

# HIGHLIGHTS



NEWS IN THE FIGHT FOR CURES

SPRING/SUMMER 2019

At The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS), generous donors and volunteers make lifesaving advances possible.

## Supporters Corner

In spring 2019, The Wawa Foundation made a \$1 million foundational gift to help launch the LLS Children's Initiative.

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Philanthropy has been a key part of our company's core values from the start. Wawa Inc. dates back to 1803, and we have found written documentation of philanthropy as far back as 1856. One of the first records was a gift to a children's hospital. Five years ago, we created a foundation to bring all of our giving under a single organization and ensure that we were utilizing our resources to really make a

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## LLS Takes On Childhood Blood Cancer

The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS) has launched an unprecedented global collaboration to accelerate safer, more precise treatments—and, ultimately, cures—for children with blood cancer.

“While treatments for adult cancers have advanced dramatically, the same cannot be said for pediatric cancers,” said Gwen Nichols, MD, LLS Chief Medical Officer. “When it comes to cancer, children are not just ‘little adults’; their cancers are different, and we need to

understand them and treat them differently.”

The LLS Children's Initiative is engaging the entire pediatric cancer community in the United States and in countries around the world in an effort to jump-start a new era of pediatric drug development, research and patient support. To drive breakthroughs faster, we plan to more than double our investment in pediatric cancer research, to \$20 million, over the next five years.

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▲ LLS's Chief Medical officer, Dr. Gwen Nichols, is leading the broad and ambitious LLS Children's Initiative to bring targeted treatments to children with blood cancer.

## Supporters' Corner

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difference in our communities. The next year, LLS became one of our national partners.

Health is one of the main tenets of our foundation. Much of the exciting research LLS is funding is in our own backyard—Philadelphia. When they told us about the new LLS Children's Initiative, our first reaction was, "Wow!" We hadn't had a single-year commitment of this size before. As we thought about what it would mean for children, and what impact it would have on our community, we quickly realized it fits right into who we are as an organization, and have been for a very long time.

The successes in cancer outcomes LLS has helped realize over the last several years have been amazing. We know our funds are being used wisely and will provide for more leading-edge research and patient support to save children's lives."



Jay Culotta, President  
The Wawa Foundation

# Science Helping Children

Just as the biology of pediatric cancers is different from that of adult cancers, the research to develop better treatments for children must be different. As part of the LLS Children's Initiative, we have more than doubled our investment in leading-edge science devoted to pediatric blood cancers.

In 2018, LLS issued a separate call for pediatric research applications and identified a number of projects that meet our high standards for funding. Among them were more than seven Translational Research Program grants and six Career Development Program grants for promising early-career researchers.

These grants will begin in July 2019 and will include the following objectives:

- Understand the molecular basis of childhood blood cancers, especially their unique mutations
- Develop targeted therapies and immunotherapies that eliminate the need for toxic chemotherapies
- Speed the delivery of new treatments to patients
- Reduce the late, long-term effects of treatment

Additionally, we will be funding at least one Special Center of Research (SCOR) grant, LLS's largest collaborative grant, which will launch in the fall of 2019. Our total commitment for research devoted to pediatric blood cancer science stands at more than \$20 million over the next five years. We are dedicated to investing in the most impactful pediatric cancer research worldwide so we can deliver cures and improved care to children in urgent need.



Under the leadership of Chief Scientific Officer Lee Greenberger, PhD, LLS is funding the most promising research to drive new and better treatments for children with blood cancer.

To learn more about the LLS Children's Initiative call, Robin Plonsker at (914) 821-8794

# LLS Takes on Childhood Blood Cancer

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The need is urgent: Children are still being treated with toxic chemotherapies that were developed in the 1950s and 1960s. While many children survive acute lymphoblastic leukemia, survival rates for children with other leukemias remain very poor. Survivors frequently experience long-term complications, including lifelong physical and cognitive impairment, secondary cancers and other diseases.

“Children can’t wait for better treatments, and neither will we.”

— Dr. Gwen Nichols, LLS Chief Medical Officer

To help more children not only survive cancer but also thrive after treatment, the LLS Children’s Initiative centers on three priority components:

- We are setting the groundwork for our Pediatric Acute Leukemia (PedAL) Master Clinical Trial, designed to speed treatments for acute pediatric leukemia and involve as many as 100 clinical sites around the world.
- We are expanding our investment in innovative science to uncover the molecular underpinnings of pediatric blood cancer and develop precision therapies that leave healthy cells unharmed.
- We are advocating for children at the state and federal levels and providing free information, resources and financial support for patients, parents and caregivers.

Since fall 2017, LLS has been convening national and international working groups to launch the LLS Children’s Initiative. “As a neutral player, LLS is in the best position to bring all the important stakeholders together around the urgent needs of children with cancer,” said Dr. Nichols.

PedAL is in preclinical development, with the goal of beginning patient enrollment in 2020. In the meantime, LLS has launched expanded financial support programs to help children and their families. “Children can’t wait for better therapies,” added Dr. Nichols, “and neither will we.”

**The PedAL Master Clinical Trial is led by preeminent physician-scientists in pediatric acute leukemia.**



**Committee Co-Chair  
GWEN NICHOLS, MD**

*Chief Medical Officer, The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society*



**Committee Co-Chair  
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## Generation LLS: Families Fighting Cancer

Founded in 1949 in New York City by a family for families, The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS) celebrates its 70th anniversary this year. Robert “Robbie” Roesler de Villiers was only 16 years old when he succumbed to leukemia. Grief-stricken and frustrated by the lack of effective treatments, his parents, Rudolph and Antoinette de Villiers, founded an organization in their son’s name that would forever change the landscape of cancer treatment.

Generations of families and children have been helped by our work—from cutting-edge research to



LLS founders Rudolph and Antoinette de Villiers with their son Robbie.

impactful patient education and support services and advocacy work. Generations to come will be touched by the work we are doing today—the work we will continue to do until we achieve a future without blood cancers.

We thank our large family of donors, supporters and volunteers, past and present, for championing our mission. Join us in celebrating

70 years of LLS’s lifesaving investment in research, support and advocacy. Visit [LLS.org](https://lls.org) to learn how, with the partnership of our supporters, LLS has transformed treatment and care—and how we are bringing the power of precision medicine to patients.