

Jacobs gives UB \$10 million

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One of Western New York's wealthiest families has thrown its money behind plans for a new heart and vascular center in Buffalo.

Jeremy M. Jacobs, chairman of Delaware North Cos., and his wife, Margaret, donated \$10 million Wednesday to the University at Buffalo to help recruit and retain top-notch researchers in heart and vascular diseases.

The gift, the single largest donation in UB's history, also jump-starts a philanthropic effort to help raise money in the community for a heart center on the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus.

"It is my hope that this gift will help provide an avenue for establishing Buffalo as a world-class center for state-of-the-art research, treatment and teaching in the areas of vascular and heart diseases," Jacobs said.

But the \$10 million gift comes with a big caveat: It hinges on the facility getting built, by no means a certainty.

"This is an investment in vision," Jacobs said, "and will only come to fruition when that vision is realized."

The heart center is an offshoot of the state-ordered merger of Kaleida Health and Erie County Medical Center, a hot-button issue still immersed in controversy and legal action.

The outcome of the consolidation effort likely will influence whether the heart-vascular institute ultimately gets built.

"It is a critical time for restructuring health care in Western New York," said UB President John B. Simpson. "It is imperative that we be willing to make the tough decisions now to create a system that will service us well for decades to come."

Plans call for a 200,000-square-foot addition to Buffalo General Hospital that takes up a section of Goodrich Street and connects to a parking ramp on Ellicott Street.

It would be constructed with \$145 million in funds from the state and Kaleida Health, hospital officials said.

A \$50 million fundraising campaign also is planned to help provide the kind of staffing and research amenities needed to establish a pre-eminent facility.

The \$10 million pledged by the Jacobs family Wednesday gets that effort off to a good start.

The money would supplement salaries or provide incentives to help the university attract top researchers, educators and clinicians, which is crucial to building excellence but difficult with dwindling financial resources, UB officials said.

"Our hope is that the generosity of the Jacobs family, and a sizable commitment of funds by the state and Kaleida Health, will induce others to support the creation of a truly world-class hub of medical research, education and patient care right here in the heart of the city," Simpson said.

Simpson, with James R. Kaskie, Kaleida Health president and chief executive officer, made the announcement Wednesday morning at UB's Center of Excellence in Bioinformatics and Life Sciences on Ellicott Street.

In addition to being chief executive officer of the hospitality and food service company, Jacobs owns the Boston Bruins National Hockey League team and is chairman of the UB Council.

The \$10 million makes the Jacobs family UB's most generous donor, with gifts totaling \$18.4 million.

The latest gift specifically honors Dr. Lawrence D. Jacobs, Jeremy Jacobs' brother.

When he died in 2001 at age 63, Lawrence Jacobs was chief of neurology at Buffalo General Hospital and chairman of the neurology department at UB's School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences.

But he may be best known for his groundbreaking research and treatment of multiple sclerosis.

Jeremy Jacobs said he had been considering for sometime how to appropriately honor his brother, who was passionate about his field and the Western New York community he loved.

What would his brother think about the \$10 million gift?

"He'd say 'Why didn't you do it earlier?' " Jacobs said with a smile, " 'and why didn't you give me more?' "

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