



Progeria Research Foundation to Honor Gene-Editing Pioneer David R. Liu, Ph.D., and Peabody Philanthropists Cathy and Dave Gravel at 2026 Night of Wonder Gala

Base-editing innovator and longtime local supporters to receive PRF's S.A.M. Award and Amy Award at biennial signature event

PEABODY, MA, Oct. 7, 2026 /PRNewswire – The Progeria Research Foundation (PRF) will honor gene-editing pioneer David R. Liu, Ph.D., and longtime supporters Cathy and David Gravel of GraVoc at its 2026 Night of Wonder Gala on Saturday, November 14 at the Westin Boston Seaport Hotel in Boston. Held every two years, Night of Wonder is PRF's signature fundraising event supporting the search for treatments and a cure for Hutchinson-Gilford Progeria Syndrome, known as Progeria, a rare and fatal genetic disease that causes rapid aging in children.

PRF will present two awards at this year's gala, each named for a member of the Progeria community whose spirit continues to shape the foundation's work: the S.A.M. Award for Science & Medicine, and the Amy Award for Spirit & Service.

"David Liu's groundbreaking work has put gene editing on the path to a cure for Progeria, turning what was once a distant hope into a real possibility for these special children and young adults," said Audrey Gordon, executive director of PRF. "And for over two decades, Cathy and Dave Gravel have shown up for them again and again with their time, talent and treasure. Honoring them all at Night of Wonder is a reminder that curing Progeria takes both breakthroughs in the lab and amazing people who refuse to let this community stand alone."

Science And Medicine (S.A.M.) Award: David R. Liu, Ph.D.

Named for Sam Berns, who inspired PRF's founding and whose [TEDx talk](#) on his philosophy for a happy life has moved millions, the S.A.M. Award honors those who advance the science and medicine that will one day cure Progeria.

This year's recipient, David R. Liu, Ph.D., is the inventor of base editing, a technology developed in his lab that functions like a "spell check" for DNA and is capable of correcting the single genetic mutation that causes Progeria. As a member of PRF's Progeria Gene Team, Liu has helped carry that discovery from the lab toward the clinic, developing the SamPro-2 gene therapy now advancing toward human trials.

Liu is the Richard Merkin Professor and director of the Merkin Institute for Transformative Technologies in Healthcare at the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard, the Thomas Dudley Cabot Professor of the Natural Sciences at Harvard University, and a Howard Hughes Medical Institute investigator. He has published more than 300 papers, holds more than 115 U.S. patents, and is an elected member of the National Academy of Sciences and the National Academy of Medicine. He received the 2025 Breakthrough Prize in the Life Sciences and the 2026 Harvey Prize, and was named to the 2025 TIME100 Health list and the 2026 Washington Post Next 50.

"When you meet a child with Progeria, you understand immediately why this work can't wait," Liu said. "A single genetic mutation is stealing their time, and until recently we had no way to correct that at its source. It's been one of



the privileges of my career to work alongside PRF on a precision editing approach designed to fix that mutation directly and permanently. This award means a great deal to me, and I look forward to the day a gene-editing therapy benefits every child with Progeria."

The Amy Award: Cathy and Dave Gravel

Named for Amy Foose, a child with Progeria whose joyful spirit and love of life left a positive impression on everyone she met, the Amy Award honors those who bring that same heart, hope and generosity to PRF's mission.

This year's recipients, Cathy and Dave Gravel, founders of the award-winning, Peabody-based IT firm GraVoc, have supported PRF since its inception, steadily deepening their commitment and passing that philanthropic spirit on to their children and grandchildren. Well known throughout the Peabody community, the Gravels regularly sponsor charitable events individually and through GraVoc and have been widely recognized for their business and civic leadership.

Cathy's involvement with PRF began in 2013, when she and fellow Peabody Rotarians organized a premiere of "[Life According to Sam](#)" at Peabody City Hall - an event she chaired simply because she saw a chance to raise money and awareness for the cause. That instinct to show up has defined the Gravels' relationship with PRF ever since: Last year, when PRF needed Red Sox tickets so Niccolo, a young adult with Progeria visiting from Italy, could realize his dream of attending a game during a clinical trial visit, Dave arranged not just tickets but a full VIP experience at Fenway Park.

"Dave and I have been supporting PRF events for over 20 years, and what keeps us engaged is the kids — their humor, their honesty, the way they take on things most adults couldn't, - and the tremendous progress PRF is making" Cathy said. "Amy Foose embodies that kind of spirit and determination, and we are deeply honored to receive an award in her name ."

"You go to one of these events expecting to help, and you leave realizing how much these kids have given you instead," Dave said. "We're just grateful to be part of this community."

Event Details

What: Night of Wonder, PRF's biennial signature gala

When: Saturday, November 14, 2026, 6:00 p.m. – midnight

Where: Westin Boston Seaport District Hotel, Boston, MA

Tickets and information: www.progeriaresearch.org/night-of-wonder-2026

About The Progeria Research Foundation

The Progeria Research Foundation (PRF) is the driving force behind the global effort to understand, treat and ultimately cure children and young adults with Hutchinson-Gilford Progeria Syndrome (Progeria), a rare and fatal genetic disease that causes rapid aging in children. Founded by the family of Sam Berns after his diagnosis in 1999, PRF has enabled or led major scientific breakthroughs in the field; from discovery of the causative gene mutation, to Progeria's first and only FDA-approved treatment, lonafarnib, to the advancement of gene-editing approaches now



in development. Through rigorous science, global research infrastructure and close partnership with the worldwide patient community, PRF is advancing next-generation therapies and leading the Path to Cure Progeria program to determine whether a one-time gene-editing therapy can offer a durable, potentially curative treatment.

For more information and to support PRF's mission, please visit www.progeriaresearch.org.

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