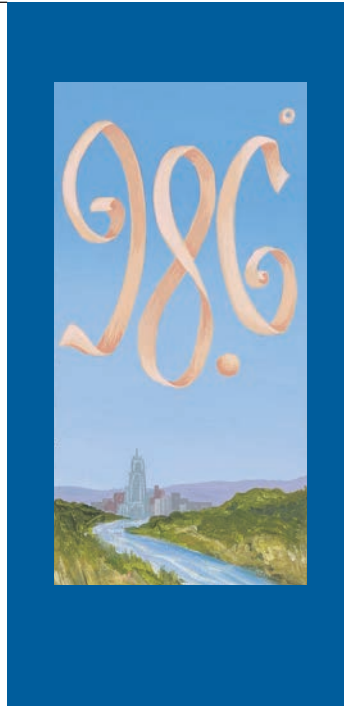


*People and programs
that keep the school
healthy and vibrant*



SANCTUARY

SOLACE FOR STUDENTS

Raymond Thornton (MD '98) mesmerized his classmates when he played the piano, whether it was at a basement piano bar in Oakland, the class talent show or his home in Highland Park. Friends say it was apparent he wasn't the average medical student who'd taken childhood piano lessons, but a professional in their midst. Thornton finished a doctorate in piano performance from Juilliard while a first-year student at Pitt Med.

"He was truly extraordinary," says Athena Beldecos (MD '98), once a violinist, who played chamber music with Thornton for fun during their Pitt Med days. She called him a "Mozartologist" for his expertise about the composer.

"We enjoyed each other's sense of humor," she says, a sentiment shared by classmates and colleagues throughout his career. "He was meticulous in his word and dress, with his pressed shirts and bowtie. And then he could let these comments slide under his breath that were just riotous."

Thornton grew up in Point Pleasant, West Virginia. After Juilliard and Pitt, he completed his residency and a fellowship in interventional radiology at UC San Francisco. He served as an associate attending interventional radiologist at the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York. He was the founding director of the center's intervention-

al radiology fellowship program and directed their interventional oncology fellowship. Thornton also held appointments at the University of Utah and Cape Cod Hospital. He died in October.

Beldecos remembers Thornton as a cultivator of beauty, who tended to dahlias and roses in his garden, and even wrote diagnostic reports in a beautiful manner. Gardening and meditation gave

him solace when he struggled with depression, she says.

She's leading their Class of 1998 in honoring his life through tributes, including an April performance featuring the Brentano String Quartet through the Pittsburgh Chamber Society Digital Concert Series. Plans are under way to create a memorial on campus with aesthetics that are healing and calming. —*Cara Masset*



Thornton

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BOOSTER SHOTS

A \$1 million grant from the **Tull Family Foundation** launched the new **Alba Tull Center for Neuro Imaging and Therapeutics**, dedicated to designing and expanding imaging technologies. In this multidisciplinary meetup of neuroscience, therapeutics and imaging, the center aims to develop new anti-aging treatments, train physician-scientists in the uses of imaging technologies and find new ways that augmented reality can help guide surgeons' hands. Joseph Maroon, clinical professor of neurological surgery, played a key role in securing the gift.

Center projects will include high-definition fiber tracking (an imaging technique pioneered at Pitt) and radiomics (a single, noninvasive scan integrating multiple patient records to predict responses to therapies and support precision-medicine approaches to care).

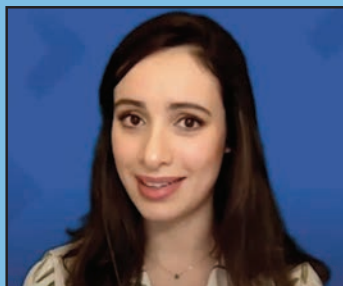
The Clear Thoughts Foundation has created the CTF Consortium supporting the work and collaboration of Pitt labs run by **Robert Friedlander**, Walter E. Dandy Professor and chair of neurological surgery, **Oscar Lopez**, professor of neurology, psychiatry and clinical and translational sciences who directs Pitt's Alzheimer's Disease Research Center, and **Amantha Thathiah**, assistant professor of neurobiology and member of the Pittsburgh Institute for Neurodegenerative Diseases.

Despite COVID-19 interruptions, the investigators have continued their work focused on understanding dementia. Notably, in spring 2020, a team led by Friedlander showed that, in mice, melatonin, which the body produces less of as we age, helps regulate inflammation that leads to neurodegeneration in a number of diseases. That study was supported by CTF as well as the National Institutes of Health and the **Pittsburgh Foundation Walter L. Copeland Fund**. And Lopez's team reported primary results from a multisite trial suggesting that replacement of blood plasma with albumin can slow cognitive and functional decline in patients with Alzheimer's disease.

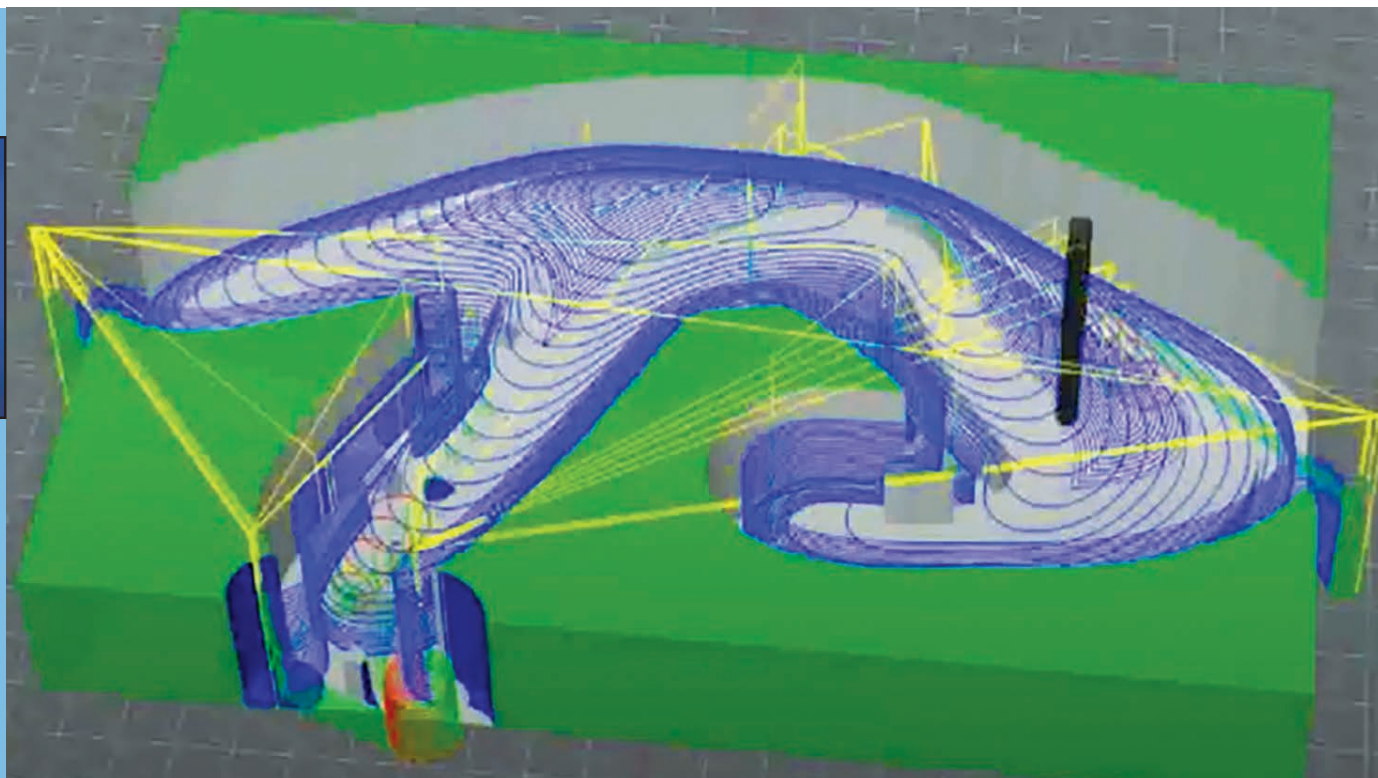
To learn more, join the CTF Connect Virtual Panel Discussion (details at cleartoughtsfoundation.org). —*Elaine Vitone and Erica Lloyd*

To make a gift to the school, contact Jen Gabler, **412-802-8317**, jag188@pitt.edu, giveto.pitt.edu

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PITTSBURGH, THE LAMANS: AMEE OBIDZINSKI/
UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH



The Lamans' planned gift will benefit Pitt Innovation Challenge (PInCh) projects like REPLICA (shown here), a custom-made cartilage ear implant, which won a \$100,000 award last fall. REPLICA is the brainchild of plastic surgeon Liliana Camison (above), who is part of a team of Pitt and Carnegie Mellon University researchers.



Seed. Succeed.

David Laman (MD '70), a retired pulmonologist, remains something of a student of the sciences. He reads medical literature for kicks, just for the love of watching emerging biomedical approaches to addressing disease take shape.

"There's so much exciting biotechnology out there that occurs at the very basic level," he says. As an example, he points to Jennifer Doudna, the Berkeley biochemist who pioneered CRISPR gene editing and received the 2020 Nobel Prize in Chemistry.

"There are going to be multiple other uses for CRISPR technology, including treating sickle cell disease, thalassemia and who knows what else that wasn't on her original project grant."

Sadly, it can be tough for bench researchers—particularly up-and-comers—to get funding, he says. That realization inspired him and his wife, Verna Laman, to establish a planned gift supporting pulmonary and critical care medicine as well as the PInCh program (short for Pitt Innovation Challenge).

"I think it's a really slick idea" says David Laman of PInCh, which Pitt's Clinical and Translational Science Institute designed to generate solutions to challenging health problems. Through seed funds, PInCh helps bold new ideas—and the innovators behind them—get a fighting chance.

The Lamans wanted to build something enduring for the benefit of young scientists, "and be helpful for the future," he says.

"I think that someplace out there, there will be another Doudna."



David and Verna Laman

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