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February 6, 2011

No. 44: Jan T. and Marica F. Vilcek



Jan T. and Marica F. Vilcek

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Art, in New York.

Amount donated in 2010: \$23.1-million

Biggest beneficiary: New York University Langone Medical Center

Donors' background: Dr. Vilcek is a professor of microbiology at New York University School of Medicine and co-developed Remicade, an anti-inflammatory drug. Ms. Vilcek is a former associate curator and head of the accessions and catalog department at the Metropolitan Museum of

Dr. Vilcek, 77, and his wife, Marica, 74, pledged \$21-million to New York University Langone Medical Center. Of the total, \$10-million will go toward a new residence hall for students, \$10-million will endow full-tuition scholarships, and \$1-million will be added to the Jan T. Vilcek Endowed Fellowship Fund, which the couple established five years ago. Dr. Vilcek said he hopes the donation will “enable talented young medical students and researchers to have the same opportunities that I did at NYU Langone.” He added that he and his wife hope to improve the competitiveness of the medical school and attract the best-qualified students.

While they have an eye toward present and future students, the couple’s reasons for giving to the medical center are rooted in their [past](#). They came to the United States 46 years ago as refugees from what was then communist Czechoslovakia with no money and few contacts.

“We earned our small fortune not by speculating in the financial markets but by doing scientific research in a university setting,” said Dr. Vilcek.

He said the medical center gave him the opportunity to be a part of its family, and it in turn became his intellectual home. He and his wife now want to make it possible for others to succeed.

The Vilceks have paid \$8.3-million toward the pledge and plan to pay the remainder over the next three years. The \$21-million commitment is not the Vilceks’ first gift to the institution or even their largest. In 2005 the couple pledged \$105-million to the medical school for education and research programs in the department of microbiology.

Dr. and Ms. Vilcek last year gave \$1-million to their Vilcek Foundation, in New York, which they established in 2000. The foundation awards grants and prizes with a focus on calling attention to the contributions of immigrants to science and the arts in the United States. The couple also gave \$700,000 to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and a total of more than \$390,000 to other nonprofits, including the Bellevue Literary Press, in New York, several scientific research funds at New York University, and other organizations.

—Maria Di Mento

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