

LEGACY

A Planned Giving Newsletter from Northwestern's Medical School

A Bequest Benefiting the Future of Arrhythmia Care

When Luke Howe was diagnosed with atrial fibrillation (AFib) and underwent an ablation in 2008, a minimally invasive procedure to eliminate tiny areas of heart tissue causing irregular heartbeats, he was paired with a dynamic duo of cardiologists: surgeon Patrick M. McCarthy, MD, and electrophysiologist Rod S. Passman, MD, of Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine.

The two immediately put Howe at ease with their sense of humor—Dr. McCarthy introduced himself as the plumber and Dr. Passman as the electrician. “It turned out I needed the electrician,” Howe said. “Dr. Passman has been my EP [electrophysiologist] ever since.”

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Luke Howe (right) and
Bridget Gibbons (left)

A Bequest Benefiting the Future of Arrhythmia Care

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Thus began an almost 20-year relationship with Dr. Passman, director of the Northwestern University Center for Arrhythmia Research and the Jules J. Reingold Professor of Electrophysiology, and the team of cardiologists, nurses, and technicians at the center. Thanks to ever-evolving therapies, Howe can golf, boat, and swim without worry for his abnormal heart rhythm. “I’m just living life,” he said. “I have no restrictions; I have no limitations. I can do everything I could before I dealt with these challenges.”

In gratitude for this new lease on life, Howe and his wife, Bridget Gibbons, documented a generous bequest to support the Center for Arrhythmia Research. Their goal, they said, is to advance the kind of care that has profoundly shaped Howe’s experience living with atrial fibrillation and atrial flutter.

Planned gifts like charitable bequests create a legacy that helps Feinberg programs flourish. Donors may designate a fixed sum, called a specific bequest; a percentage of their estate, called a percentage bequest; or a portion of the remaining assets after other distributions, called a residuary bequest. Bequests offer flexible, practical support for causes like the Center for Arrhythmia Research, where clinicians and scientists are working to uncover the molecular causes of arrhythmias and elevate treatment standards.

INNOVATING THERAPIES FOR MILLIONS

Abnormal heart rhythms, known as cardiac arrhythmias, are a leading cause of stroke, heart failure, and sudden death. AFib is the most common type of irregular heartbeat, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and scientists estimate 10 million people in the U.S. are living with AFib in 2026.

Dr. Passman said the planned gift from Howe and Gibbons will help improve outcomes for this population of heart patients for decades to come.

“We are incredibly thankful to Luke and Bridget for their vision and generosity,” he said. “Their bequest will help us continue advancing research and care for patients with arrhythmias, building on the progress of the past 20 years and driving the innovations that will define the next.”

Howe expressed awe at the striking pace of advancement in cardiology and direct impact it has had on his care. When his symptoms recurred in the early 2020s, he underwent additional procedures, including cardioversion and further ablations to address both AFib and a new diagnosis of atrial flutter. Procedures once requiring eight or nine hours can now be completed in only one or two, with patients often going home the same day. Additionally, enhanced mapping technologies and refined ablation techniques have enabled increasingly precise and effective care.

Gibbons emphasized that advances over the past two decades are the reason her husband is still here, adding that “20 years ago, the outlook for AFib and atrial flutter was nowhere near as positive.”

Howe and Gibbons attribute much of Howe’s success to the focus and care of Dr. Passman.

“He’s really and truly now part of our family story,” Gibbons said. “He’s on Team Howe, because he’s been such an integral part of my husband’s health. That impacts not only Luke’s life, but my own life and that of everyone in our family.”



The Three Most Important Gifts You'll Ever Give

When you create your will and estate plan, you give those you love much more than just financial protection. You give them:

① *The Gift of Good Planning*

Creating your will and estate plan is an act of compassion. When you plan ahead, loved ones will not wonder about your final wishes because you will have thoughtfully removed all guesswork. They will not spend weeks debating who should inherit what.

Your will and estate plan transform from a set of legal documents into a comforting companion that helps those who will need it most.

② *The Gift of Your Story*

How many people truly know what has shaped your life and inspired your values? You may be close to several people, but there are likely still important things each one could learn about you.

By sharing why you chose to support Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine through your will and estate plan, you help your loved ones understand your commitment to championing innovative research and patient care.

③ *The Gift of Giving Back*

If you choose to support Northwestern's medical school through a gift in your will, you are putting your values into motion beyond your lifetime. A gift in your will does not affect current finances—making it a popular giving choice for our Feinberg School of Medicine community.

A planned gift can preserve your connection to Feinberg and ensure the success of students, scientists, and patients for generations.

What Can Your Legacy Do?

To explore ways your will and estate plan can include a gift to support our mission to impact the health of humankind, contact Development and Alumni Relations at 312-503-8933 or medical-development@northwestern.edu. We would be honored to be part of your life story.



Rogers Society member Peggy Snorf (right) and friend Jim Kinney at the annual Rogers Society luncheon in May 2026.



Andrew Christopherson, Associate Dean for Development at Feinberg (left), and Rogers Society members James W. Hilliard '80 and Marjorie J. Hilliard, PT, MS, PhD, at the annual luncheon.

Ready to Get Organized?

To help you begin your estate planning journey, or update a preexisting plan, we want to offer you the **FREE** guide, ***Essential Details for My Loved Ones***. This invaluable resource helps you organize important personal information and documents. Simply return the enclosed reply card to request your copy today.

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The Rogers Society Welcomes New Members

Twenty-three alumni and friends included Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine in their estate plans during the past two years and became members of the Henry and Emma Rogers Society. Through charitable bequests, gift annuities, insurance policies, and other forms of planned gifts, members of the Rogers Society have created a lasting legacy for Feinberg students, faculty, and programs.

Anonymous (7)
Martha J. Dahl
Susan J. Fabian
Louis E. Fazen, III, MD, MPH, and N. Lynn Eckhert, MD, DrPH
Luke Howe and Bridget Gibbons
Dr. Michael G. and Carol S. Hutmacher
Sandra L. Kuzlik
Dan and Laura K. Lasley
Peggy Snorf
Marshall S. Sparberg, MD
Lorraine H. Treen
Frank and Faye Zimmerman

This list reflects individuals who have shared their estate plan with Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine between June 11, 2024, to June 16, 2026. We have made every effort to provide accurate information.