

## \$15M donation will establish institute for neuroscience at URI



URI PHOTO BY NORA LEWIS

URI President David Dooley (right) and Nasser Zawia (left), director of the URI Interdisciplinary Neuroscience Program, celebrate the establishment of the George & Anne Ryan Institute for Neuroscience with Tom and Cathy Ryan, whose gift of \$15 million launched the Institute.

KINGSTON – With the largest private donation in its history, the University of Rhode Island will establish a neuroscience research institute named for the parents of Thomas M. Ryan, a 1975 pharmacy graduate of the University and former chairman, president and CEO of CVS Caremark. Tom and his wife Cathy have donated \$15 million to establish the George & Anne Ryan Institute for Neuroscience at the University of Rhode Island.

“The Ryan Institute will elevate the visibility of the groundbreaking research taking place here in Rhode Island and position URI as a leader in neuroscience research and the treatment of neurodegenerative and neurological diseases,” said URI President David M. Dooley. “We are tremendously grateful to Tom and Cathy Ryan and the Ryan family for their foresight and continued generosity. They have created an enduring legacy and made a truly transformational gift.”

“When I retired from CVS two years ago,” said Ryan, “we had conversations about what the family foundation would focus on and we decided to focus on education and health care. I had some discussions with President Dooley because, although I had given back to the University, I wanted to give to something that was more transformational, more lasting, really a future gift.”

“When you look at what’s happening around the world with ALS, autism, epilepsy, Parkinson’s and Alzheimer’s, it’s truly an epidemic,” said Ryan. “As the population ages, not only in the U.S., but globally, it’s going to get worse.”

“On a personal level, my dad retired at a young age, was extremely healthy, rock-solid, kind of bigger than life guy – and he had a stroke and then subsequent Alzheimer’s. I saw what it did to him, what it did to my mother, and our family. The economic costs are one thing, but the personal, emotional costs are another. It steals memories. It saddles caregivers. I saw my mom’s health go down. I had colleagues at CVS pass away from ALS. So it hit close to home for us and —once we did the due diligence and saw what was going on at URI – it was a natural fit.”

### Focus and collaboration statewide

The Ryan Institute will focus its research, teaching, and outreach on neurodegenerative diseases and disorders, like Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s and ALS. It will draw on the expertise of more than 30 scientists from across the University who have been studying brain disorders and diseases from multiple perspectives and disciplines. The faculty – from pharmacy, engineering, psychology, chemistry, communicative disorders and more – participate in the University’s Interdisciplinary Neuroscience Program, established in 2011 to conduct innovative neuroscience research and offer master’s and doctoral degrees.

The Ryan Institute will be a magnet to attract people and engage them in solving some of the most pressing health care challenges we face in society – neurodegenerative diseases. This gift enables the University to attract leading researchers and train new generations of scientists to work on these problems. The Institute will collaborate with other state, regional and national entities to develop and deliver treatments for central nervous system disorders.

The University has unique research strengths in pharmacology/drug discovery, neuroengineering, and neuropsychology. To maximize statewide efforts in neuroscience, the Ryan Institute will stimulate cooperation among other institutions in Rhode Island, including the well-established neuroscience program at Brown University, the basic research programs of the Brown Institute for Brain Science, the newly formed Norman Prince Neurosciences Institute at Rhode Island Hospital that focuses on clinical neuroscience, and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. ❖

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