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LUPUS Takes Center Stag

The rallying cry for Lupus Awareness Month was echoed here in Oneida County, with a special media event Friday, May 19 at the Masonic Medical Research Institute (MMRI) in Utica. Local leaders, patient advocates, and scientists alike came together to both raise awareness and celebrate the positive steps made towards combating lupus. More than 1.5 million Americans, and 5 million people worldwide, have lupus, a devastating autoimmune disease that breaks down the body's own immune system.

Fatigue, rash, lesions, joint pain, fever—these are only a few of the many symptoms experienced daily by people living with lupus. This debilitating disease can impact anyone of any race or gender, although it disproportionately affects women, especially those of color and of minority descent. There is currently no cure for lupus, and treatment options remain limited, underscoring the urgent need for lupus research to understand its causes and to find better and more effective treatments and therapies.

In addition to furthering social awareness about lupus in our local communities, the May 19th event at MMRI featured the dedication and unveiling of a new lab space in honor of the Lupus and Allied Diseases Association, Inc. (LADA), which has and continues to support lupus research at MMRI. The collaboration between LADA and MMRI seeks to further the salient and ground-breaking research at MMRI in this field. Event speakers included Kathleen Arntsen, President and CEO of LADA, and Maria Kontaridis, Ph.D., Executive Director, and Gordon K. Moe Professor and Chair of Biomedical Research and Translational Medicine at MMRI, whose research efforts are, in part, dedicated to lupus research.

About LADA and MMRI

The Lupus and Allied Diseases Association, Inc., has been a champion for patient-focused programs for lupus awareness, advocacy, education, and research since 1978. The organization has supported lupus research at MMRI since 1990, donating more than \$215,000 to date. The MMRI, a veritable neighbor to LADA, has a 65-year history in Utica, and is an ideal research partner for LADA since autoimmunity and lupus research are among MMRI's primary areas of research focus.

About the Event and Participants

Attendees at Friday's event at MMRI included State Senator Joseph A. Griffo; Assemblywoman Marianne Buttenschon; Assemblyman Brian D. Miller; Former Assemblyman John Salka, who is the Director of Community Relations for Congressman Brandon Williams; Oneida County Director of Public Health Dr. Daniel Gilmore; Regional Director at Empire State Development, Allison Madmoune; members of LADA's Board of Directors; members of MMRI's Board of Directors and Community Advisory Committee, as well as many other community supporters. May is officially recognized as Lupus Awareness Month by a New York State legislative proclamation, which was presented at the event by Assemblywoman Marianne Buttenschon.

Also in attendance were representatives from the Order of the Eastern Star of New York: Susanne Peckham, the 2019 Grand Matron of the Order of the Eastern Star, New York, and Phil Trautman, the 2019 Grand Patron of the Order of the Eastern Star, New York. Each was honored for their fundraising service to MMRI with the presentation of a "Vine of Life" award. Eastern Star has been immensely generous, donating more than \$60,000 in support of lupus efforts alone.

For more information about this event or our research efforts, please visit our websites for MMRI (www.mmri.edu) or LADA (www.ladainc.org).

MMRI is a non-profit dedicated to scientific research that improves the health and quality of life for all humankind. We strive to conduct high-quality research aimed at developing a deeper understanding of cardiovascular, neurocognitive, and autoimmune disease etiology, in the hopes of generating innovative cures and treatments for these ailments. Visit us online at:

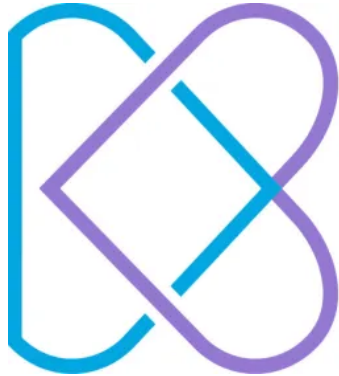
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