

## HEALTHY BRAIN AGING: CONSIDERING THE POSSIBILITIES



DR. ANDREA TENNER WELCOMED CONFERENCE ATTENDEES

On October 2, UCI MIND and the Alzheimer's Association, Orange County Chapter (AAOC), hosted the 26th Annual Southern California Alzheimer's Disease Research Conference, *Healthy Brain Aging: Considering the Possibilities*, at the Irvine Marriott Hotel. Over 400 professionals, caregivers, and community members gathered for this one-day educational event focused on current research in age-related brain changes and lifestyle factors that may support healthy brain aging. After welcoming introductions by UCI MIND Director Dr. Andrea Tenner and AAOC President Jim McAleer, Dr. Maria Carillo, Chief Science Officer of the Alzheimer's Association, set the stage with an overview of modifiable risk factors for cognitive decline and dementia, including physical activity, diet, cardiovascular health, cognitive exercise, and sleep. Dr. Alon Avidan, Professor of Neurology at UCLA and Director of the UCLA Sleep Disorders Center, delved further into the topic of sleep and dementia, updating the audience on the risks for dementia associated with some sleep disorders. Dr. Jessica Langbaum of the Banner Alzheimer's Institute (BAI) then presented her research on cognitive training interventions, concluding that formal instruction and strategies may delay cognitive decline in healthy older adults. In addition to her role as Project Scientist, Dr. Langbaum serves as Associate Director of BAI's Alzheimer's Prevention Initiative, an international collaborative of scientists, physicians, industry and regulatory agencies focused on prevention research.



DR. JOSHUA GRILL DISCUSSED ETHICS AND CLINICAL TRIALS



CONFERENCE ATTENDEES PARTICIPATED IN DR. KELLI SHARP'S INTERACTIVE SESSION

Opening the afternoon session, Dr. Joshua Grill, Director of Education at UCI MIND, engaged the audience with a discussion on ethical considerations for Alzheimer's disease prevention trials. Dr. Grill, who also serves as Associate Director of UCI MIND's Alzheimer's Disease Research Center, is an active investigator in the first clinical trial in "preclinical Alzheimer's disease," the Anti-Amyloid treatment in Asymptomatic Alzheimer's disease study. Dr. Daniel Nation, Assistant Professor of Psychology at USC, followed with a session on the role of vascular aging in cognitive decline and Alzheimer's disease. Dr. Nation's fascinating work has examined the relationship between pulse pressure and biomarkers of Alzheimer's disease. Present to share his research and expertise on the topic of exercise and cognitive health was Dr. Carl Cotman, founding Director of UCI MIND. In his lecture, Dr. Cotman emphasized the importance of aerobic exercise in promoting healthy cognition and brain aging. To conclude the conference, Dr. Kelli Sharp, Assistant Professor in the Department of Dance at UC Irvine, examined the healing art of dance in neurorehabilitation. Her presentation included interactive components of dance and movement that brought the audience to their feet, the perfect ending to an education-filled day.

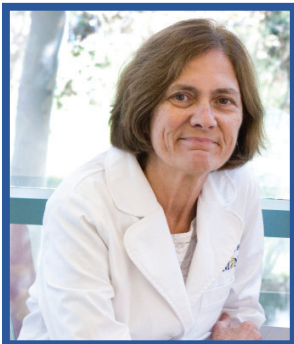
The Conference was a huge success thanks to our speakers, attendees, staff, volunteers, and especially our 37 sponsors from local organizations who helped make the event possible. Save the date for our 27th Annual Southern California Alzheimer's Disease Research Conference on September 30, 2016, at the Irvine Marriott Hotel!



CONFERENCE ATTENDEES VISITED EXHIBITS DURING COFFEE BREAKS THROUGHOUT THE DAY

## FROM THE DIRECTOR

ANDREA TENNER, PH.D.



Dear Friends,

In the previous issue of this newsletter, we highlighted some of the recent events that contribute to this being, perhaps, the most exciting time in the history of UCI MIND. Notable were the arrival of new Vice Chancellor of Health Affairs and Dean of the School of Medicine, Dr. Howard Federoff, and the successful renewal of the critical Alzheimer's Disease Research Center grant by Dean Frank LaFerla and the other members of the ADRC. This issue is largely a continuation of that theme, again meant to let you – our extended family, friends, and partners – know just how promising the future is for UCI MIND.

Great things are happening at UCI MIND in general (see below), but major news of success in our neuroscience research comes with wonderful frequency. Our senior faculty such as Drs. Carl Cotman (page 3) and Leslie Thompson (page 6) continue to receive grant funding, awards, and other distinctions. Even more exciting than the continued success of our senior scientists, however, is the crop of energetic and innovative scientists who are new to UCI or to Alzheimer's disease research and are poised to take the field to new heights and eventual improved treatments, preventions, and cures for all neurodegenerative diseases. These brilliant faculty are described on pages 4 and 5.

As always, all of us at UCI MIND need your help to achieve our goal of a world where memories last a lifetime. With increased funding, the creative and talented scientists described on pages 4 and 5 can push the boundaries of current understanding of disease mechanisms, test novel ideas, and answer scientific questions more rapidly. Roughly \$0.80 of every donated dollar goes directly into the laboratory or research clinic, including the laboratories and clinics of these fantastically promising young scientists, with much of the rest devoted to community education.

In this issue, we also offer our thanks to the incredible individuals and families who have made donations to UCI MIND over the past year (pages 9-11). We cannot adequately convey the depths of our gratitude for gifts to support research at UCI MIND. These gifts give us the opportunity to accelerate our efforts to make a difference in the world through science.

Finally, as the holiday season approaches, we wish you and your families all the best. We hope to see you all at upcoming UCI MIND Community Events or the UCI MIND website ([mind.uci.edu](http://mind.uci.edu)). Warmest regards.

### PROVOST VISIT TO UCI MIND

UC Irvine Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor, Enrique J. Lavernia, Ph.D., paid a special visit to UCI MIND this fall. During his visit, the Provost heard an overview of the research endeavors at UCI MIND and received a behind-the-scenes tour of the facilities on UC Irvine's campus from Institute Director, Dr. Andrea Tenner, and Dean of the Ayala School of Biological Sciences, Dr. Frank LaFerla. Pictured here with Dr. Lavernia, Chief Administrative Officer, Andrea Wasserman, concluded the tour with a human brain demonstration. Dr. Lavernia returned to UC Irvine on July 1, 2015, after serving as Dean of the UC Davis College of Engineering since 2002. Prior to UC Davis, Dr. Lavernia was Chair and Chancellor's Professor in the Department of Chemical Engineering and Materials Science at UC Irvine. In his new role, Dr. Lavernia oversees 12 schools, nearly 3,000 faculty, and 192 degree programs as the Chief Academic and Operating Officer. UCI MIND welcomes Dr. Lavernia back to the UC Irvine family and looks forward to future interactions with the Provost.



### UC IRVINE NATIONAL COLLEGE RANKINGS

UC Irvine has a lot to celebrate as it climbs national rankings in its 50th year. According to *U.S. News & World Report*, UC Irvine has risen from #11 to #9 (tie with UC San Diego) among



the highest-ranked public colleges and universities in the country. Another proud accomplishment is UC Irvine's continued accessibility to students from all backgrounds. The *New York Times* named UC

Irvine the #1 college in the country "doing the most for low-income students." Lastly, annual rankings of sustainable universities by the *Sierra Club* placed UC Irvine at the top spot as the greenest school in the United States for the second year in a row. Go Anteaters!







# IN THE NEWS

*Exciting achievements and updates from the  
Institute for Memory Impairments and Neurological Disorders*

## DR. CARL COTMAN FEATURED ON ABC 7 EYEWITNESS NEWS

Dr. Carl Cotman, founding Director of UCI MIND and Professor of Neurology and Neurobiology and Behavior, was featured on ABC 7 Eyewitness News in early October. The report highlighted Dr. Cotman's presentation at the 26th Annual Alzheimer's Disease Research Conference, where he spoke to the impact of exercise on cognitive function and brain aging. According to Dr. Cotman, all seniors should be exercising three to four times a week to promote healthy brain aging, and aerobic exercise is especially important. Although he cannot definitively say whether exercise can reduce cognitive decline, Dr. Cotman is hopeful. Dr. Cotman is leading an upcoming national clinical trial to examine whether exercise can slow cognitive changes in older persons. If you are interested in volunteering to participate in this upcoming study, please contact Megan Witbracht, Ph.D., at (949) 824-3249 or [mwitbrac@uci.edu](mailto:mwitbrac@uci.edu).



Carl Cotman, Ph.D.

## DR. DAVID BAGLIETTO-VARGAS AWARDED ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION GRANT

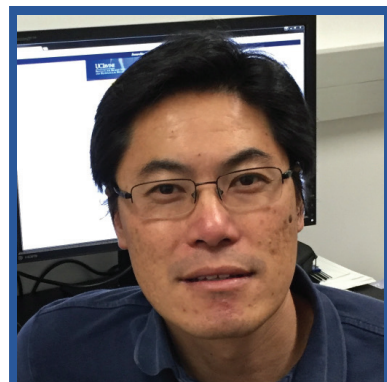
Congratulations to Assistant Researcher, Dr. David Baglietto-Vargas, who was recently awarded the Alzheimer's Association New Investigator Research Grant (NIRG), which aims to support the research efforts of promising, newly independent investigators. Dr. Baglietto-Vargas joined UCI MIND in 2009 after receiving his Ph.D. from the University of Malaga in Spain where he worked to characterize transgenic animal models to identify new therapeutic targets for Alzheimer's disease. This \$100,000, two-year grant will allow Dr. Baglietto-Vargas to further investigate the molecular mechanisms by which Alzheimer's disease causes memory and cognitive impairments. Specifically, this project aims to elucidate how synapses are affected in Alzheimer's disease. Dr. Baglietto-Vargas, in collaboration with UCI MIND's Drs. Frank LaFerla and Carl Cotman, will utilize novel and state-of-the-art physiological, imaging, biochemical, and animal model approaches to achieve his project. Dr. Baglietto-Vargas hopes that his investigation of synaptic degeneration, one of the earliest features of Alzheimer's disease pathology, will eventually reveal potential therapeutic approaches to help mitigate cognitive decline.



David Baglietto-Vargas, Ph.D.

## DR. WAYNE POON AWARDED ICTS PILOT GRANT

Research Associate Professor and Tissue Repository Director, Dr. Wayne W. Poon, was awarded a \$25,000 grant from the UC Irvine Institute for Clinical and Translational Science (ICTS) this fall, which will be complemented with a \$7,500 award from UCI MIND. The ICTS pilot award funds projects aimed at transitioning laboratory, clinical, or population studies into clinical applications. Dr. Poon plans to continue his work examining if endophenotypes associated with genetic risk factors can serve as diagnostic biomarkers for Alzheimer's disease subtypes. This project will directly target a personalized medicine approach to treating Alzheimer's disease, using an individual's genetic information to optimize treatment decisions. Congratulations to Dr. Poon on his award that will help advance the field of Alzheimer's research!



Wayne Poon, Ph.D.

## BRILLIANT FUTURE: NEW & NOTEWORTHY FACULTY



**María M. Corrada, Sc.M., Sc.D., Associate Professor of Neurology and Epidemiology**

After finishing my doctoral degree in Epidemiology in 2003, I was recruited to UCI by Dr. Claudia Kawas to establish an investigation of the oldest-old, people aged 90 and older. The 90+ Study is now one of the largest epidemiological studies of aging and dementia in this ever-growing age group. We have found that the risk of dementia continues to increase exponentially doubling every five years of age and does not decrease as previously believed. Our work is highlighting that age matters - risk factors, causes, and types of dementia at younger ages are different from those in the oldest-old. With the support of the UCI ADRC we are also learning about the brain pathologies that contribute to dementia at very advanced ages. With more and more people living to very old age, these unique participants are helping us learn the secrets to aging successfully.



**Joshua Grill, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Psychiatry and Human Behavior**

I completed my undergraduate training at Miami University in Oxford, OH, where I began my work in neuroscience in the place cell laboratory of Dr. Phil Best. From there, I did my doctoral work with Dr. David Riddle at Wake Forest University School of Medicine, studying neurotrophic factor regulation of aging brain anatomy. After a brief stint in industry, Dr. Jeffery Cummings recruited me to join the UCLA Alzheimer's Disease Research Center (ADRC) in 2007. There, I transitioned my research career into clinical studies, specifically clinical trials. I was thrilled to join UCI MIND on March 1, 2015, moving with my wife and our young daughter to Orange County. Here, I will continue my work, which focuses on the efficient and ethical conduct of clinical trials in Alzheimer's disease (AD), including trials in patients with dementia and prodromal AD, as well as AD prevention trials. I will also continue to serve as a member of the Steering Committee of the Alzheimer's Disease Cooperative Study (ADCS), a national AD clinical trial network, and the Internal Ethics Committee for this group. Here at UCI, I will serve as Director of Education for UCI MIND and lead the Outreach, Recruitment and Education Core of the UCI ADRC, a position I similarly held for the duration of my time at UCLA. I'm also honored to have been invited by Dr. Frank LaFerla to serve as Associate Director of the UCI ADRC, assisting him in guiding the future of this esteemed group of outstanding and productive scientists.



**Edwin S. Monuki, M.D., Ph.D., Neuropathology Core Co-Director and Warren L. Bostick Chair of Pathology & Laboratory Medicine**

A native of Southern California, I received my BS degree from MIT, then my M.D. and Ph.D. degrees from UC San Diego. I then completed my pathology and neuropathology training in the Harvard system before joining the UC Irvine faculty in 2001. A developmental neurobiologist and neuropathologist by training, I led my lab's studies on the developing brain, which culminated in the invention of a stem cell-based technology for making choroid plexus epithelial cells (CPECs; Watanabe et al., J Neurosci 2012; U.S. patent 8,748,176). CPECs are the cells that produce cerebrospinal fluid (CSF), the fluid that bathes the brain and spinal cord, which provides new and unique opportunities for studying and treating Alzheimer disease (AD). In 2013, I joined the ADRC team, and currently serve as Co-Director of its Neuropathology Core. It has been my honor to serve our ADRC and to help facilitate the ground-breaking AD research that occurs every day at UCI and throughout our nation.

# BRILLIANT FUTURE: NEW & NOTEWORTHY FACULTY



**Aimee Pierce, M.D., Assistant Clinical Professor of Neurology and Medical Director, UCI MIND Memory Assessment and Research Center**

I arrived at UCI in 2011 and joined the Alzheimer's Disease Research Center Clinical Core. As a geriatric neurologist who specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of AD and other forms of dementia, initially my focus was on performing annual neurologic assessments for our research participants. However, given the focus at UCI on studying biomarkers for AD prediction and diagnosis, I quickly began research utilizing cerebrospinal fluid and brain PET imaging to identify the pathologic hallmarks of AD, "plaques and tangles," in living humans. I am also working closely with the Induced Pluripotent Stem Cell Core to collect blood and fibroblasts (from skin punch biopsies) from living humans to generate stem cells for the study of AD. Most important to me is identifying new interventions and medications for the prevention and treatment of AD, and I have led three clinical trials thus far at UCI, with more planned for 2015-16.



**Kim Green, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Neurobiology and Behavior**

I grew up in England and completed my Ph.D. in cellular physiology at the University of Leeds in 2002 before moving to UCI to research the pathogenesis of Alzheimer's disease under the mentorship of Professor Frank LaFerla. Together, we described how various lifestyle factors could influence the development of Alzheimer's disease (such as stress, diet, mental activity) as well as discovered several novel therapies that could halt or reverse the progression of the disease in mice (such as nicotinamide, memantine, ST101, and minocycline). In 2011 I started my own laboratory and decided to focus on the immune cells of the brain known as microglia. These cells stand as guardians of our brain, protecting us from invading pathogens in much the same way that white blood cells do in the rest of the body. However, during Alzheimer's disease, and all related neurodegenerative diseases as well as brain injuries, these microglia become overexcited and start attacking the brain itself, which contributes to the damage seen in the Alzheimer's disease brain. Thus, finding ways to manipulate these cells and stop their attack of the brain is critical. To that end, my lab has discovered a class of drugs that can eliminate all of these microglia from the brain, and we are studying the consequences of having a brain with no microglia, and how we can apply this to Alzheimer's disease (and other brain disorders) to learn the precise role these cells play in the disease process, and as a potential therapeutic.



**Michael A. Yassa, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Neurobiology and Behavior**

I am interested in how the brain learns and retrieves information. In particular, I investigate long-term memory mechanisms and how these mechanisms are altered in aging and neuropsychiatric disease. Trained as a neurobiologist and experimental psychologist, I examine neural mechanisms of memory from a network perspective using advanced neuroimaging and neuropsychological techniques. The central questions in my research are: (1) What are the neural mechanisms that support learning and memory? (2) How are memory circuits and pathways altered in the course of aging, dementia, and neuropsychiatric disorders and how do these changes inform our understanding of memory function? and (3) How can we identify early preclinical biomarkers that can distinguish between normal and pathological age-related changes (e.g. Alzheimer's disease) so that we can better design diagnostic and therapeutic tools. My lab also develops and refines neuroimaging tools to explore the brain's architecture at very fine levels of detail, for example using high-resolution functional MRI or ultrahigh-resolution MRI.



# UCI MIND WELCOMES NEW FACULTY MEMBERS!

## DIANE O'DOWD, PH.D



Dr. Diane O'Dowd and her laboratory have studied the activity of living neurons using cutting edge electrophysiology and molecular genetics techniques for more than 25 years at UCI. She is currently working on generating neurons from iPS cells

to be able to assess functional differences in those derived from patients with CNS disorders. Dr. O'Dowd is also a renowned teacher and innovator in science education. She holds a prestigious Howard Hughes Medical Institute professorship and is Professor of Development and Cell Biology in the School of Biological Sciences and Professor of Anatomy and Neurobiology in the School of Medicine. She also currently serves as Vice Provost of Academic Personnel.

## CHARLES LIMOLI, PH.D



Dr. Charles Limoli is a Professor of Radiation Oncology in the School of Medicine at UC Irvine whose broad interests include oxidative stress, neurogenesis, stem cells, transplantation, chemobrain, and cognition. Dr. Limoli's

research program recently garnered major headlines nationwide when his studies revealed that exposing mice to charged particles approximating galactic cosmic rays harmed brain anatomy (specifically connections between brain cells) and that this resulted in impaired cognition. Dr. Limoli's work to investigate how stem cell therapy might alleviate the symptoms of chemobrain for chemotherapy patients has also recently drawn headlines and may be applicable to other cognitive disorders as well.

## DR. LESLIE THOMPSON'S DISTINGUISHED LECTURE



On October 13, UCI MIND faculty member Dr. Leslie Thompson delivered the prestigious Ayala School of Biological Sciences Dean's Distinguished Lecture to a packed house at the Crystal Cove Auditorium of the UCI Student Center. Dr. Thompson's lecture, "Huntington's disease: A race against time," detailed her remarkable research career, which includes having been part of the team that initially identified the mutant *Huntingtin* gene by working closely with a large cohort of people afflicted with the disease in Venezuela.

More recently, Dr. Thompson has been awarded several million dollars in grant funding to study the potential of stem cell therapies for Huntington's disease. Through it all, as she described in her lecture, she has been driven by an overwhelming desire to help the incredible families afflicted with this genetic disorder, many of whom were in the more than 300 person audience at this important event. UCI MIND congratulates Dr. Thompson on her outstanding achievements in research and her selection for this esteemed and well-deserved honor.

In addition to being a member of UCI MIND, Dr. Thompson is a Professor of Neurobiology and Behavior within the Ayala School of Biological Sciences and of Psychiatry and Human Behavior and Medicinal Chemistry within the School of Medicine.

## 2015 DONOR HIGHLIGHT: VIRGINIA NAEVE



Virginia Naeve and her husband Bob chaired the 2015 UCI MIND Time of Your Life Gala. This outgoing couple with a delightful sense of humor have been married for 30 years and have two grown children, Andrew and Allison. They are active and engaged members of the community, who are highly supportive of UCI MIND and Alzheimer's research. We recently interviewed Virginia to better understand how she came to be such a passionate and committed supporter.

**How did you first become acquainted with UCI MIND?** Quite a few years ago I saw a flyer from UCI MIND about lectures on Alzheimer's disease. They were called the Family Education Series. I went by myself to a lecture called "Reducing your Risk for Alzheimer's Disease: Lifestyle Changes and More." Dr. Malcolm Dick and his wife Dr. Cordula Dick-Muehlke spoke so beautifully that evening that I was hooked! UCI MIND

also holds "Ask the Doc" forums which give audience members a chance to ask questions. I just kept going to the lectures to learn as much as I could. All of the staff and researchers were always very warm and welcoming.

**How were you and your family introduced to Alzheimer's disease?** My family didn't know a thing about Alzheimer's and our introduction to it came as a complete shock. Both Mom and Dad were very happy, active, and seemed to be in good health. In 2005, Dad passed away very unexpectedly from a heart attack. Mom went upside down, and we were noticing that she was repeating things, forgetting names and putting things away in strange places. Everyone thought that Mom was grieving severely. None of us knew anything about Alzheimer's disease. We just kept thinking her behavior was because she was in such pain from losing Dad. Eventually, my family along with my two brothers and their families realized that something was really wrong.

**You have created a blog. What are your reasons for writing your blog? Who is your audience? How can our readers access your writings?** Mom suffered with Alzheimer's for ten years. About five years before she passed away in June of 2013, I started keeping a notebook with bits of information about her disease process and our experiences. I just kept thinking that if I could find a way to help someone else who was about to go through similar experiences, I would do it. I had no idea at that point that I would eventually design a website and become a blogger, but I knew I had to do something. I also knew Mom would want me to help others. My audience is a list of several hundred people, who either signed up on my website to receive my blogs, or they are a friend of mine and I'm forcing them to receive my blogs! They are sent out via email. Some subscribers are dealing with caregiving, some are just starting to wonder what is ahead for them, and others just want to know a little about this disease but have no experience with it. What I'd like to do is reach more people who are as lost and clueless as I was, and who might find my website and blogs helpful. I am currently contacting more Alzheimer's organizations, groups and websites to see if they will carry my blogs and a link to my website. My website has a lot of information, resources and good videos about Alzheimer's disease and is called *A New Path for Mom*. It's found at [www.anewpathformom.com](http://www.anewpathformom.com) and my blogs are found there.

**Why do you support research at UCI MIND?** Sometimes when you donate to an organization, you really don't know where your money is going. That isn't true with UCI MIND. My husband Bob and I appreciate knowing that the majority of funds donated are going directly to research. Not only are the scientists at UCI MIND brilliant and recognized world-wide for their accomplishments, they are approachable and willing to take the time to share information with the community. When the researchers give a lecture, I try to learn as much as I can about their progress. I appreciate that many of their presentations are targeted for general audiences. I am forever grateful to those who dedicate their lives to finding a prevention or cure for Alzheimer's. I will always support the work that is done at UCI MIND. My hope and vision is to stay the course with my website and blogs until one day I can change my Home Page to one of CONGRATULATIONS to those who have helped rid the world of Alzheimer's disease.

*UCI MIND is grateful for Virginia and Bob Naeve's ongoing support of research, their leadership role and Virginia's eagerness to share information with others.*

### Make a Donation Online!

Every contribution helps support Alzheimer's disease research at UCI MIND. Your gift of any amount is important. It all adds up in the fight to end Alzheimer's disease.

You can make a donation online.  
Go to: <http://mind.uci.edu/giving/online-donations/>

Help make a difference today.



# 6TH ANNUAL TIME OF YOUR LIFE GALA



TIME OF YOUR LIFE GALA 2015



UCI MIND ALUMNI HONOREE  
TOM CHOU WITH WIFE, DANA



DIRECTOR, DR. ANDREA TENNER

On Saturday, May 16, 2015, UCI MIND held an out-of-this-world fund-raising event to celebrate a world of tomorrow, where memories will last a lifetime. The ultramodern event featured futuristic tables, lighting, sounds, music, and unique entertainment created by Linda Young, EliteOC Productions. Gala Co-Chairs, Bob and Virginia Naeve welcomed guests and presented special recognition to honorees UCI Alumnus Supporting Alzheimer's Research, Tom Chou, MS, BA, UC Irvine 1992, and UCI MIND Community Leadership Honoree, Loren Shook, President/CEO of Silverado.

Another highlight of the evening was the remarkable presentation by Bill Edwards and his family of a donation in memory of their wife, mother and grandmother, Nancy Imlay Edwards. Their gift, as well as many others from 280 guests helped raise a net of \$200,000, which will immediately and directly support Alzheimer's research at UCI MIND. We thank our sponsors and underwriters acknowledged below.



GALA CO-CHAIRS, BOB & VIRGINIA NAEVE



DRS. ROSALYN LAUDATI, JAMES PICK, & LORNA CARLIN



WILLIAM EDWARDS WITH DAUGHTERS HEATHER AND AMY,  
GRANDDAUGHTER SOFIA, & DEAN FRANK LAFERLA

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## Wine and Cheese Kickoff Party at the Home of Virginia and Bob Naeve - Wine Donors

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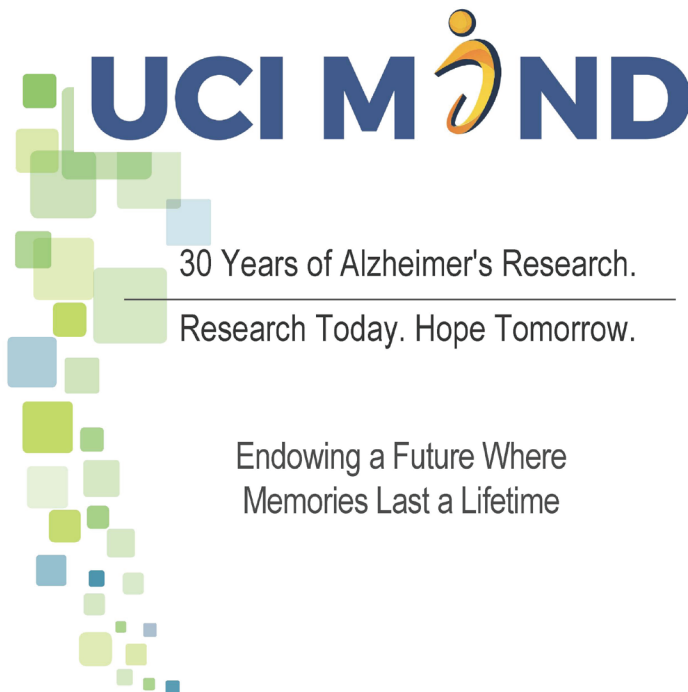
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Research Today. Hope Tomorrow.

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