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## 16th Annual Diamonds Gala "Puttin' on the Ritz"

Guests arrived in cocktail attire for the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Diamonds Gala "Puttin' on the Ritz" on Saturday, November 3, 2018 at the Ritz Carlton St. Louis.

Rene Knott, of NewsChannel 5, served as the Emcee/Auctioneer. Opening remarks were made by Vic Perini, Chairman of the Board. Dr. Adrian Di Bisceglie, Co-Director of the Saint Louis University Liver Center, shared some of the great things taking place at the Liver Center which have been made possible from Friends donations. We celebrate that there is finally a cure for Hepatitis C, but there are still so many other forms of liver disease that need continuous research, so that new technologies can be discovered and applied to the medical care of patients and ultimately find cures for all. Don Eggleston, Founder of Mission Works, and author of "With All We are: Mission, purpose and transformation" gave a powerful presentation and shared some excerpts from his book.

A wonderful three course dinner was served and Dr. Alex Befeler received the "Naomi Judd Award" for being outstanding scientist, clinician, academic leader and devoted family man. The presentation was followed by a live auction, and raffle winners were announced. The Gala raised over \$386,000 in corporate and donor support.



**Don Eggleston, Keynote Speaker**



**Alex Befeler, MD,  
Naomi Judd Award Recipient**



**Vascular & Interventional Radiology physicians/  
guests, SSM Health SLU Hospital**

The "Diamonds Gala" is the Friends of SLU Liver Center's annual and major fundraiser, which supports the research efforts of the world-renowned Saint Louis University Liver Center for the treatment and cure of liver diseases, and promotes understanding and awareness of liver disease. All money raised stays in the St. Louis area to perform life-saving research which helps patients with liver disease nationwide.



**Adrian M. Di Bisceglie, MD,  
FACP, FAASLD**

## AASLD 2018 Distinguished Service Award

The American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases (AASLD) is the premier professional organization for physicians, researchers and other health care providers involved in liver diseases. The AASLD mission is to advance and disseminate the science and practice of hepatology, and promote liver health and quality patient care.

The Distinguished Service Award is given to an individual in honor of his/her sustained service to AASLD or the liver disease community in general. The award recognizes service provided to the community of hepatology researchers and clinicians over an extended period; service that is well above and beyond that provided by many members who serve on the Governing Board and Committees of AASLD.

Dr. Di Bisceglie is co-director of the Saint Louis University Liver Center and has spent his career involved in the development of new therapies for chronic hepatitis and authored nearly 400 publications on the subject of viral hepatology and liver disease. He has been an AASLD member since 1989, attended every annual meeting since 1984 and has served the association in a number of capacities including Chair of the Clinical Research Committee, Public Policy Committee and a number of abstract selection committees. He has also been co-organizer of three AASLD single topic conferences on Hepatocellular Carcinoma, new therapeutic agents for hepatitis C and End-Points in Clinical Trials for Hepatocellular Carcinoma. Dr. Di Bisceglie served as associate editor of HEPATOLOGY from 1991-1995 and as a member of its editorial board. He was elected to the Nominating Committee in 2001 and to the AASLD Governing Board in 2010 during which time he was instrumental in establishing the AASLD Foundation. Dr. Di Bisceglie ultimately served as AASLD President in 2014. Interestingly, Dr. Bruce Bacon, co-director of the Saint Louis University Center, has previously served as president of AASLD in 2004 and also had been a recipient of its Distinguished Service Award in 2010.

***Congratulations to Dr. Di Bisceglie on receiving the AASLD's 2018 Distinguished Service Award!***

## CONGRATULATIONS TO DR. ALEX BEFELER 2018 NAOMI JUDD AWARD RECIPIENT



**Alex Befeler, MD**

Dr. Befeler joined the faculty in the Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology in 1998 as an Assistant Professor and his risen through the ranks to become a tenured full Professor in 2014. He completed his undergraduate studies at the University of Chicago where he then stayed for medical school, graduating in 1992. From Chicago he traveled south for his Internal Medicine residency at the prestigious University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, an institution known for its outstanding work in biomedical sciences. However he couldn't find cowboy boots that fit quite right, so he returned to the University of Chicago for his fellowship training in Gastroenterology and Hepatology. Looking for an institution with an outstanding reputation in the care of patients with liver disease and advancing the knowledge that would improve the lives of these patients through cutting edge research, he was recruited to the Liver Center at Saint Louis University to start his impressive academic career.

At the SLU Liver Center, Dr. Befeler has established himself as a leader in the management of patients before and after liver transplantation with special interests in primary sclerosing cholangitis and liver cancer. He is a member of the National Cancer Institute Early Detection Network for liver cancer and he serves as the chairman of the Liver Cancer Research Network. He is involved at the community level as well, serving as a medical advisor to the local chapter of the American Liver Foundation, as a member of the regional UNOS transplant board and as a member of our local Mid-America Transplant Services Medical Affairs Committee. He is recognized by his colleagues and trainees for his rigorous thinking, sharp intellect, team spirit and compassionate care.

On the personal side, Dr. Befeler is devoted to his family and is an avid cyclist. He's often seen arriving to work early in the morning looking energized by his bike ride through Forest Park. He's traveled to many corners of the world and is known for his appreciation of exotic places, food and people. He and his wife Serra-lesa Ivener recently launched their son to college and they still have two daughters at home. So for being an outstanding scientist, clinician, academic leader and devoted family man, we proudly present Dr. Alex Befeler with the 2018 Naomi Judd Award.

***Congratulations to Dr. Befeler for receiving the Naomi Judd Award!***

## SLU SCIENTIST JOHN TAVIS HONORED BY AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY

At the American Cancer Society's Champions of Hope Gala, attendees celebrated researcher John Tavis, Ph.D., who has dedicated his career to science and medicine.

SLU faculty members shared reflections in a video about Tavis's dedication to research and teaching, noting that he is a committed mentor to students and colleagues.

Tavis, who is professor of molecular microbiology and immunology at SLU, has been studying the hepatitis B virus for 24 years. Experts estimate that up to 290 million people are chronically infected with the hepatitis B virus. Of those infected, about 1 million worldwide die from liver failure and liver cancer each year.

Tavis's work aims to advance our understanding of how the hepatitis B virus replicates in order to develop a new drug that, in combination with other medications, could cure the viral infection.

The American Cancer Society is the nationwide, community-based, voluntary health organization dedicated to eliminating cancer as a major health problem by preventing cancer, saving lives, and diminishing suffering from cancer, through research, education, advocacy, and service.

***Congratulations to John Tavis for being recognized by the American Cancer Society!***



**John Tavis, PhD**

*By Carrie Bebermeyer on 11/08/18*

## RESEARCHERS AWARDED GRANT TO STUDY LIVER TRANSPLANT REJECTION

The Mid-America Transplant Foundation has awarded a Clinical Innovation grant to Saint Louis University School of Medicine researchers to develop new methods for detecting rejection in liver transplant patients.

The team received a two-year grant of \$161,173 to measure Cytokeratin 18 (CK-18) as a biomarker for rejection in liver transplantation.

Principal investigator Ajay Jain, M.D., is a SLUCare pediatric hepatologist and gastroenterologist and the medical director of the pediatric liver transplant program at SSM Health Cardinal Glennon Children's Hospital.

Chintalapati Varma, M.D., a SLUCare transplant surgeon, associate professor in abdominal transplant and surgical director of pediatric liver transplantation, and Caroline Meyer, M.D., a SLUCare pediatric gastroenterologist, will serve as co-investigators.



**Ajay Jain, M.D.,**  
Medical Director, Pediatric Liver Transplant Program  
SSM Health Cardinal Glennon Children's Hospital

While liver transplantation remains a highly successful procedure, it can result in the complication of cellular rejection, Jain said. Rejection can contribute to transplant failure. The current standard method for diagnosing rejection is a liver biopsy, which is a surgical procedure. Inspired by a wish to reduce painful and invasive liver biopsies, the team is seeking to create a blood test to make the same rejection determination.

The team will test the ability of protein component CK-18 to accurately detect rejection. The study will prospectively measure CK-18 levels and compare it to the liver rejection activity index scores to develop a robust, non-invasive biomarker for liver transplant rejection.

The CK-18 level will be assessed in blood samples obtained in post-transplant patients undergoing standard post-op treatment for evaluation of rejection.

"We expect a strong correlation between the severity of hepatic rejection and CK-18 levels," Jain said. "We believe our hypothesis has sound foundations, strongly supported by current understanding of rejection and CK-18 as a noninvasive biomarker."

*By Maggie Rotermund 10/29/18*

## How Can You Help the Friends of SLULC? *Be a Sponsor - Be a Volunteer*



### Volunteers are the backbone of the Friends of the SLULC!

Whether you are interested in becoming a sponsor or want to answer phones, stuff envelopes or serve on a planning committee, we have volunteer opportunities available. You may volunteer as an individual or bring a group of friends. Please complete and fax this form to 314-576-3654 or mail to the Friends office. A representative will contact you soon!

- ☐ *Yes, I am interested in learning more about sponsorship opportunities! Please contact me with more information.*
- ☐ *Yes, I am interested in volunteering! Please contact me with more information.*

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Best way to reach you \_\_\_\_\_

Times you are available to volunteer: \_\_\_\_\_



# Fun with Friends in 2018



SHOOT FOR A CURE



The Young Friends Liver Luau



WE honor  
our DOCTORS



The Common Good Awards Ceremony



Diamonds Gala







#### Officers

Vic Perini, *President*  
Paul Azzara, *Secretary*

December, 2018

#### Board of Directors

Gary Becker  
Elizabeth Brennan  
Tim Eggleston  
Tom Fisher  
David Helms  
Rochelle Hendersson  
Mark Johnson  
Kathleen Morris  
Joe Reinberg  
James Sanders

Dear Friends,

As this year comes a close, we'd like to share what 2018 has brought for the Friends of the Saint Louis University Liver Center. We deeply appreciate the support from our Board, Volunteers, Sponsors and Individual Donors. We are grateful to those who attended our fundraising events (Shoot for a Cure and Diamonds<sup>16</sup> Gala) and Dine & Discover. These events promote understanding and awareness of liver disease while raising much needed funds for liver research.

The impact of charitable contributions is measurable and we'd like to share a few things made possible in 2018 from contributions to the Friends of the Saint Louis University Liver Center:

#### Ex Officio Members

Bruce R. Bacon, MD  
Lou Ann Biermann, RN, MSN

- Awarded Seven Seed Research Grants various amounts totaling \$154,000  
*Research areas include: Abdominal Transplant Surgery, Hepatitis B Virus, Non-alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease (NAFL and NASH), Pediatric GI & Hepatology, and Pediatric Neonatology*
- Special Matching Grant – for Study of Pediatric Liver Disease: \$50,000
- Purchase of Minor Research Equipment - 5 items totaling \$18,481
- Three Summer Research Fellowships totaling \$10,500
- Purchase of Three Pieces of Capital Equipment totaling \$105,500

#### Medical & Scientific Advisory Council

Bruce R. Bacon, MD  
Alex S. Befeler, MD  
Lou Ann Biermann, RN, MSN  
Adrian M. Di Bisceglie, MD  
John E. Tavis, PhD  
Brent A. Tetri, MD  
Jeffrey H. Teckman, MD  
Henry B. Randall, MD

These things are not possible without community support, donations of all levels! Your support is critical in continuing cutting edge research.

#### Young Friends

Tim Eggleston  
Katie Fakonas  
Leslie Hodges  
Annie McDermott  
Maura McNamara  
Joe Reinberg  
Jennifer Sanwald

We ask you to please consider making an end of the year tax deductible contribution to Friends of the Saint Louis University Liver Center. A gift of \$1,000+ will place you in our **VISTA SOCIETY** with special recognition. Please see enclosed donation form or contribute online at [www.friendsoftheslulc.org/make-a-donation](http://www.friendsoftheslulc.org/make-a-donation).

We look forward to hearing from you and we wish you a Happy and Healthy Holiday Season!

Sincerely,

#### Executive Director

Leisa Duff

Bruce R. Bacon, M.D.  
James F. King MD Endowed Chair in Gastroenterology  
Professor of Internal Medicine  
Saint Louis University School of Medicine  
Co-Director, Saint Louis University Liver Center

Adrian Di Bisceglie, M.D.  
*Bander Chair in Internal Medicine*  
Chief of Hepatology  
Saint Louis University School of Medicine  
Co-Director, Saint Louis University Liver Center

Brent A. Tetri, M.D.  
Professor of Internal Medicine  
Director, Division of Gastroenterology & Hepatology  
Saint Louis University School of Medicine

Vic Perini  
Chairman of the Board  
Friends of the Saint Louis University Liver Ctr.



### Friends of the Saint Louis University Liver Center

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### Friends Board of Directors

Mr. Vic Perini, *Chairman*  
Mr. Paul Azzara, *Secretary*  
  
Mr. Gary Becker  
Mrs. Elizabeth Brennan  
Mr. Tim Eggleston  
Mr. Tom Fisher  
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Mr. Mark Johnson  
Ms. Kathleen Morris  
Mr. Joe Reinberg  
Mr. James Sanders

### Ex Officio Members

Dr. Bruce R. Bacon  
Ms. Lou Ann Biermann

### Founding Members

Ms. Sue Barlett  
Mrs. Joan Lipic  
Mr. Jeff Reinberg

**Save the Date!**  
**October 26, 2019**



Volunteers are needed to help plan  
the 17th annual Diamonds gala.  
Would you like to help?

**314-576-3078**

The planning committee meets once  
a month, March - October.

## What's on the Calendar?

**June 1, 2019** Shoot for a Cure, Strathalbyn Farms  
Club, Weldon Spring, MO

**October 26, 2019** Diamonds Gala, the Chase Park  
Plaza, St. Louis, MO

**November 8-12, 2019** AASLD—The Liver Meeting,  
Boston, MA

**For information on Friends events:**  
**p: 314-576-3078**  
**[www.friendsofthelulc.org](http://www.friendsofthelulc.org)**

*Special Thanks to our newsletter Sponsor*



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Saint Louis University Hospital