



Credit: Bonnie Grant

Mayor Jim Kenney officially proclaimed March 24, 2018 as "Get Your Rear in Gear Day" in Philadelphia, urging all citizens to get screened for colon cancer. City Representative Sheila Hess (right) presented GYRIG Philadelphia executive director and founder Maria Grasso with the City Proclamation at the 10th Anniversary event in Fairmount Park.

Staying in Gear: 10 Years of Raising Funds, Awareness for Colorectal Cancer

When it comes to planning and managing events, Maria Grasso is truly a pro. As a Senior Director of National Accounts with the Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau, she has executed numerous events, including the 2017 NFL Draft, with aplomb.

Outside work, she applies those skills as Executive Director of Get Your Rear in Gear Philadelphia (GYRIG). For Grasso – who lost both her father and grandfather to colorectal cancer – the project is deeply personal.

After learning of the first Colon Cancer Coalition's GYRIG event in 2005, Grasso was motivated to bring the effort to Philadelphia. She organized the first GYRIG event in 2009 and continues to raise funds to support research, education and screening for colorectal cancers in the Philadelphia region.

On March 24, Grasso, her husband, Sam, and a team of 200+ volunteers hosted the 10th GYRIG Philadelphia event. More than 3,000 participants joined in for the four-mile run, two-mile remembrance walk and Kids' Fun Run – along with a giant inflatable colon that uses humor to encourage people to learn about colon cancer facts, symptoms and questions to ask healthcare providers.

This year's GYRIG event brought the total funds raised in the decade to more than \$2.2 million – with all monies raised staying in the tristate area. Jefferson's Departments of Surgery and Medical Oncology at the Sidney Kimmel Cancer Center are among the beneficiaries – including ongoing research by Scott D. Goldstein, MD, FACS, Director, Division of Colorectal Surgery, and Edith P. Mitchell, MD, FACP, Program Leader,

Gastrointestinal Oncology. Most recently, the GYRIG grant funded a colonoscopy coordinator to support patients in the Division of Gastroenterology & Hepatology.

Last year, Jefferson nominated Grasso for an award from the Association of Fundraising Professionals. On November 17, 2017, she was honored with the President's Award at the National Philanthropy Day Awards Gala Breakfast. It was a well-deserved recognition of Grasso's boundless energy and dedication to the cause.

To learn more about supporting colorectal cancer research and programs at Jefferson, please contact Kelly Austin in the Office of Institutional Advancement at **215-955-6383** or **Kelly.Austin@jefferson.edu**.



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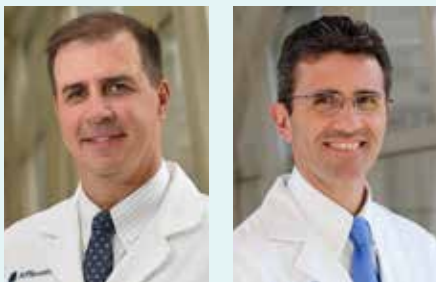
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News in Brief



Congratulations to **Scott Cowan, MD, FACS**, and **Francesco Palazzo, MD, FACS**, on their inductions into the Society of University Surgeons.



Jefferson Health President and CEO Stephen Klasko, MD, MBA; Alex Gorsky, Chairman and CEO of Johnson and Johnson; Philadelphia basketball legend Julius Irving; Charles J. Yeo, MD, Enterprise Chair of Surgery at Jefferson; and Stephen P. Crane, Chair, Jefferson Board of Trustees.

The 8th Samuel D. Gross Professor and chair of the Department of Surgery, **Charles J. Yeo, MD, FACS**, received the Achievement Award in Medicine at the 15th Annual Jefferson Gala on November 28, 2017. The event, held at the Pennsylvania Convention Center, set new records for attendance (1,050) and funds raised (\$2.1 million) to benefit the Department of Surgery Research and Education Fund and the launch of the Philadelphia Collaborative for Health Equity. Ukee Washington, news anchor for CBS 3, emceed the ceremony while Julius Erving – aka "Dr. J." – made a surprise guest appearance to honor Dr. Yeo and Alex Gorsky, chairman and CEO of Johnson & Johnson, who received the Award of Merit.

Dr. Yeo's major accomplishments have been in the fields of surgical education, clinical care of patients with complex alimentary tract diseases, and molecular research in pancreatic cancer. He has personally performed over 1,500 Whipple procedures, and cared for over 2,200 patients with pancreatic tumors. He established the Jefferson Pancreas, Biliary, and Related Cancer Center in 2007 which is now the highest volume pancreatic cancer surgery center in the Delaware Valley.