



SUMMER 2022

# CuresToday

Gateway for Cancer Research has been devoted to funding Phase I and Phase II clinical trials for over 30 years. See how you advance medical science by making those trials possible!

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## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

by **Michael Burton**, President and CEO, Gateway for Cancer Research



June 7 was National Cancer Survivors' Day, a time to honor the 16.9 million Americans who are beating cancer and living life to the fullest each day. Since Gateway's founding 30

years ago, thanks in large part to significant advances in research, the cancer mortality rate has dropped by 32 percent – that's 3.5 million more survivors\*!

But cancer survivors are so much more than statistics. They are our loved ones, family and friends, and we celebrate them every day. At Gateway, survivors inspire us to accelerate our mission to fund the life-saving research that is changing the future of cancer care and helping survivors live longer, feel better and triumph over cancer.

We celebrate people like Gateway Board member and pediatric cancer survivor Joe Caltabiano, who channeled his passion and philanthropy into research that will deliver urgently needed new targeted therapies to countless children fighting leukemia. And Gateway-funded investigators like Dr. Rizwan Romee of Dana-Farber Cancer Institute whose novel immunotherapy approach is bringing hope and healing to people facing head and neck cancer. Read on to hear their inspiring stories.

Perhaps most of all, we celebrate *you*, our generous supporters. Simply put, without you, none of our progress and the promise of future discovery would be possible. From all of us at Gateway, and on behalf of 16.9 million determined cancer survivors we are privileged to serve, thank you.

\* Source: American Cancer Society Facts & Figures 2022

99 CENTS

**OF EVERY DOLLAR RECEIVED DIRECTLY  
FUNDS CANCER CLINICAL TRIALS**



# 30TH ANNIVERSARY CURES GALA – STARDUST DREAMS

By all measures, Gateway's 30th Anniversary Cures Gala, held last November, was a tremendous success, raising \$4 million to advance transformational cancer research and inspiring all with a vision of a world where a cancer diagnosis is no longer feared.

*Stardust Dreams* was a celebration of all that Gateway has achieved since its founding in 1991. Gateway has raised close to \$100 million for transformative clinical cancer research, funded more than 195 studies at many of the world's leading



research institutions, and has brought cancer treatment innovations to 10,000

patients enrolled in Gateway-funded trials.

Fittingly for the milestone anniversary, *Cures Gala* co-chairs Richard J and Dr. Stacie J. Stephenson graciously hosted *Stardust Dreams* in their home, "Tudor Oaks" in Barrington, IL, the venue for the very first Cures Gala.

Cameron Mathison, star of *All My Children* and a cancer survivor emceed the event, which featured performances by recording artist Ruben Studdard and dance troupe Light Balance, and guests were "raised up" by a special surprise video tribute from Grammy Award-winner Josh Groban.

Gateway is deeply grateful to the Stephenson Family and to all who generously supported the gala and made *Stardust Dreams* a reality.

**SAVE THE DATE: CURES SOIREE**  
**Saturday, November 12, 2022 – Chicago, IL**

## INAUGURAL GATEWAY CELEBRITY FIGHT NIGHT

### A Red-Carpet Night for Cancer Research

What do Reba McEntire, Pitbull and cancer researchers have in common? They all came together in Phoenix on March 12 for the inaugural *Gateway Celebrity Fight Night* to deliver a knockout blow to cancer.

Since 1995, *Celebrity Fight Night* has raised millions of dollars toward advances in health and well-being. Now, after joining forces with Gateway for Cancer Research and our family of signature events, the new *Gateway Celebrity Fight Night* will amplify our collective impact and philanthropic power, with all our combined firepower focused on a single enemy - cancer. The star-studded inaugural event raised \$5 million for cancer research setting the standard for all future *GCFNs* to come.

With 16-time Grammy Award-winning musical director David Foster, Hall of Fame recording artist and the evening's emcee, Reba McEntire, and A-list celebrity attendees, it was a power-packed night of excitement, with live musical performances by Tony Vincent, CeeLo Green, Matt Mauser, Jordin Sparks, the TENORS, Katharine McPhee Foster, Michael Bolton, Tony Orlando, and headlined by international recording artist Pitbull.

Gateway Founding Chairman Richard J Stephenson and Vice Chair Dr. Stacie J. Stephenson – taking the helm as Co-Chairs – presented the *Gateway Celebrity Fight Night* Visionary Award to Jimmy Walker, who founded *Celebrity Fight Night*.

Cameron Mathison, star of *All My Children* and a cancer survivor, was recognized with the inaugural Mary Brown Stephenson Award, which honors an individual who shares their personal experience with cancer to champion the cause through public advocacy or philanthropy. The award is named for the mother of Richard J Stephenson, who founded Gateway 30 years ago in her honor in the wake of her death from cancer, to fund lifesaving research that will give others facing cancer hopeful treatment options and better quality of life while researchers work toward cures.

Thank you to all whose generosity of spirit, talent and philanthropy brought this event to life to benefit the millions facing cancer today.

**SAVE THE DATE: CELEBRITY FIGHT NIGHT**  
**Saturday, April 1, 2023 – Phoenix, AZ**



# WE HAVE 17 MILLION REASONS TO CELEBRATE!

In honor of National Cancer Survivor's Day this June, support cancer warriors with a gift to Gateway for Cancer Research. Your generosity will directly benefit cancer survivors by funding breakthrough cancer research that is helping those facing cancer live.

Together, we are empowering cancer survivors and shaping the future of cancer care.

**GIVE  
TODAY**



## JOE CALTABIANO – FUELING COLLABORATIONS TO END PEDIATRIC LEUKEMIA



Joe Caltabiano

**A**cute myeloid leukemia (AML) is the second most common leukemia in children. Following treatment with current therapies, almost half of children relapse and their prognosis becomes extremely poor. Survivors often suffer long-term complications and side effects from the harsh treatments.

As a survivor of childhood cancer, Gateway Board Member Joe Caltabiano understands all too well the urgent need to change the course of treatment for children with relapsed leukemia. Driven by his personal experience and passion to help these children and their families, Caltabiano made a transformative \$250,000 gift through *Gateway Concierge* to help researchers find a new treatment approach for children fighting cancer recurrence.

In the spirit of driving high-impact strategic collaborations, Gateway has leveraged Caltabiano's gift by partnering with The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS) to fund a global, groundbreaking, multi-site precision medicine study – the LLS

Pediatric Acute Leukemia (PedAL) Master Clinical Trial. At Children's Oncology Group (COG) consortium sites across the country, researchers perform genetic sequencing and biomarker screening on patient tissue samples to identify the individual molecular drivers of their disease. Each patient is then matched to a sub-trial of a targeted therapy that is the best match for their unique genetic information.

**“For children with relapsed acute leukemia, there is no standard of care, and their prognosis is poor. As a childhood cancer survivor, I chose to invest in Gateway because of its targeted mission to fund early phase research, which is where cancer breakthroughs happen.”**

JOE CALTABIANO

Thanks in part to Caltabiano's gift, PedAL opened for enrollment in mid-April and brings us hope that we will soon have an arsenal of effective treatments that provide lasting cures for children with blood cancer. For more information about the LLS PedAL Master Clinical Trial, visit [www.lls.org/lls-childrens-initiative-pedal](http://www.lls.org/lls-childrens-initiative-pedal).

Gateway Concierge is a unique major gifts program through which visionary benefactors like Joe Caltabiano channel their personal passion for fighting cancer into purpose by co-creating new possibilities in cancer care with world-class clinician scientists. To learn more about how you can tailor your own novel research program and drive cancer innovation, contact Gateway Concierge Executive Director Jessica Cestone at **267-275-4509** or [Jessica.Cestone@GatewayCR.org](mailto:Jessica.Cestone@GatewayCR.org).



**N**ow in its fifth year, **Vino con Stelle** is an unforgettable evening of “*Wine Under the Stars*” in Phoenix, Arizona. The event features world-class culinary and wine pairings curated by renowned chef and Arizona restaurateur Mark Tarbell, and a spirited live auction of the rarest, most exclusive vintages. The true stars of *Vino con Stelle* are the glittering constellation of philanthropists, cancer researchers and cancer survivors who come together with passion and purpose to defeat cancer and celebrate life. For more information, contact Mallory Middleton at **480-290-5699** or [Mallory.Middleton@GatewayCR.org](mailto:Mallory.Middleton@GatewayCR.org).



# RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT: RIZWAN ROMEE, MD, DANA-FARBER CANCER INSTITUTE

This year, close to 70,000 Americans will develop head and neck cancer. Current treatments – surgery, radiation therapy, chemotherapy, and immunotherapy – can have side effects that significantly diminish patients' quality of life.

Gateway-funded investigator Rizwan Romee, MD, of Dana-Farber Cancer Institute is working hard to change the outlook for these patients. He is advancing a new approach to treating squamous cell carcinoma of the head and neck (SCCHN) – the most common type of head and neck cancer – by

ipilimumab, an immunotherapy drug, has been shown to improve survival for recurrent or metastatic SCCHN, but some patients eventually become

**One patient was well enough, long enough, that his wish to travel to Florida came true.**

resistant to it. Dr. Romee's Phase I trial examines whether combining

cytokine-induced, memory-like natural killer cells (CIML NK cells) will boost the immune response against the tumor cells and enhance the effectiveness of ipilimumab in these patients. NK cells are retrieved from a donor, usually a patient's parent or sibling, and manufactured in the lab to increase their tumor-fighting ability. The revved-up CIML NK cells are then given to the patient in combination with ipilimumab.

Dr. Romee's trial has shown promising results. For the six patients enrolled to date, the NK cell therapy has been tolerable, and the trial has reported some disease stability and tumor shrinkage. Three patients reported improved quality of life and more hopefulness for their future. One patient was well enough, long enough, that his wish to travel to Florida came true. This is the core of Gateway's mission, helping those facing cancer feel better and live life to its fullest.



Patients are always at the center of all Gateway-funded research. Dr. Romee underwent the NK procedure himself to have a better understanding of his patients' and their families' experience.

genetically manipulating immune system cells to enhance their cancer-fighting function.

## / WORD CUREIOSITY / EARLY PHASE CLINICAL TRIALS

**Definition:** There are three phases of clinical trials. Phase I trials are designed to test the safety and tolerability of an investigational drug or therapy in a small number of enrolled patients. If successful, the trial moves into a larger Phase II study, which examines whether the treatment is effective and at what dose. In a Phase III clinical trial, researchers enroll very large numbers of patients to validate the findings of the **early phase clinical trials**.

**What it means to Gateway and you:** Early phase clinical trials are the first step in developing new therapies and have the potential to shift the paradigm for standard of care for cancer. Gateway exclusively funds the most promising early phase cancer clinical trials because this is where life-saving treatment breakthroughs happen.