

Cooley's Anemia Foundation holds annual gala

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Peter Chieco

Cooley's Anemia Foundation will hold its annual Celebration of Hope Gala on Thursday, June 7, at 6 p.m., at the Lighthouse at Chelsea Piers in Manhattan.

Nick Leschly, chief bluebird of bluebird bio, will accept the Humanitarian of the Year award on behalf of the company, which is conducting clinical trials in gene therapy for beta-thalassemia, as well as developing treatments for other conditions. Tracy Antonelli will receive the Patient Recognition award in acknowledgement of her triumphs over the challenges of living with thalassemia and her adoption of three children with thalassemia from China.

Children born with beta-thalassemia major (a.k.a. Cooley's anemia) require lifelong blood transfusions as often as every two weeks. In addition, they must undergo a daily drug treatment to remove excess iron from the transfusions. There are many complications they may face, including cardiac and liver failure, osteoporosis, diabetes, and pulmonary hypertension. Living with thalassemia requires a strong will and a determination to meet and conquer a multitude of challenges.

In making this announcement, Peter Chieco, incoming national president of the Cooley's Anemia Foundation Board of Directors, said, "For years, the Cooley's Anemia Foundation has been a champion of gene therapy as a potential curative approach to thalassemia. We are thrilled to have this opportunity to recognize the exceptional work and dedication of bluebird bio in this exciting area. bluebird bio's commitment gives hope to thalassemia patients here in the United States and around the world."

Cooley's Anemia Foundation is also honoring Tracy Antonelli, recipient of the Patient Recognition Award. Tracy is part of a new generation of thalassemia patients who, thanks to advances in care, are living longer, fuller lives. In years past, patients had little hope of living far into adulthood, getting married or starting careers. With newfound hope, people like Tracy are overcoming their obstacles and enjoying life experiences previously closed to them. One way in which Tracy has chosen to share this sense of hope is through adoption of children with thalassemia who would otherwise have little chance of growing and thriving.

For more information about the 2018 Cooley's Anemia Foundation Gala and for information about tickets for the June 7th event visit fundraising.thalassemia.org/2018Gala or email hackermann@thalassemia.org.