



For Immediate Release

Contact: Ed Tate
edward.tate@hepb.org
267-934-3475

Hepatitis B Foundation to hold its annual Crystal Ball Gala on April 30

The Gala will celebrate the Foundation's 30th Anniversary.

Doylestown, April 8, 2021 – The Hepatitis B Foundation's annual Crystal Ball Gala later this month holds a special significance: it is the ceremonial start of the Foundation's 30th Anniversary celebration.

A nonprofit, research-based organization, the Foundation serves people living with hepatitis B, their families and health care providers around the world. It was founded in 1991 by Joan and Tim Block of Doylestown and their friends Janine and Paul Witte. The Wittes had lived in New Hope for many years until Paul passed away in February at the age of 94.

The Gala, which is the Foundation's primary fundraising event, will be held on Friday, April 30, starting at 7:30 p.m. EDT. Like last year, the 30th Anniversary Gala will be an online event, allowing people to participate from the comfort of their homes. Details are posted on hepbgala.org. The event is free of charge, open to the public and registration is not required. Attendees can join live through the Gala website or the Foundation's Facebook and YouTube pages.

"The Gala provides a wonderful opportunity to celebrate our 30th Anniversary with our many supporters and everyone interested, sharing some of our history and honoring some very deserving people," Foundation President and Co-Founder, Timothy Block, PhD, said. "Despite the pandemic, the show must go on, and we have an excellent program planned. One of the highlights will be a wonderful video that provides a glimpse of our history and comments from numerous people who made major contributions over the years."

The 2020 Gala also was virtual and the online format made it more accessible than in previous years, Dr. Block noted. The event attracted participants from 14 different states plus viewers from six countries outside of the U.S.

The 2021 Gala includes a silent auction with opportunities to bid on a wide range of exciting items, which are now available for previewing at hepbgala.org. This year's auction, which is sponsored by Arbutus Biopharma Corporation, features a visit to the Adventure Aquarium, four tickets to Busch



Gardens in Florida, a one-night stay at Kalahari Resorts and two Spirit Airlines round-trip vouchers. Among other items are a large YETI Tundra cooler, football autographed by Philadelphia Eagles star Brandon Graham, VIP drag racing experience, craft beer basket, FitBit Alta HR Activity Tracker, basket of Bordeaux wine and beautiful, local artwork, including a gift certificate from the Silverman Gallery of Buckingham. The auction will open for bidding on Monday, April 26, at 7 a.m. EDT and will close at 11:45 p.m. on Saturday, May 1.

During the Gala, the Hepatitis B Foundation will honor Wenhui Li, PhD, of the National Institute of Biological Sciences in Beijing, with the prestigious Baruch S. Blumberg Prize for Outstanding Contributions to Hepatitis B Research. Dr. Li's work in identifying the receptors in liver cells that are the key pathway to hepatitis B infection has been a major breakthrough in research toward curing the disease, which affects an estimated 300 million people worldwide.

The Foundation will present the 2021 Community Commitment Award to Nadine Shiroma, a long-time policy advisor to the Hepatitis B Foundation. In 2010, she was part of a leadership team that helped define hepatitis B as a protected condition under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). More recently has expanded her advocacy to assist those with hep B in the Asian American and Pacific Islander community and those facing discrimination in the U.S. military.

Also during the Gala, the Foundation will present the Milestone Achievement Award to Eric Freedgood on behalf of the Carol & Edmund Blake Foundation in appreciation for its extremely generous support of the Hepatitis B Foundation's advocacy, patient support programs and research. The Blake Foundation's cumulative giving surpassed the \$1 million mark this year.

About Hepatitis B: The number of people living in the United States who have a chronic hepatitis B infection may be as high as 2.4 million, significantly greater than the generally accepted estimate of 2.2 million in 2011, according to a new analysis by a team of public health experts, scientists and physicians including two authors affiliated with the Hepatitis B Foundation. The study examined U.S. data from 2018 and found the majority of those with chronic hepatitis B, nearly 1.5 million, have emigrated from foreign countries. A report on the analysis, "An Updated Assessment of Chronic Hepatitis B Prevalence among Foreign-Born Persons Living in the United States," is published in the March issue of *Hepatology*, the journal of the American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases. Worldwide it is estimated that about 300 million people are chronically infected with hep B and each year up to 1 million people die from the disease, despite the fact that it is preventable and treatable.



About the Hepatitis B Foundation: The nation's leading nonprofit organization solely dedicated to finding a cure for hepatitis B and improving the quality of life for those affected worldwide through research, education and patient advocacy, the Hepatitis B Foundation was founded in 1991 and is based in Doylestown, Pa., with an office in Washington, D.C. To learn more, go to www.hepb.org and www.hepb30years.org, read our blog at hepb.org/blog, follow us on Twitter @HepBFoundation, find us on Facebook at [hepbfoundation](https://www.facebook.com/hepbfoundation) or call us at 215-489-4900. To donate, contact Jean Holmes at 215-489-4900 or jean.holmes@hepb.org.