



**For Immediate Release:**

March 29, 2024

**Contact: Millie Occhionero**

Director of Marketing and Communications  
Masonic Medical Research Institute (MMRI)  
315-624-7475  
518-530-8921  
mocchionero@mmri.edu

**Masonic Medical Research Institute (MMRI)  
Holds First Annual 1958 Gala**

UTICA, NY – On Saturday, March 23, 2024, MMRI held its first annual 1958 Gala at the Fort Schuyler Clubhouse in Utica, New York, to raise awareness and support for its groundbreaking medical research. The proceeds benefit the organization’s innovative biomedical research in cardiovascular disease, neurocognitive disorders and autoimmunity.

The 1958 Gala, presented by The Fountainhead Group, began with a nostalgic celebration of the organization’s life-changing accomplishments since its humble beginnings in 1958, including being instrumental in the development of the pacemaker and both the internal and external defibrillators. It then took guests through an immersive journey “into the future” of medical research, as eventgoers received an inside look into MMRI’s newest innovations in autism, lupus, non-alcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and heart disease research.

“We are so excited to be part of the city’s revitalization, with plans for a new state-of-the-art campus in downtown Utica,” said Maria Kontaridis, Ph.D., executive director and Gordon K. Moe professor and chair of biomedical research and translational medicine at MMRI. “This event was the perfect opportunity to celebrate the exciting future of MMRI. We are no longer a “hidden” gem! Thank you to John and Jackie Romano, chairs of the 1958 Gala, for not only their sponsorship but also for their passion for research and our community.”

With the help of its sponsors and eventgoers, the inaugural 1958 Gala raised \$180,000 for MMRI.

“MMRI is widely recognized worldwide by scientists for its groundbreaking research,” said Jackie Romano. “Until now, few people in Utica were aware of MMRI’s tremendous accomplishments and contributions to the Mohawk Valley. Not only is MMRI bringing expert scientists to live and work in our community but it is also making life-changing medical

discoveries right in our backyard. Thank you to all who came out to support MMRI. It was a night to remember.”

The elegant evening featured delightful hors d’oeuvres, era-themed cocktails by expert mixologists, sommelier-selected wines from the Romano wine cellar, delicious dinner stations, live entertainment and more.

MMRI would especially like to thank their sponsors whose support made an immense impact, including our presenting sponsors, the Fountainhead Group, Inc. and the MMRI Board of Directors; our red carpet sponsor Mohawk Valley Health System; our diamond sponsors, the Kontaridis/Thrailkill Family and PJ Green; and our platinum sponsors, the John Brown team at Coldwell Banker Faith Properties, Central New York Brain and Spine Neurosurgery, Pacemaker Steel and Piping Company, TangoSquared and the Utica Comets. The gold sponsors include Baird Private Wealth Management – The Topi Group, Nicole Condon-Shih, Empower Business Strategies, The Hayner Hoyt Corp., Kenneth C. Miller Mason Contractor, Mandia International Trading, Morehouse Appliances, Steve Lennon and Co. Jewelers, Volo’s Auto Supply. MMRI was also pleased to have more than 30 silver sponsors who contributed to the success of this event. Their names can be found at [mmri.edu/1958gala](http://mmri.edu/1958gala). To learn more about MMRI’s medical research and how you can support the organization, visit [mmri.edu](http://mmri.edu).

**Photos attached:** Eventgoers at the MMRI 1958 Gala

###

MMRI is dedicated to scientific research that improves the health and quality of life for all. We strive to conduct high quality research aimed at developing a deep understanding of diseases and generating innovative cures and treatments. For more information, visit [mmri.edu](http://mmri.edu).

Facebook: [facebook.com/MasonicResearch](https://www.facebook.com/MasonicResearch)

LinkedIn: [@Masonic Medical Research Institute - MMRI](https://www.linkedin.com/company/@MasonicMedicalResearchInstitute)

X: [twitter.com/MasonicResearch](https://twitter.com/MasonicResearch)