

CONSTRUCTING A CURE

Real estate industry leaders help Jeffrey Modell Foundation's efforts to overcome Primary Immunodeficiency

IN 1987, when Fred and Vicki started the Jeffrey Modell Foundation in honor of their son, who died at the age of 15 as a result of a lifelong condition called Primary Immunodeficiency (PI), they did the fundamental work of foundations - mailings, galas, meetings, and more mailings. Primary Immunodeficiency is an umbrella term for more than 150 genetic defects that are characterized by illnesses that are sometimes acute but many times recurring, persistent, debilitating, chronic and sometimes even fatal conditions.

The challenge faced by the Modell's was steep: Primary Immunodeficiency was considered so rare that many doctors knew little about it and had few treatment options. The majority of the population had never heard of PI. It was not at the top of many research agendas. Through JMF, the Modell's persevered and in 1993, they made a fundraising connection that would lead to breakthroughs in research and treatment of PI that would affect patients everywhere. A group of New York real estate leaders attended the annual benefit, and Fred Modell recalls, "from that moment

on, their support has been constant and continues to expand annually."

Manhattan's real estate Titans are not known for their willingness to take a back seat in any situation, and their confident approach has catapulted JMF into the big leagues of medical research and fundraising over the past 21 years. There are 37 Jeffrey Modell Diagnostic and Research Centers, over 200 referral centers, spanning 28 US cities, 14 countries and 4 continents worldwide. To date the Modell's have raised over 100 million dollars. The Jeffrey Modell Immunology Center centrally located on the Harvard Medical School campus has recently been dedicated. It will serve as a focal point for the most dynamic and diverse community of immunologists in the world.

Fred Modell credits the alliance with the commercial real estate community for taking JMF from its grassroots beginnings to its present stature. Industry leaders such as David Greenbaum of Vornado, Aby Rosen of RFR, Bruce Mosler of Cushman & Wakefield, Stephen Siegel of CB Richard Ellis, Steven Witkoff of The Witkoff Group,

Jonathan Mechanic of Fried, Frank, Harris, as well as real estate giants Tod Waterman and Arnold Penner have been the backbone of JMF's efforts. "These friends and supporters gave us the courage to build an immunology center on the Harvard campus," says Modell.

Jeff Blau, President of Related Companies, has been a constant supporter and will be honored as JMF's "Man of the Year" at this year's Spring Ahead Gala on April 24 at Cipriani 42nd Street.

"I am extremely proud to support the Jeffrey Modell Foundation. The work Vicki, Fred and the entire Foundation board and staff do to support worldwide research and advocacy, education initiatives for the medical industry and patient programs for the Primary Immunodeficient community is invaluable. The Foundation has touched countless lives and I am honored to be playing a role in their vital cause," says Blau. Blau follows in the footsteps of past honorees that include many of the supporters cited above as well as, Robert Alexander of CB Richard Ellis, and Ric



Vicki and Fred Modell at The Jeffrey Modell Immunology Center at Harvard



Jeffrey Modell



Lisa and Jeff Blau

Clark of Brookfield Properties. Spring Ahead is an annual gala that Vicki and Fred host to bring together their supporters and honor individuals who have contributed to the Foundation's many successes. The gala is a red letter date on the New York social calendar and Vicki has chosen "State Fair" as this year's theme. Guests can be sure they will be treated to the best food, décor and entertainment on the benefit circuit.

JMF was instrumental in securing Federal funding to test newborns for Severe Combined Immune Deficiency, known as "Bubble Boy Disease". Wisconsin is the first state in the nation to administer statewide screenings of every newborn. By identifying carriers

of the genetic disorder, treatments such as bone marrow transplants, which offer a total cure, can be implemented in time to save lives.

Again, the involvement of the real estate community is key. Stephen Siegel, Chairman, Global Brokerage, of CB Richard Ellis was driven by the opportunity to start from the ground up: "My early involvement in JMF was a result of my conclusion that there had not been enough funding to enable more extensive research of Primary Immunodeficiency diseases and cures. The fact that without research children were condemned to live a greatly shortened and restricted life made the decision to get involved an easy one."

Now JMF is creating a special research

project that will be owned by several of these real estate leaders. Because they are used to the bottom-line realities of business, "ownership" of a project will give them the opportunity to measure the effectiveness of their investment. As Fred Modell notes "we know this group has the ability to write checks and attend galas, but what people don't realize is that their commitment has gone far beyond that." He also states, "they want to know how they changed the lives of the patients, especially the children."

*For further information on the Jeffrey Modell Foundation please visit www.info4pi.org
For information and ticket sales for the Spring Ahead Gala please contact 212.819.0200 or asylvestri@JMFWorld.org*