

SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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DIANA AND RICHARD STRAUSS CHAMPION DEVELOPMENTAL BIOLOGY AND CLINICAL PROJECTS

DALLAS — April 19, 1999 — Dallas philanthropists Diana and Richard Strauss have once again demonstrated their support of UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas, this time with donations to underwrite new and expanded clinical programs, and to upgrade an endowed research chair to the level of distinguished chair.

The Diana K. and Richard C. Strauss Distinguished Chair in Developmental Biology will be held by Dr. Luis Parada, director of the Center for Developmental Biology, said Dr. Kern Wildenthal, UT Southwestern president.

The relationship between the Strausses and Parada began with the 1995 Crystal Charity Ball, which benefited neurological diseases in children. Diana Strauss attended a UT Southwestern presentation that included a talk by Parada about neurofibromatosis (NF), a common genetic condition in which tumors grow along peripheral nerves. NF, which occurs once in every 3,000 births, also can affect the bones and skin and lead to developmental abnormalities. The disease had special significance for the Strauss family because a friend's daughter has the condition.

Diana Strauss was so impressed that she and her husband established the Diana K. and Richard C. Strauss Professorship in Developmental Biology, with Luis Parada as the holder. In 1996 the professorship became an endowed chair as a result of additional gifts from the couple.

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“I am grateful and honored that the Strausses support and believe in our work,” said Parada. “Their support and trust makes an enormous difference and places a renewed sense of urgency in our research. In addition it permits us a much faster pace than would otherwise be possible.”

Parada and his team of researchers in the Center for Developmental Biology and the Kent Waldrep Foundation Center for Basic Neuroscience Research, which he also directs, are working on the molecular basis of nerve-cell development and regulation. Recently they have developed a mouse model of NF and are working on gene therapy to eradicate NF tumors. In addition the group is investigating the molecular changes effected in spinal-cord injury and developing ways to keep nerve cells alive.

The second component of the Strauss' gift will be under the direction of Dr. Willis Maddrey, executive vice president for clinical affairs.

The couple was impressed by the major strides in clinical medicine, achieved under Dr.Maddrey's leadership over the past decades, at UT Southwestern's Aston Ambulatory Care Center and at Zale Lipshy University Hospital, where Mrs. Strauss served as a member of the board of directors. To advance clinical excellence on the campus, they decided to provide a fund to support new or expanded clinical initiatives.

“It would be impossible for our clinical programs to move in the directions they have and at the pace they have without the support of the Dallas community as exemplified by Diana and Richard Strauss,” said Maddrey, holder of both the Arnold N. and Carol S. Ablon Professorship in Biomedical Science and the Adelyn and Edmund Hoffman Distinguished Chair in Medical Science. “The Strausses are a much appreciated part of the UT Southwestern family.”

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