Celebrating Commencement in the 50th Year of the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai

A pioneer in the study of addiction, a leader in biomedical engineering, a champion of reproductive rights, and a physician-scientist whose work has revolutionized the fight against some cancers were honored as the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai celebrated its 49th Commencement—and the 50th Anniversary of its founding.

The Icahn School of Medicine granted 145 MDs, 64 PhDs, and 24 dual degrees in the ceremony held on Friday, May 11, at David Geffen Hall, Lincoln Center. “I know that you have the hearts, minds, and passion” to change the future of medicine, the graduates were told by Dennis S. Charney, MD, Anne and Joel Ehrenkranz Dean, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, and President for Academic Affairs, Mount Sinai Health System. Fifty years ago, Dr. Charney said, “The School of Medicine was founded with a focus on the clinical and biologic problems facing the physician, with a dedication to the personal problems of the patient and family. It fostered the ‘healer’ mentality that still exists today.”

Dr. Charney saluted “Giants of Mount Sinai”—many of them on the Commencement stage—who were early graduates and faculty who have made transformative contributions to science and medicine. He also listed some accomplishments.

A Festive 33rd Crystal Party Held in Central Park

The Mount Sinai Health System’s 33rd annual Crystal Party, held Thursday, May 3, in the Central Park Conservatory Garden, was a festive event attended by more than 1,200 leaders, faculty, supporters, and friends of the Health System. Dancing, dining, and celebrating a year of accomplishments at the Mount Sinai Health System and the 50th anniversary of the Icahn School of Medicine.
of the Class of 2018. One graduate cofounded a national patients’ advocacy organization; another wrote a comprehensive overview of palliative care in Africa. Other graduates fought bias in patient care and made advances in the study of immunotherapy, bipolar disorder, and drug addiction. “I am confident you will carry on the tradition of our great institution,” Dr. Charney said.

Timothy P. Shriver, PhD, Chairman of the Board, Special Olympics, delivered the commencement address to nearly 3,000 faculty, staff, graduates, and their families and friends who filled the hall. Dr. Shriver said people with intellectual disabilities faced “extraordinary social, cultural, and physical pain” in addition to discrimination in housing and health care. But even in adversity, he said, “for the most part they do not choose hate or anger, they choose healing.” He asked the graduates to also choose to be healers, “not just in the way we use medicine and research, but in the way we live as citizens and the way we live as human beings.”

Dr. Shriver received an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree for his work promoting inclusion, friendship, and physical fitness among 5.3 million Special Olympics athletes and their families worldwide. Honorary degrees also were awarded to:

Cato T. Laurencin, MD, PhD, Albert and Wilda Van Dusen Distinguished Professor of Orthopedic Surgery, and Professor of Chemical Engineering, Materials Science, and Biomedical Engineering, the University of Connecticut, who received an honorary Doctor of Science degree for groundbreaking work in biomaterials, stem cell science, nanotechnology, drug-delivery systems, and a field he has pioneered, regenerative engineering.

Douglas R. Lowy, MD, Deputy Director, National Cancer Institute, who received an honorary Doctor of Science degree for work that has demonstrated that drug addiction is a disease of the brain, helping to shift the national understanding of addiction and create a movement to combat the epidemic of opioid addiction.

Cecile Richards, former President, Planned Parenthood Federation of America and Planned Parenthood Action Fund, who received an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree for advancing women’s health and reproductive rights, and helping to create healthier lives for young people and marginalized communities across the nation.

Nora D. Volkow, MD, Director, National Institute on Drug Abuse, who received an honorary Doctor of Science degree for work that has demonstrated that drug addiction is a disease of the brain, helping to shift the national understanding of addiction and create a movement to combat the epidemic of opioid addiction.

Peter W. May, Chairman, Boards of Trustees, Mount Sinai Health System, gave the graduates a history lesson, pointing out that in 1968 the School of Medicine opened in a former bus garage on 102nd Street. “That building contained all the labs, one classroom, and all the administrative offices. And look at us now,” Mr. May said. “In 50 years, the Icahn School of Medicine has evolved into one of the country’s best medical schools, backed by a broad system of what will soon be eight hospitals that care for millions of patients with the same excellence.” He added, “I hope that the momentum we’ve established continues and that Mount Sinai will remain at the forefront of academic excellence and wonderful patient care for anybody who needs it. And I hope that you, our graduates, continue to be the leaders who welcome and address the inevitable changes in health care that are ahead of all of us.”

Kenneth L. Davis, MD, President and Chief Executive Officer, Mount Sinai Health System, also called on the graduates to be leaders in clinics, in laboratories, and in their communities, especially in confronting gun violence, which he called an epidemic far more pressing than the Ebola or Zika viruses. “We need to treat gun violence like the public health problem that it is,” Dr. Davis said, adding that it kills 96 Americans every day. “Today, as you get your degree in medicine, let it also double as a degree in changing the world,” Dr. Davis said. “Your community needs you, your country needs you, your classmates and colleagues need you. From this moment forward, you are our hope. Thank you for what I know you will do in the years to come.”
A Festive 33rd Crystal Party Held in Central Park (continued from page 1)

at Mount Sinai, were on the evening’s agenda. The party—Mount Sinai’s major social event of the season—raised nearly $4 million that will be used to support key educational, clinical, and research programs.

This year’s celebration was chaired by Mount Sinai Trustee Henry Cornell and his wife, Vanessa Cornell. Other members of the event leadership included the Mount Sinai Health System Hospital Presidents Committee: Rebecca Sandler and Jeremy Boal, MD; Karen and Evan L. Flatow, MD; Sharon and Arthur A. Gianelli, MPH; Joan F. and Lin H. Mo, MPH; Keith L. Marran Jr., and David L. Reich, MD; and Tracey and James C. Tsai, MD. Rachel Crane, and Holly and Michael Schechter were Friends of Mount Sinai Chairs.

Peter W. May, Chairman, Boards of Trustees, welcomed the guests. He said, “We are grateful and proud that support for this event has reached this level and ensures that the Mount Sinai Health System will continue to provide unparalleled care to patients throughout the New York metropolitan area.”

Comedian Jim Gaffigan and his wife, actress Jeannie Gaffigan, a cowriter on their entertainment projects, were the evening’s special guest speakers. In April 2017, Mrs. Gaffigan underwent a successful nine-hour surgery to remove a rare and large, benign brain tumor. The surgery was performed by Joshua B. Bederson, MD, Chair of the Department of Neurosurgery at the Mount Sinai Health System. During the procedure, Dr. Bederson used pioneering augmented reality technology that helps surgeons operate more safely and precisely.

Kenneth L. Davis, MD, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Mount Sinai Health System, thanked all the Benefit Chairs for their dedication and support, and noted Mount Sinai’s progress in advancing care. “The Mount Sinai Health System has made significant advances in patient care and research, as demonstrated by Jeannie Gaffigan’s remarkable story,” Dr. Davis said. Also in attendance was U.S. Senator Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.), who reiterated his support for Mount Sinai and recognized its commitment to ensuring quality health care for all New Yorkers.
Around the Health System

Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony For Ambulatory Pavilion

Community leaders, elected officials, physicians, neighbors, and staff joined executives from The Mount Sinai Hospital and Mount Sinai Queens for a ribbon-cutting ceremony in May to celebrate the official opening of the hospital's six-story, 140,000-square-foot Ambulatory Pavilion in Astoria. The facility features an expanded Emergency Department, six new operating rooms, state-of-the-art imaging, and outpatient services staffed with primary care physicians, surgeons, and other specialists on the faculty of the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. The entrance to the Pavilion was dedicated as the Kaufman Astoria Studios Entrance. The Studios, a neighborhood mainstay since 1920, provided support to the Hospital's building project.

Winning Presentations for Child Health Research Day

Nine Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai researchers gave oral presentations on a range of topics, including child psychiatry, environmental medicine, and maternal health, at the 20th Annual Child Health Research Day, held on Thursday, April 26, in Hatch Auditorium. Sponsored by the Jack and Lucy Clark Department of Pediatrics, The Mindich Child Health and Development Institute, and the Department of Environmental Medicine and Public Health, the two-day event highlighted outstanding research in child health by medical students, postdoctoral fellows, faculty, and staff. The event also allowed young investigators to share their research with colleagues and network with potential collaborators. Six poster presenters were additionally selected for special recognition. A total of 94 research projects were submitted this year.

Staying Fit With Mount Sinai Heart

On a beautiful Saturday morning in April, more than 100 Mount Sinai Heart employees, including faculty, fellows, nurses, and staff, along with their families, participated in the 5th Annual 5k Run for Fun & Yoga in Central Park. Organized by Annapoorna S. Kini, MD, Director of the Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory at The Mount Sinai Hospital, and the Zena and Michael A. Wiener Professor of Medicine, the run took place around the Central Park Reservoir and was followed by a 30-minute yoga session on the East Meadow Lawn led by Dr. Kini. “As cardiovascular specialists, we encourage our patients to exercise in order to live the longest and healthiest lives possible,” says Dr. Kini. “As health care providers, we need to ensure that we remain active and lead heart-healthy lives ourselves. We have made it a priority to lead by example, and we look forward to keeping this tradition going on an annual basis.”

Annapoorna S. Kini, MD, led a yoga session in Central Park after a 5k run.
**Leaders and Staff Salute Mount Sinai’s Volunteers**

During National Volunteer Recognition Week, the more than 1,000 volunteers at The Mount Sinai Hospital and the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai who provide support, assistance, kindness, and compassion to countless individuals every day were honored at a breakfast held Wednesday, April 25, in Annenberg West Lobby.

“Our volunteers are such an integral part of the Mount Sinai community, and they have a unique and valuable perspective on caring and compassion,” Kenneth L. Davis, MD, President and Chief Executive Officer, Mount Sinai Health System, told the guests. “Your humanity shines through. We are at our best, thanks to you.”

According to the Department of Volunteer Services, which hosted the breakfast, volunteers serve in every area of patient care, research, and administration throughout the hospital and School of Medicine, representing a broad expanse of backgrounds—doctors, teachers, lawyers, retirees, and high school, medical, and graduate students, among them.

“When visitors walk into one of our buildings and are greeted by a volunteer, they get a sense of what Mount Sinai is all about—they feel that they are part of our family,” said Dennis S. Charney, MD, Anne and Joel Ehrenkranz Dean, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, and President for Academic Affairs, Mount Sinai Health System.

“You are incredibly special—just taking a moment to be kind to someone sets a tone that brings a better experience for everyone,” David L. Reich, MD, President and Chief Operating Officer of The Mount Sinai Hospital, reminded the volunteers.

The recently named Director of the Department of Volunteer Services, Shari Kaplan, LCSW, opened the festivities, telling the guests: “Today is about you—our kind, generous, priceless, and committed volunteers who share your time and passion with us every day.”

Mount Sinai West and Mount Sinai St. Luke’s recognized their volunteers at an awards ceremony and reception held at the Symphony Space Performing Arts Center on the Upper West Side on Wednesday, April 18. Arthur A. Gianelli, MPH, President of Mount Sinai St. Luke’s; Tim Day, Chief Operating Officer, Mount Sinai West; and Meredith Lisagor, M.Div, Director of Spiritual Care, joined the Volunteer Services team, led by Director Amy Bush and Assistant Director Ramona Gross, in honoring the more than 80 volunteers in attendance. One outstanding volunteer, Naomi Goldberg, was recognized for 10 years of service at Mount Sinai West in the Emergency Department and the Division of Hematology/Oncology.

Jeremy Boal, MD, Executive Vice President and Chief Clinical Officer, Mount Sinai Health System, and President, Mount Sinai Downtown, led staff in saluting 55 volunteers who attended a reception in the Bernstein Building on Tuesday, April 17. When Dinah Jacobson, who oversees Volunteer Services at Mount Sinai Beth Israel, asked staff and volunteers to share stories about their experiences, retired

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Leaders and staff at Mount Sinai Brooklyn honored their long-serving volunteers. From left: Rose Huczko, 1,957 volunteer hours; Roman Khait, Patient Representative; Ruth Mermelstein, 1,339 volunteer hours; Frank Rotelli, 3,263 volunteer hours; Philip Fagin, 2,607 volunteer hours; Scott Lorin, MD; Linda Valentino, RN, Chief Nursing Officer and Vice President of Patient Care Services; Jean Chin, 3,972 volunteer hours; Deborah Dean, MD, Chief of Emergency Medicine; Morris Jacobs, 1,397 volunteer hours; Rabbi Jacob Hoenig, and Maia Makharadze.
Leaders and Staff Salute Mount Sinai’s Volunteers (continued from page 5)

nurse Jackie Slawsky, a volunteer for Surgical Admitting, spoke up. “I’ve been volunteering at Mount Sinai Beth Israel for several years,” she said, “and there isn’t another place that welcomes you like family. I really feel like I matter to the staff and patients.”

At Mount Sinai Brooklyn, an afternoon of activities on Thursday, April 19, included a recognition ceremony, as well as a Musician Volunteer Concert and Spring Volunteer Workshop. Scott Lorin, MD, newly named President of Mount Sinai Brooklyn; Maia Makharadze, who manages the Department of Volunteer Services; and Rabbi Jacob Hoenig, Director of Pastoral Care and Education, presented a “Best in Brooklyn Volunteer Award” to eight volunteers who have devoted more than 1,000 hours in service to patients—with one volunteer reaching nearly 4,000 hours. Said Ms. Makharadze: “We have very dedicated and multi-talented volunteers who give so much of their time to Mount Sinai Brooklyn.”

Stefan Balan, MD, Director of Cancer Network Development, Brooklyn; and Chief of Hematology and Oncology, Mount Sinai Brooklyn, expressed the gratitude of all when he addressed the volunteers. “We are a hospital, a place where nobody chooses to be—except you who come here and want to make a difference in someone’s life, to make them feel better, to embrace them, and listen to them. For all this, we thank you.”

We Want Your Opinion on Patient Safety!

The Mount Sinai Health System is conducting a survey on our patient safety culture. Feedback is welcome from all faculty, staff, and students. Your answers will be anonymous and confidential. Your input will help ensure the safest environment possible for our patients. It only takes 10 minutes to complete.

The survey will be open from Monday, June 11, through Friday, June 29.

Go to theori.org/mshspatientsafetysurvey.

Your Voice Counts

Your Voice Counts is a newsletter that features stories of extraordinary patient care and the Mount Sinai Health System faculty and staff who make these stories possible. Share your Mount Sinai story by emailing yourvoicecounts@mssm.edu or visiting mountsinai.org/yourvoicecounts.