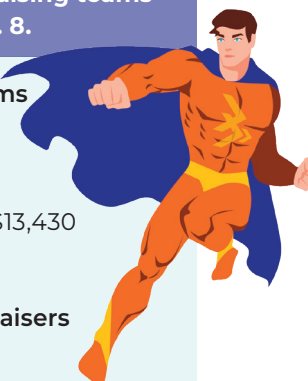
The following are the top five fundraising teams and individual fundraisers as of Oct. 8.

Top superpowered fundraising teams

1. Team Emicles: \$23,765
2. Table Talk: \$19,020
3. Team UMassFive: \$18,747
4. ForHealth Consulting SoleMates: \$13,430
5. Advancement Avengers: \$12,021

Top superpowered individual fundraisers

1. Laura O'Mara: \$22,590
2. Tina Peladeau: \$8,300
3. Rich Kump: \$7,165
4. Tania Fernandez: \$4,591
5. Laura Morris: \$4,458



Gift puts spotlight on stroke rehabilitation

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“It takes a family with vision to help us fill the knowledge gap in stroke rehabilitation,” said Dr. Barrett. “Their experience gives them the authority and power to speak to the problem. With the support of this fund, we hope to inspire curiosity, build a bank of knowledge and promote a community of practice where people can learn together.”

Importantly, the gift brings attention to challenges surrounding stroke rehabilitation.

“Building a sense of urgency around this need is key,” Dr. Barrett said.

A message of hope

Dennis continues to take things one day at a time while also looking ahead. Longer-term goals include riding

a bike across the country and swimming faster and farther.

Sharon observes how such an experience can dramatically alter one’s view on life.

“Post-stroke, you worry less about things that don’t matter,” she said. “Losing abilities like being able to stand and walk gives you an entirely new perspective.”

Dennis hopes that sharing his story will motivate other stroke survivors to persevere through their own rehabilitations, while raising public awareness regarding life after a stroke.

“It’s my job to show others what’s possible, that you can recover,” Dennis said. “It takes longer than you think. You need to stick with it every single day. But you will get better.” ●

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A gift to UMass Chan Medical School clarifies what is important to you and shapes the way you are remembered. While cash is easy, other gifts can help maximize your impact and increase your personal benefits.



Appreciated stock or real estate

When you give appreciated stock or real estate held for over one year, you owe no capital gains tax and still qualify for a deduction (if you itemize) for the full value of the property.

Donor-advised fund

If you’ve already set aside money in a donor-advised fund, you can recommend a grant to us without impacting your spendable income. Please notify us so we can acknowledge the gift and thank you.

A gift from an IRA (age 70½ or older)

You can make a tax-free gift to us from your IRA that counts toward your required minimum distribution if one is due (generally starting at age 73). The annual aggregate limit for 2024 is \$105,000.

A charitable gift annuity

This is an opportunity to make a gift and, in return, receive fixed income payments for life. Gift annuity rates are the highest they have been in 16 years! Contact us for a personal illustration.

We’re here to help!

We are grateful for your support and happy to help you explore the benefits of these and many other giving options. Use the QR code below to request a free copy of our brochure, *Seven Strategies for Year-End Giving*.

Kim Canty

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Consult your tax and financial advisers when considering any planned gift.