



Unflagging Support of Yale Cancer Center

Jerry and Roz Meyer

Roslyn M. “Roz” Meyer, PhD, and her husband, Jerome H. “Jerry” Meyer, MD, will never forget the torment they felt when Roz was diagnosed with stage IV melanoma in 2005.

“The worst part was not knowing what to do or where to turn,” said Jerry. “It was anguish.”

But with the help of Yale Cancer Center and, specifically, Mario Sznol, MD, Professor of Medicine (Medical Oncology), Roz was able to join an experimental program at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in Bethesda, MD, run by Steven A. Rosenberg, MD, PhD, who pioneered the development of effective immunotherapies and gene therapies for patients with advanced cancer. Eighteen years later, she remains healthy.

“It’s in the realm of the miraculous,” commented Jerry.

Roz and Jerry made the decision to apply for a clinical trial at the National Cancer Institute in Bethesda, Maryland, since the standard treatments at the time did not work. They were lucky that Roz met the eligibility requirements for the trial, and that her outcome was successful. But they always wished that patients could have access to those kinds of treatments close to home. Their original philanthropy to Yale Cancer Center was to create such a program at Yale, including a recent \$500,000 donation to the Meyer Fund for Melanoma Research, which was established through a foundational multi-million dollar gift.

“Jerry and I really believe in trying to make cancer treatment available to as many people as possible, as close to home as possible,” Roz said. “One of the things we love about Eric Winer (YCC Director) is that he’s focusing on making sure everyone has equal access to top-notch healthcare.”

When Roz was diagnosed, there were no effective treatments. “Surgery helped for a while but then it would pop back up, and vaccines in general did not work,” she said. But after they returned from the NIH and her health improved, the couple focused their generosity—a constant in their lives—on healthcare.

“We were painfully aware that people (here) couldn’t get the treatment that I was able to get in Bethesda,” Roz said. “We wanted that to change.”

In addition to creating and supporting the Meyer Fund for Melanoma Research, Roz is Co-Chair of the Yale Cancer Center Director’s Council, a group of volunteers who share a commitment to the Center with outside expertise and financial commitment.

“One of the things I learned early on about Yale’s program is that they have an amazing team of melanoma doctors, and they also have world class scientists, and that synergy is just phenomenal,” Roz said. “What’s so fantastic about Yale is the extraordinary people working here.”

The treatment Roz received motivated her to start a melanoma focused patient and family support group at Yale Cancer Center. “The support group provided hope for a lot of people,” she said. Now as a Co-Chair of the Director’s Council, she helps advise Dr. Winer and other Cancer Center leadership on strategic planning and fundraising initiatives, advocates for Yale Cancer Center and Smilow Cancer Hospital, and looks forward to helping bring more equity to cancer treatment.

Roz and Jerry Meyer are fixtures of the Yale and New Haven communities, having raised their three children here and run successful medical practices—she as a psychologist, he as a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst. They helped found Leadership, Education & Athletics in Partnership (LEAP), a non-profit that provides New Haven youth summer and after-school programs, and the International Festival of Arts and Ideas,

which highlights art and theater from across the globe.

Philanthropic giving and investing in their community are core beliefs for the Meyers, and they couldn’t imagine it any other way.

“We got it from our families, the understanding that much is expected from those who are given a lot, and that we need to make the world a better place,” Roz said. “Both of us feel that if we can help out in a situation, we will.”

Although they are retired from their practices and now proud grandparents, the Meyers keep busy with their work in the community and their art. Jerry’s art in several mediums has exhibited widely at galleries throughout the country, and Roz’s work in photography and most recently, mosaics, has had many showings in the region, including at Smilow Cancer Hospital.

The couple, who met in 1971 at the Cross Campus Library (now Bass Library) at Yale when he was a fourth-year medical student and she was beginning her doctorate in clinical psychology, could have lived anywhere, but chose the New Haven area.

“We met each other and fell in love here, which helped,” Jerry added. “We got married, opened our practices, and raised a family. All those things brought us close to Yale and the town. New Haven has all the ingredients to make wonderful things happen: bright people, enthusiasm and motivation, good modeling, and good colleagues. It’s still the place for us.”

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—Roz Meyer