Muriel L. Block Bequeaths Largest Gift in Einstein History

*Inspired by her belief in the potential of translational medicine to heal the world, a leading supporter leaves a remarkable gift and an indelible legacy*

For decades, Muriel L. Block was a passionate supporter of medical research at Albert Einstein College of Medicine. Her name, along with that of her late husband, Harold Block, graces the entrance of Einstein’s state-of-the-art research facility, the Michael F. Price Center for Genetic and Translational Medicine/Harold and Muriel Block Research Pavilion, shown at left, which opened in 2008.

Muriel was a cherished member of the Einstein family, frequently attending events sponsored by Einstein’s National Women’s Division, visiting the school’s Jack and Pearl Resnick Campus in the Bronx and meeting with deans and other Einstein administrators, researchers and faculty in New York and Florida, where she wintered.

At the time of her death in September 2010, Muriel was considered one of Einstein’s most generous benefactors, having created an endowed faculty scholar position in mental illness research in 1990 and provided a spectacular gift of nearly $22 million in 2003 toward the construction of the new research facility—then the second-largest gift the College of Medicine had ever received.

Her support undoubtedly was a major force behind the most recent phase of Einstein’s growth and development as a center for cutting-edge medical research.

But the story of Muriel’s devotion to Einstein does not end there, because she named Albert Einstein College of Medicine as the remainder beneficiary of her estate. As a result, Einstein recently received a sum in excess of $150 million to be used for medical research, in the names of Harold and Muriel Block.
Muriel Block and Einstein: Timeline of an Enduring Partnership

1970s and 80s Muriel and her husband, Harold Block, a New York real estate executive and philanthropist, become members of Einstein’s Society of Founders. Muriel joins Einstein’s National Women’s Division, serving on its national board and New York chapter executive board. After Harold’s death in 1987, Muriel remains active with Einstein.

1990 Muriel makes her first major gift to Einstein, establishing the Muriel and Harold Block Faculty Scholar in Mental Illness. To recognize her generosity, the College of Medicine holds a special reception in Muriel’s honor on June 13.

2003 Muriel’s gift to Einstein of nearly $22 million helps advance biomedical research through the construction of the Michael F. Price Center for Genetic and Translational Medicine/Harold and Muriel Block Research Pavilion. The building, dedicated in 2008, is the largest medical research facility built in the Bronx since the College of Medicine opened in 1955.

2004 Einstein holds a special dinner in Muriel’s honor at the Plaza Hotel on June 13. At its Hanukkah Dinner and Convocation on December 12, Yeshiva University awards Muriel an honorary doctorate in humane letters to recognize her exceptional philanthropic vision and generosity to the College of Medicine.

2008 The Einstein community turns out to celebrate with Muriel, Einstein Overseer Michael Price and their families and friends at the June 12 dedication of the magnificent research facility named in their honor—home to leading investigators in cancer, diabetes, heart disease and other major areas of biomedical research.

2012 Einstein receives in excess of $150 million through Muriel Block’s estate, representing the largest single gift in the College of Medicine’s or Yeshiva University’s history.

1. Muriel L. Block with David W. Preven, M.D., professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences, at a reception celebrating the establishment of the Muriel and Harold Block Faculty Scholar in Mental Illness, June 13, 1990

2. Muriel with the late Judy R. Rosenberg, a member of the Einstein Board of Overseers and a longtime leader of the National Women’s Division, at the division’s 50th Anniversary Celebration, October 30, 2003


4. Allen M. Spiegel, M.D., the Marilyn and Stanley M. Katz Dean, with Muriel at the dedication of the Price Center/Block Research Pavilion, June 12, 2008
“I considered Muriel a friend and partner in my work as dean of Einstein,” says Allen M. Spiegel, M.D., Einstein’s Marilyn and Stanley M. Katz Dean. “From our many conversations over the years, it was very clear that she derived great personal satisfaction from her ability to make a difference in helping to improve the human condition. She clearly had the vision to do something that would have far-reaching consequences and had great confidence in Einstein as an institution. Her final gesture of extraordinary generosity will have a terrific impact on our work.”

Muriel’s bequest—the largest gift in the College of Medicine’s nearly 60-year history—will greatly augment Einstein’s capacity to advance its mission to improve human health. The gift will support important areas of research and has become the centerpiece of Einstein’s ambitious $500 million capital campaign, quietly launched in 2006 and now set to enter a more public phase in April 2013.

As an expression of the Einstein community’s gratitude, several entities will be named in honor of Muriel and her late husband, Harold Block, who was a leading New York City real estate executive:

**The Harold and Muriel Block Institute for Brain Research.**

This new interdisciplinary institute will be established to recognize Muriel’s avid interest in helping advance research on neuropsychiatric disorders. The institute will focus on basic and applied research on the entire spectrum of neuropsychiatric disorders and will include faculty members from a wide variety of departments.

**The Harold and Muriel Block Building.** In recognition of Muriel’s commitment to improving health and quality of life for future generations, the College of Medicine will rename one of its most significant buildings in her honor. Previously known as Abraham Mazer Hall, the...
building was the first dormitory for Einstein medical students; today, it serves as headquarters for a number of important programs.*

**The Harold and Muriel Block Scholars.** Endowed chairs are reserved for the most senior and significant faculty at Einstein, and a series of chairs known as the Harold and Muriel Block Scholars will be established to support the work of outstanding Einstein faculty members working in a variety of disciplines.

**The Harold and Muriel Block Institute for Clinical and Translational Research (ICTR) at Einstein and Montefiore.** Einstein’s NIH-funded ICTR, part of a national consortium intended to reduce the time between discoveries and treatments, and to train the next generation of clinical researchers, will be named in grateful recognition of Harold and Muriel Block.

“It is an honor and a privilege for us to recognize Muriel in these ways,” says Ruth L. Gottesman, Ed.D., chair of Einstein’s Board of Overseers. “To have a major research institute, the primary site of our training program for physician-scientists and a group of our most senior researchers all bear the names of Harold and Muriel will be a lasting tribute to her legacy. But the work that will result from her gift will be Muriel’s true legacy."

“Muriel was an extraordinary woman,” adds Dean Spiegel, “and I believe that extraordinary things will come out of Einstein as a result of her bequest. Not everyone was fortunate enough to meet her during her lifetime, but I think the entire Einstein community—researchers, students, administrators, alumni and other donors—should feel gratified and inspired by this amazing gesture.”

*One of the residential towers built on Einstein’s Jack and Pearl Resnick Campus in the intervening years was recently renamed in honor of Abraham Mazer, thereby preserving the Mazer family’s connection to resident life on campus.

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Sophie Molholm, Ph.D., the Muriel and Harold Block Faculty Scholar in Mental Illness, an associate professor in the department of pediatrics and in the Dominick P. Purpura Department of Neuroscience and associate research director at the Children’s Evaluation and Rehabilitation Center.