



MICHAEL • MANZELLA • FOUNDATION
EDUCATION • CHILDREN • CANCER RESEARCH • ARTS

Michael Manzella Award 2024



Congratulations to Nicholas Peter Cerny, recipient of the 2024 Michael Manzella Award at Yale University. The Manzella Award is awarded to the graduating senior in Yale's Timothy Dwight College who, "through the qualities of kindness, dedication, and courage," most inspired his/her classmates. Presenting the award are Frank and Joan Manzella. Nicholas is currently studying violin at the Royal College of Music in London. Also pictured are Mary Liu, Head of College and Dean Sarah Mahurin (far right).

MMF HOSTS A TAILGATE AT "THE GAME"



In November, 2023, friends of the Michael Manzella Foundation gathered together to tailgate outside the Yale Bowl before the 2023 Yale-Harvard football game.

A partnership of the MMF and Michael's beloved a cappella group, The Society of Orpheus and Bacchus (affectionately known as the SOBs), the tailgate represented a chance for returning alumni, family, current students and friends to raise a glass, celebrate Michael's legacy, and sing in glorious harmony. With so much great energy in the air, it's no wonder that Yale won the game 23-18!

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Fellow MMF Supporters,

It's simply hard to believe that MMF awarded its first Fellowships and philanthropic grants **over 30 years ago** in 1994!

Back then, we started modestly with one fellowship and the simple gift of a VCR to Sloan-Kettering's Pediatric Cancer Ward.

In 2024 alone, we distributed \$20,000 to six amazing fellows and \$10,000 through our charitable gift program. That brings our 30-year total to over **120 Fellowships** and over **\$100,000 in charitable grants**.

To say we've come a long way is an understatement!

And all of this is all a **credit to each of you** - our amazing supporters who make possible our unique efforts in education, cancer research, children's causes and the arts.

So please flip through this letter and share our pride in six incredible MMF fellows working to make a difference in diverse areas such as **childhood literacy, cancer research, dementia treatment and neonatal care**. Each story is an inspiring reaffirmation of our power to drive change.

Please also take note of our charitable grants, dedicated to finding often-overlooked causes like DreamYard's **underfunded inner-city arts** programs or Friends of Karen helping families manage **cancer's crushing financial burden**.

On that note, we are particularly proud to spotlight our new partnership with **Hear Your Song**, employing the power of music to help pediatric cancer patients process their complex emotions. We have sponsored two successive MMF Fellowships and cannot think of a cause more consistent with our namesake's struggles and achievements. We look forward to a long and growing relationship!

So, it is with the deepest gratitude that our Board thanks you for your support as well as your future generosity that ensures our mission will continue to grow for another 30 years.

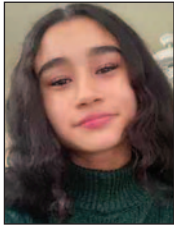
Sincerely,

Frank J. Manzella
Chairman

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MMF Invests more than \$20,000 in Summer 2024 Fellowships for Six Emerging Leaders



Chloe Budakian
Internship focused on childhood literacy interventions

My internship with the Robertson Foundation was one of the most enjoyable (and challenging!) pre-professional experiences I've had. I spent much of my internship conducting literacy research for the foundation, trying to answer the questions: 1) **what is the conceptual and cognitive relationship between writing and reading?** 2) **how does parent involvement impact early childhood literacy?** These are two large, difficult questions to answer, so I did a substantial amount of reading and submitted various write ups for my supervisor. I also attended frequent meetings with the staff in the education portfolio, and I learned all about how philanthropy works, and what a career in philanthropy looks like. My supervisor sent me a reading list with additional books about philanthropy, and as I worked through them, we reserved some of our meeting time to talk about them. It was fantastic! I sincerely thank the Michael Manzella Foundation for supporting this internship!



Mia Capella Cooper
Conducting immunology and cancer research

I began my work in May with a specific goal: **I wanted to fuel my passion for studying cancer therapies by doing research in a forefront immunology lab.** I did not realize back then the detail to which this could be achieved. Not only did I start my research journey with this lab [The Chen lab at Yale Univ.], but I built a foundation that helped me envision a clear future as a cancer researcher. My project with this lab centered one protein; I spent my days experimenting with this protein and observing how it affected interactions with cancer cells. The overarching goal of this lab, and this field, is to determine

how to harness the power of the immune system to attack and kill cancer. To progress this project, I greatly expanded my proficiency with basic biochemical assays– the basis of any path in biology research. The Chen lab is large but collaborative, and I learned most from the people surrounding me. The industry portion of a career in research is something I know little about, and making connections with people in this burgeoning industry was a phenomenal experience. **All the skills I gained provide me with an incredible platform from which I will build my research career.** I am thrilled to say that my work in the Chen lab will not end this summer. I am currently planning to restart as a paid undergraduate research assistant for the lab this school year. Cancer research is something that provides me with deep meaning in and out of the lab, and I am lucky to continue this work into the future.



Genevieve Kim
Research into the effects of music-based interventions on dementia

The potentially beneficial effects of music in dementia have recently attracted attention both from health professionals and the public. However, aside from anecdotal evidence, we still do not understand how music achieves such benefits, how to optimize those benefits, or **how best to use music clinically in the daily lives of people with dementia.** My summer project focused on addressing these questions, based at a center for research on the musical brain in dementia, at Queen Square Institute of Neurology in London, England. The intervention involves a person listening to music with particular personal relevance to them and promoting either energetic movement or calm reflection. People with dementia were recorded in their own homes during a series of music listening sessions, accompanied by their caregivers, and **both patient and caregiver reactions were analyzed to measure the changes in physiological and mental state as well as social behavior before and after listening to music.** My role in the project

has been to code and analyze their reactions, to decide whether the music intervention is likely to produce meaningful benefits, to quantify that benefit, and to determine which aspects of music are responsible. This project has enriched my understanding of interdisciplinary research, particularly as it applies to dementia. Furthermore, my experiences meeting patients to understand different types of dementia in clinical settings at the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery while also interacting with other patients as research participants **confirmed my aspiration to pursue a career in medicine.** I feel privileged to have been given the opportunity to deepen my understanding of both dementia and the musical brain by the Michael Manzella Foundation.



Aaron Liu
Lab research to increase natural killer cell anti-tumor efficacy

My research focused on increasing natural killer (NK) cell anti-tumor efficacy. I learned more about NK cells and their role in cancer biology. I also learned about different NK cell therapies, CAR NK cell therapies and their similarities and differences with CARTcell therapy, and CRISPR/Cas9 advances. **Along with ideas and protocols vital to cell management in the wet lab, I gained an insight into how a lab community functions.** Communication was necessary to efficiently manage the limited resources and benches in the lab, and patience was required. These scenarios taught me the importance of developing a relationship with others in the lab as well as the importance of effective time management. I hope to use what I've learned to better adapt to more challenging tasks and to make novel contributions of my own in the lab. However, **the research I worked on this summer has granted me invaluable experience in working at the bench and being part of a lab community.** I am deeply grateful to the Sidi Chen lab and the Michael Manzella Foundation for providing me with this opportunity.

SUPPORTING THE DREAMS OF UNDERGRADUATES ON A MISSION



Dominique Romain

Internship with Room to Grow, a NYC non-profit aiming to provide low-income mothers with the means to care for their babies

During my time at Room to Grow, I was able to witness various aspects of the organization. I worked in both the administrative, research-oriented side of the org, and the hands-on side. Through both, I learned a lot about Room to Grow, and nonprofits as a whole. I saw the importance of community. **I witnessed the impact working as a unit could have on the lives of young children.** I helped archive historical documents allowing me to really gain insight on the importance of maintaining relationships, especially with donors. It became evident very early on that Room To Grow not only cares about the families and the children, but also its community as a whole. The “first hour” team meets with the families providing guidance and kindness,

advising parents on developmental goals, and the various toys/books we had in house that could aid in this. The “second hour” team, using the suggestions of the first hour team, would then help the families choose 100 donated baby items for their child. I witnessed this process every day for the entire summer. I saw the care with which each staff member handled their part in the process. My experience at Room To Grow **increased my interest in the nonprofit sector, and has shown me that many careers fall within the public health sector.**



Siji Smolev

Internship with Hear Your Song

This past summer, I led a multitude of **songwriting sessions with kids with serious illnesses and complex health needs to write their own songs as part of Hear Your Song.** The experience brought me face to face with young patients on

ventilators or with serious illnesses, many of whom could not speak yet were tasked each and every day with finding joy within the hospital setting. It was my aim to make their voices heard, whether spoken through their nodding at our mutual brainstorming or through their smiles as they heard their songs come to life. Their head-bobbing and wide-eyed smiles when given the keys to a new form of self-expression taught me more than perhaps I had taught them– it showed me how music is not just an art form but a way to connect more deeply with others than words alone can afford. **The experience was thrilling: meeting a child, getting to know what made them tick, writing lyrics together, ideating musical ideas, and playing with sounds and instruments together to build out the song.** I am grateful to the Michael Manzella Foundation for allowing me to engage in this work that empowers kids through collaborative songwriting. **My experiences this summer have perpetually inspired me to be an empathetic friend to children facing the emotional burden of serious illnesses.**

GRANTMAKING 2024

MMF Long Term Partners awarded \$5,000 each to further their mission

DreamYard Project

(www.dreamyardprep.com)

With help from the Michael Manzella Foundation's \$5000 grant, the music program at DreamYard Prep in Bronx, NY, had an incredibly successful year, engaging approximately 150 students in a dynamic and expansive curriculum. While maintaining its core focus on vocal singing instruction, the program broadened to include keyboard and percussion training, enriching the musical experience for students in grades 9 through 12. Tim Lord, Co-Executive Director of DreamYard, reflected, “We are so thankful to the Manzella Foundation for the ongoing and consistent support. It makes all the difference in the world in building as comprehensive and vibrant program as we have.”



Friends of Karen

(www.friendsofkaren.org)

Thanks to the \$5,000 grant from MMF, Friends of Karen provided essential sibling support services to local families facing a child's life-threatening illness. Our dedicated Sibling Support team worked closely with both the ill child and their siblings, offering emotional and psychosocial care to help the entire

family navigate the complexities of diagnosis and treatment. These services foster resilience and connection, ensuring that siblings feel supported and involved, while helping the family stay strong through their journey.



Partner Spotlight: Hear Your Song

Over the past two years, MMF has supported two Yale undergraduates with summer fellowships to support their internships with Hear Your Song (see Siji Smolev above). Hear Your Song, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that empowers children and teens with serious illnesses and complex health needs to make their voices heard through collaborative songwriting. Founded in 2014 by then-Yale undergraduates Dan Rubins and Rebecca Brudner, today Hear Your Song partners with pediatric hospitals, camps, schools, and other nonprofit programs that serve kids experiencing serious illnesses and complex health needs. Based in New York City with chapters at multiple college campuses, Hear Your Song ensures that all volunteers who lead songwriting sessions receive trauma-informed care training, and all of their programs are available to youth and families free of charge. Learn more about this impactful organization at hearyoursong.org.



OUR MISSION



Michael Manzella
(1971 - 1993)

Michael Manzella, a gifted scholar, musician and athlete, succumbed to a two-year battle with cancer in 1993 at the age of 21. He left behind a legacy of music, love and inspirational courage. This Foundation was conceived to honor that legacy.

The Michael Manzella Foundation is a not-for-profit corporation dedicated to activities in education, children’s causes, cancer research and the arts. We support those individuals and institutions that demonstrate the leadership and potential to make significant contributions in these areas. These goals are consistent with the struggles and achievements of Michael’s life.

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Check out the MMF website at themichaelmanzellafoundation.com

Keep in Touch! To hear more about MMF events, please provide us with your e-mail address on the enclosed form.

If you wish to support MMF, you may send a tax-deductible donation to:

Michael Manzella Foundation
412 Woodbridge Road
Rockville Centre, New York 11570

You may also donate online at www.themichaelmanzellafoundation.com.

This option is available under the “About” tab. Thank you for your support.