

Watch Damon Runyon Honor Home Depot Cofounder Ken Langone

Damon Runyon emeritus board member Ken Langone was honored at the cancer research foundation's annual breakfast.

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The Damon Runyon Cancer Research Foundation held its Annual Breakfast at The Metropolitan Club in New York on Wednesday, June 12, 2024. The event raised over \$1.5 million to support promising early-career scientists pursuing innovative strategies to prevent, diagnose, and treat all forms of cancer.

Guests enjoying coffee before the Damon Runyon Annual Breakfast. Courtesy of Damon Runyon Cancer Research Foundation

The Breakfast honored Emeritus Board Member Ken Langone, Chairman of Invemed Associates and Co-Founder of The Home Depot, for his longstanding support of Damon Runyon and his shared

commitment to investing in bold ideas. Mr. Langone's years of leadership on the Damon Runyon board led to the establishment of the Damon Runyon Clinical Investigator Award, a program that has jump-started the careers of hundreds of physician-scientists.

Since its launch in 2000, the Clinical Investigator Award has invested over \$84 million to support the careers of 125 physician-scientists, who have gone on to pioneer the development of immune checkpoint inhibitors, personalized targeted therapies, CAR T cells, cancer vaccines, and other revolutionary cancer treatments.

Watch Ken Langone's remarks at the Damon Runyon annual breakfast in the video at the top of this article.

Rabi Upadhyay, MD, speaks about his work as a physician-scientist

Courtesy of Damon Runyon Cancer Research Foundation

Expanding the pool of patients who can benefit from these advancements is a major research focus among current Damon Runyon scientists. Damon Runyon Physician-Scientist Rabi Upadhyay, MD, of NYU Grossman School of Medicine, studies the intricate biology between the gut microbiome and lung tumors, hoping to aid patients who do not currently respond to immunotherapy. "There's no way I could do this without the funding from Damon Runyon," he told those gathered. "I now see patients one day a week—they motivate me to continue this research—but my salary is supported by the research community."

Breakfast attendees also heard from Damon Runyon-Dale F. Frey Breakthrough Scientist Lydia Finley, PhD, who demonstrated how studying stem cell metabolism, which changes as the cells

differentiate, can illuminate the metabolic changes that healthy cells undergo when they become cancerous. “I’m very excited about what’s to come, and I want to thank everyone in the room,” she said. “Your support has enabled most of the discoveries of my career.”

At the Breakfast, fellow Emeritus Board Member Leon G. Cooperman announced that Isabella N. Grabski, PhD, had been named the Foundation’s first Kenneth G. Langone Quantitative Biology Fellow in Mr. Langone’s honor. Dr. Grabski’s research at New York Genome Center aims to identify drug mechanisms of action at molecular resolution using CRISPR-based technologies. With this framework, she hopes to more precisely identify how a given cancer drug functions in the cell.

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