Dear Friends,

THANK YOU, EDWARD; THANK YOU, DAVID; AND thank you, all. And welcome, old friends and new friends, to our 37th anniversary of the Ball of the Year. I’m sure that you have all heard the expression that a picture is worth a thousand words. Therefore, I will be brief, since our foundation’s progress during this past year was evident in our film. As you all know, our primary focus is always our patients, and I believe you will agree that we have made great strides in this endeavor.

One of the many important lessons in life I was taught by my parents is that giving is not a calculation of what you are buying, it is really about participating in a fight – and in today’s world, there are many battles to be won. Our foundation’s war is against cancer; and our mission is finding a cure. But along the way there are other issues connected to fighting this disease; issues concerning human dignity, patient care and patient rights. Our efforts in research are a prominent part of this battle, and can be seen in the new and advanced treatments that will ultimately affect our patients’ prognoses. And so, I truly believe that is why we are all here today; because we want to make a difference; we love that special feeling that comes with being a giving person. I am honored to be in your company and thank you for sharing your blessings with so many people in need of your kindness and your continuous generosity.

As you all well know, The Don Monti Memorial Research Foundation is alive and well because of your commitment to our cause, as is the legacy of my dear parents and brother, Tita, Joseph and Don Monti. Always remember my Mother’s guiding words: to live each day with faith, with hope and most important, with love. It is truly the greatest recipe for a life well-lived; and my parents were the most extraordinary examples of that.

Please enjoy this wonderful evening. My love and gratitude goes out to each and every one of you. May God bless you all, and thank you.

Caroline Monti Saladino, President
The Don Monti Memorial Research Foundation
On a magical evening in November 2008, more than 800 people attended The Don Monti Memorial Research Foundation’s 37th Annual Ball of the Year at The Crest Hollow Country Club.

The host, General Chairman Ed Travaglianti, introduced Caroline Monti Saladino, president of The Don Monti Memorial Research Foundation, who welcomed the guests and spoke of the foundation’s successes during the past year, and the exciting plans for the year to come.

The keynote speaker, Dr. David J. Steinberg, president of Long Island University, told a moving story about Tita Monti’s 80th birthday and the sighting of a rainbow, that was, as Tita Monti announced, “… Don wishing me a happy 80th birthday.” That message of hope and wonder is demonstrated in the exciting research that North Shore-LIJ Health System and Cold Spring Harbor Laboratories are now collaborating on in the fight against cancer.

Three well-known local florists – Spits and Peck Florist, Flowers by Brian and Pedestals Florist – provided the stunning flower arrangements. After the speeches and video, the guests danced the evening away to the versatile sounds of East Coast, provided through Gregg Raffa Events & Entertainment.

This was the first ball after the era of Tita and Joseph Monti, who died in 2006 and 2007, respectively. The previous two galas were dedicated to their memories and accomplishments. But the loving spirit of both was present throughout the evening, and lives on in the important work of the foundation they founded and nurtured for 36 years in their son’s name.
Ed and Pat Travaglianti with friends of Tory Zabatino and Meredith Travaglianti and friends

Brother Edmond Precourt, Michael Afrunti, Bernie Strianese, Donald Cusimano, John Hughes, Amy Hughes, Christine Bishop-Feeney, Rita Cusimano, Ella Strianese, Rosemarie Afrunti

Melanie and Bob Cassandro and friends

Robert and Sylvia Aiello and friends

Ed and Pat Travaglianti, Anthony and Barbara Grieco

Clockwise from top: Senator Carl Marcellino, Diane Fagiola, Bob Fagiola, Chris Brings, Art Brings, The Hon. Harry Anand, Nick Bartilucci, Joan Bartilucci, Dr. Chandra Anand, Dr. Jim Watson, Patricia Marcellino, Liz Watson

Dr. and Mrs. Vincent Vinciguerra

Dr. Bruce Stillman, Richard Leeds, David Peikon, Bob Isakson, Sue Isakson, Terri Peikon, Suzanne Leeds, Grace Stillman

Arista String Quartet


Thomas and Cynthia Cooke, Aline and Lou Cortese, Sarah Gorman and Joe Saladino

Ed and Pat Travaglianti, Joyce and Richard Merzbacher

Dr. and Mrs. Vincent Vinciguerra
Donny Travaglia, Joe Saladino, Don Saladino, Robert Monti, Joseph Faria Jr., Joe Faria

The McDevitt and Peranzo family

Arthur Saladino, Melanie and Bob Cassandro

Don Saladino, Jose Cruz and Arthur Saladino

Curt Barkley, Karen Orzel, Anna Travaglia, Stephen Bradley

Sarah, Allen and Fran Gorman

Debbie and Ken McGuigan

John Hughes, Caroline Monti Saladino, Amy Hughes

Grace and Bruce Stillman

Dr. Steve Allen, Dr. David Spector, Dr. Mona Spector, Arthur Saladino and Caroline Monti Saladino, Amy Rappaport, Dr. Scott Lowe

Doug and Chris Fox, John and Cheryl Pufahl, Caroline Monti Saladino and Arthur Saladino, Elaine and Charles Drakos

Phil and Kathy Peranzo
The Don Monti Memorial Research Foundation extends a special thank you to Rich Marchisotto and Sherwood-Triart Photography for their time, talent and generosity expressed through these beautiful remembrances of our very special 37th Anniversary Ball of the Year.

Thank You
An aura of true joy and purpose overflowed on a recent fall evening as hundreds of cancer survivors, their families and their health care professionals joined together to celebrate the work of North Shore University Hospital’s Don Monti Bone Marrow and Stem Cell Transplant Program.

Among all the commotion of the gathering for the Sixth Annual Celebration of Life dinner at the Crest Hollow Country Club, two humble men were overwhelmed and almost speechless. Robert Carucci, a 29-year-old bone marrow recipient from Medford, came face-to-face for the first time with his bone marrow donor, Petty Officer 1st Class Rick Foresteire of the United States Navy.

“Up to this point, he was a stranger on a registry,” explained Mr. Carucci. “Now, it is so hard to find the words to describe what he means to me.”

Mr. Carucci was diagnosed in 2002 with Hodgkin’s lymphoma. After chemotherapy and a subsequent stem cell transplant did not place him in remission, Mr. Carucci needed a bone marrow transplant. A longtime platelet donor, Orlando, Fla., native Petty Officer Foresteire joined the National Bone Marrow Registry 12 years ago and then received word a couple of years ago that his bone marrow was a match for Mr. Carucci, who received his transplant in September 2006 at North Shore University Hospital (NSUH), under the care of Ruthee-Lu Bayer, MD, chief of the Don Monti Bone Marrow Transplantation Unit.

“I would always try to help someone, but the opportunity to save someone’s life, well, I would do it all over again,” said Petty Officer Foresteire. “It’s a great feeling to see him here with his family.”

This heroic story was just one of many that unfolded during the evening. Patients Frank Balchaitis and Mary Ann Vargin celebrated their one-year and five-year transplant anniversaries, respectively. Each shared personal stories of the challenges they and their families faced when confronted with their life-threatening illnesses.

“It’s not just about me, it’s about us,” Mr. Balchaitis told survivors, their loved ones, the Transplant Unit staff and the “anonymous angel” who supported him in fighting this "unseen enemy."

“I was so lucky to have my family and friends, but my shining star was Dr. Bayer,” proclaimed Ms. Vargin. "During my battle with acute myelogenous leukemia (AML), Dr. Bayer always had such faith in me.”

Dr. Bayer thanked Caroline Monti Saladino, president of The Don Monti Memorial Research Foundation, for her deep commitment and unending support of the patients and for the “extreme makeover” the foundation recently helped fund for the unit.

In June 1972, 16-year-old Don Monti, Caroline’s brother, passed away at NSUH after losing his battle with myeloblastic leukemia. Caroline’s parents, Tita and Joseph Monti, honored their son’s memory shortly after by establishing the foundation with a mission of finding a cure for cancer through research, education, fellowship and care.

“This is a day my parents lived for,” recalled Ms. Monti Saladino. “Good friends and family and good spirit.”

The celebration was all the more sweet when Dr. Bayer announced that earlier in the week, the Program received the prestigious Foundation for the Accreditation of Cellular Therapy (FACT) accreditation and is now the only accredited adult bone marrow transplant center in the Brooklyn, Queens and Long Island area. “Tonight would not be possible without Caroline’s help,” she said.

“My life has been touched and enriched by each one of you in this room,” added Dr. Bayer. “As one we stand strong. But together we are unbeatable.”
Robert Carucci, Dr. Ruthee-Lu Bayer and Petty Officer First Class Rick Foresteire of the United States Navy

Patient Theresa Knight and Nurse Zenaida Tacupa

Andrew McQueen, RN, and Mr. and Mrs. Frank Balchaitis

"...THE OPPORTUNITY TO SAVE SOMEONE'S LIFE, WELL, I WOULD DO IT ALL OVER AGAIN."

Bone marrow recipients and transplant caregivers share gratitude

Caroline Monti Saladino, President of the Don Monti Memorial Research Foundation, and Dr. Ruthee-Lu Bayer
Don Monti Division of Oncology/Hematology

Annual Christmas Party

Santa’s "elves" bring holiday cheer.

Colleen DeGaetano, Shannon Lewis, Kelly Lewis, Bunny Burns

Shokrolla Pouladin and Caroline Monti Saladino

Caroline Monti Saladino and Anna Travaglia deliver gifts for the 7 and 8 Monti patients.

Doris Barnett gets a visit from Santa

Santa and Melissa Kelly

Back row: Richard Gralla, MD; Joan Klocke, RN
Front row: Caroline Monti Saladino, Santa, Shannon Lewis
Laurie and Her Summer Camp Kids Raise $5,000

Breast cancer survivor Laurie van Daatselaar is an advocate for cancer patients and children. As the director of a one-week summer camp at her parish, Maria Regina in Seaford, N.Y., Laurie found a way to combine her passions in a fun and worthwhile way.

Each year, to further the goal of “kids helping kids,” Laurie chooses a charity that benefits children, creates a theme around the charity and presents it to her young campers for a service project. As a grateful patient of Dr. Vincent Vinciguerra, Laurie chose The Don Monti Memorial Research Foundation last summer. Her goal was to collect and donate money to offset the cost of a child’s or teenager’s chemotherapy.

“I have been extraordinarily blessed by our health insurance and have been covered for everything,” Laurie says. “But I know there are families out there that are not as fortunate as I have been.”

Laurie gave each of the 244 campers and 179 big brothers and sisters labels, “Surfin’ for the Cure,” to put on containers and asked them to start filling them with small change. She expected the children to be able to collect a few hundred dollars at most. But the word spread. The kids squirreled away nickels, dimes and quarters, and many parents matched whatever their children saved.

The owner of a small shop in Massapequa heard of her plan and placed a “Surfin’ for a Cure” jar on the counter to solicit donations from customers.

“From small efforts can sometimes come great things. Laurie was pleased that her plan raised $5,000 for The Don Monti Memorial Research Foundation.”

Friends of Tory Zabatino Raise More Than $10,000

Losing one of your best friends to cancer, when you are all in your early 20s, is something that should be unimaginable — but for The Friends of Tory Zabatino it was a reality that we had to live through. So what could we do, the friends who loved Tory so much, to keep his memory alive and in the meantime, help others in need and who could understand our position?

TWO WORDS: BAR CRAWL

On Oct. 18, 2008, The Friends of Tory Zabatino held the 3rd Annual NYC Bar Crawl, an event we organized to get us all together to honor the memory of the person who had such an impact on our lives and, in the process, raise money for a charity that was so close to the heart of our beloved friend: The Don Monti Memorial Research Foundation.

As in the prior two years, there were eight bars involved in the event. Each donated one free drink to each participant or person who donated money to our cause. In the last two crawls, we raised more than $5,000 and $6,000, respectively. However, this year we shattered those previous donations and raised more than $10,000.

“We all love and miss our friend so much, and this event helps us do something that we know Tory would be proud of. Words cannot express our gratitude to everyone who has helped us reach this goal. It is our pleasure to donate all of the proceeds to The Don Monti Memorial Research Foundation, to help continue the fight that this great organization is leading. We are especially proud to help Tory’s family and relatives keep his memory alive and show everyone just how special he was to all of us. Tory Zabatino is an inspiration to us all! We all love and miss the guy who brought so much joy to our lives.”

Caroline Monti Saladino with friends and family of Tory Zabatino, who raised thousands of dollars for The Don Monti Memorial Research Foundation during their Pub Crawl.
Meet Amy Rappaport

Chasing Down the Genetic Culprits in Leukemia

Scientists trying to decipher the genetic basis of cancer have so far identified dozens of cancer-causing oncogenes and protective genes called tumor suppressors that counteract them. But these discoveries are still a small part of a bigger picture, most of which is yet to be filled in. To design more effective anticancer therapies, scientists will need to compile a much more comprehensive list of cancer-related genes to build a detailed map of how various pro- and anti-cancer genetic pathways interact.

Funding from The Don Monti Memorial Research Foundation has been instrumental in accelerating the pace of cancer gene discovery at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory (CSHL), work that will form the basis for the discovery of a new generation of anti-cancer drugs that are expected to be much more effective and far less toxic than current therapies. The Foundation’s generosity has benefited not only distinguished CSHL scientists such as Dr. Scott Lowe, leader of the Tita Monti Cancer Research Laboratory, who has grappled with these problems for more than a decade, but also an impressive crop of highly accomplished post-doctoral fellows and graduate students who will be leaders in cancer research in the decades to come.

One of the most promising young scientists is Amy Rappaport, a graduate student in the Watson School of Biological Sciences at CSHL, who is now in her second year in Dr. Lowe’s lab. Lowe calls Rappaport a “pioneer” for her use of two recently developed technologies to unravel the complex genetic and biochemical networks that cause acute myeloid leukemia (AML), a cancer in which certain white blood cells proliferate out of control in the bone marrow.

For a few years now, scientists have known that AML patients who respond poorly to treatment carry mutations in genes embedded in chromosomes 5 and 7. But there are many genes in these regions, and despite years of hard work it is not yet clear which are specifically associated with AML.

Rappaport plans to use a revolutionary technique called RNA interference, or RNAi, developed in part by CSHL, to switch genes “off” on the two chromosomes. Her test subjects are mice that have been engineered by Dr. Lowe’s group to develop AML-like disease. The scientists predict that combining this animal model with the power of RNAi will enable them to develop a more comprehensive scan of most of the potential leukemia-causing genetic culprits. “Knowing which cancer genes to target,” Rappaport points out, “is the first step in designing drugs that will suppress their effects.”