

# PHILANTHROPY

*in action*



## Abstract Art Concrete Results

by Gary Goldenberg

Who would have imagined that de Kooning, Rothko, and Rauschenberg would become saviors of nursing?

No one, it's safe to say, since these giants of Abstract Expressionism had little or nothing to do with the nursing profession. But now their art does. In 2005, New York collectors Donald and Barbara Jonas sold half of their collection of postwar and contemporary art masterpieces and used the proceeds to establish the Jonas Center for Nursing Excellence, the first private philanthropy of its kind.

Among the Center's goals are to promote nurse recruitment and retention, increase ethnic and racial diversity among the nursing workforce, advance innovative practice models, and improve practice environments in New York City and beyond. With its unique nursing-centric focus, sizeable endowment, and a board of advisors that reads like a page ripped from *Who's Who in Medicine and Health Care*, the Jonas Center is quickly making a name for itself.

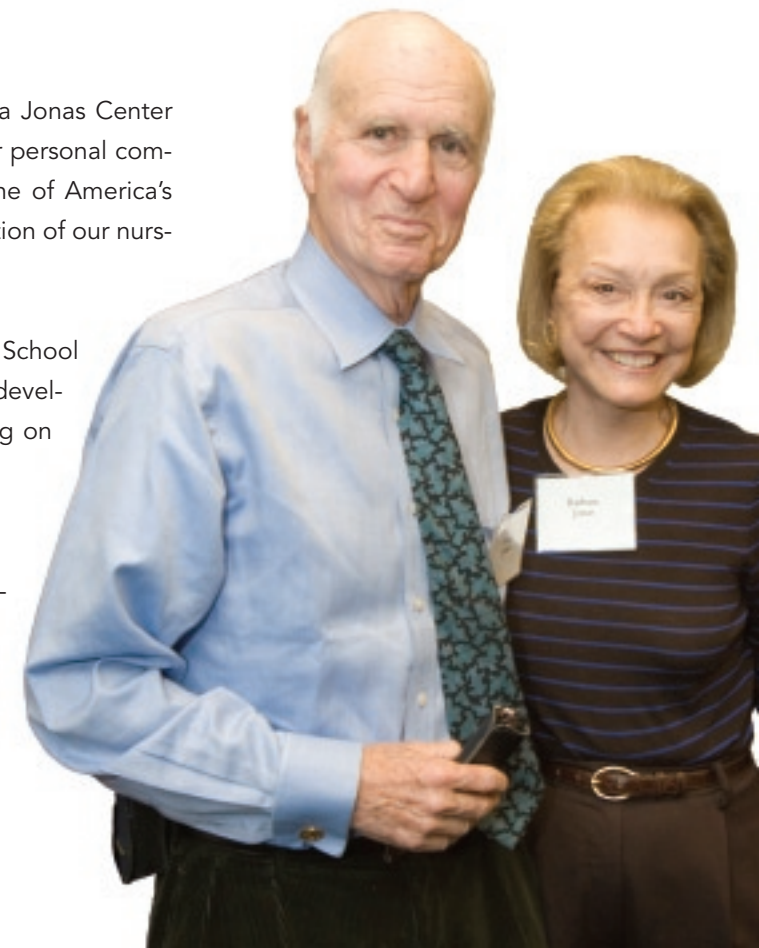
As James R. Tallon, Jr., President of the United Hospital Fund and a Jonas Center advisor, notes, "With their dedication of financial resources and their personal commitment, Donald and Barbara Jonas have shined a spotlight on one of America's foremost health policy challenges — the supply, quality, and preparation of our nursing workforce."

One of the beneficiaries of the Jonas Center is Columbia University School of Nursing, which to date has received grants in support of faculty development and a joint venture with Beth Israel Medical Center focusing on evidence-based nursing.

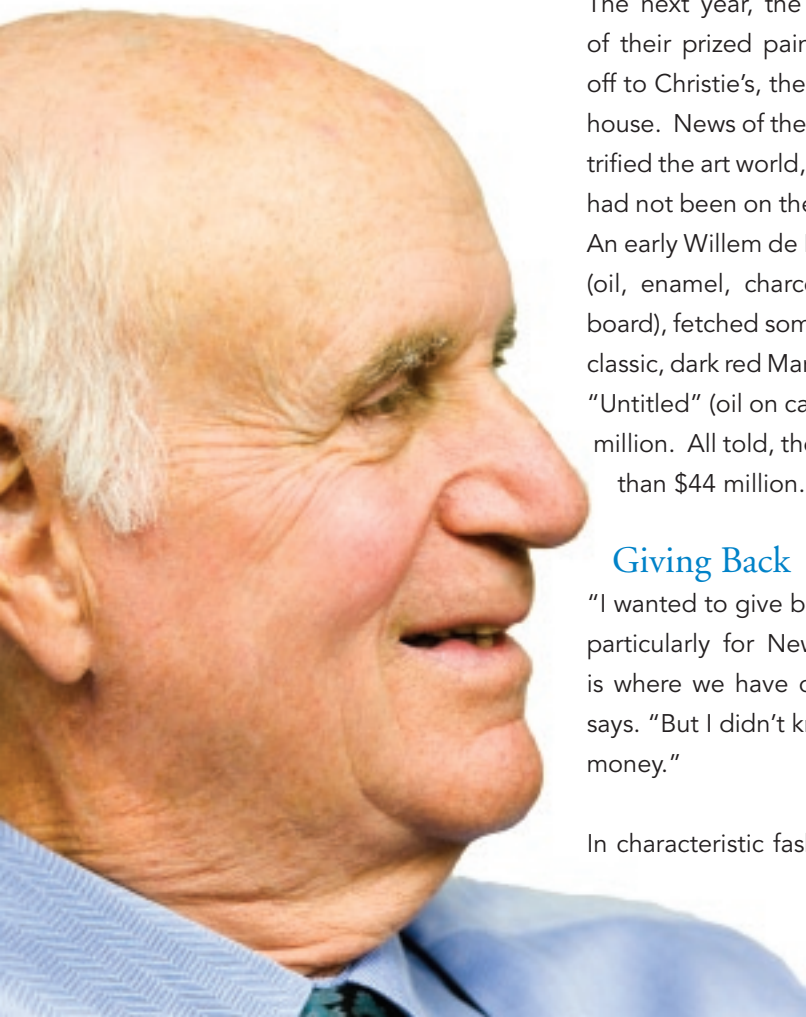
### A Windfall for Nursing

The story of the improbable link between abstract art and nursing begins about 30 years ago, when the Jonases began collecting art to fill the blank canvas of their new Fifth Avenue apartment. What started as a hobby soon turned into a passion. The Jonases studied art, toured galleries, and consulted with experts, all the while falling in love with Abstract Expressionism.

*Following the credo, "If you die rich, you die poor," a New York couple transforms their estimable collection of abstract expressionist art into a philanthropic center for nursing excellence.*



*“I wanted to give back, to do something particularly for New York, because this is where we have our roots. But I didn’t know where to put the money.”*



In those days, works by Pollock and his kindred spirits were relatively affordable, allowing the couple to amass a museum-quality collection, 30 pieces in all. “We never, ever bought with an investment view,” Mrs. Jonas was quoted in *The New York Times*. “We bought because we loved the work, and we never sold anything.” Nonetheless, the art did turn out to be a spectacular investment, as prices for these artists doubled and doubled again.

One day in 2004, Mr. Jonas decided to sell part of their collection and give the proceeds to charity. “Donald felt strongly that if you die rich, you die poor,” says Mrs. Jonas. “He was very committed to changing this world and doing something while we were alive.”

The next year, the Jonases shipped 15 of their prized paintings and sculptures off to Christie’s, the international auction house. News of the impending sale electrified the art world, as most of the pieces had not been on the market for decades. An early Willem de Kooning, “Sail Cloth” (oil, enamel, charcoal and graphite on board), fetched some \$13 million, while a classic, dark red Mark Rothko abstraction, “Untitled” (oil on canvas), brought in \$10 million. All told, the auction raised more than \$44 million.

### Giving Back

“I wanted to give back, to do something particularly for New York, because this is where we have our roots,” Mr. Jonas says. “But I didn’t know where to put the money.”

In characteristic fashion, the Jonases re-

searched the possibilities and consulted with experts in charitable giving, looking for “an uncharted beach” along the philanthropic coastline. In time, nursing came to the fore. “We found incredible people in the nursing world — the real thing, smart and tough and strong,” says Mr. Jonas. “And there’s a sweetness to them. I liked it all the more because nursing was on nobody’s radar.”

The more the Jonases, both in their 70s, learned about nursing, the more they were captivated. “What everybody tells me, nurses are the backbone of the health care system, yet they are undervalued, underutilized,” Mr. Jonas adds. The couple was especially alarmed to learn that the nation faces a shortage of one million nurses by 2020, a recipe for disaster for a country with an aging population and a rising rate of chronic illness.

From consultations with leaders in practice and academe, including Mary O’Neil Munding, DrPH, Dean of the School of Nursing, the mission of the Jonas Center took shape, ultimately focusing on nurse recruitment, retention, workforce diversity, innovative practice models, and improvements to practice settings.

A realist, Mr. Jonas recognizes that the Jonas Center cannot solve all of nursing’s dilemmas on its own. Rather, he sees the role of the Center as a “convener,” fostering connections among key players in the healthcare system who can have a significant impact on nursing.

In May of this year, for example, the Jonas Center organized a national policy forum

on nursing education and practice at the Dirksen Senate Building in Washington, D.C. The event, co-sponsored by Senators Jack Reed (D-RI) and Charles Schumer (D-NY) and hosted by Louis W. Sullivan, MD, former secretary for Health and Human Services and Jonas Center board member, attracted representatives from the offices of elected officials, the Department of Labor, the Senate Finance Committee, and the Special Committee on Aging.

### Who will care for me?

The idea of bringing together different elements of the healthcare system was also behind the Center’s “Who Will Care for Me?” grant program, which was launched in 2006 to foster collaborations between nursing schools and clinical settings.

Eleven grants were awarded, one of which went to the Columbia University School of Nursing and Beth Israel Medical Center. Under this particular grant, the two institutions created several small teams,

each consisting of two students, one clinical nurse leader, and one staff nurse, who combined their talents to implement evidence-based changes in nursing practice.

To familiarize the teams with evidence-based processes, all members participated in the *Assessing Clinical Evidence* course at the School of Nursing, which taught participants how to critically appraise the quality and applicability of published evidence and use a variety of electronic sources to access current best practices. During the course, the teams identified a project, which was then put into practice and evaluated. The ultimate goal of the program was to improve the work environment for nursing, attract and retain nurses, and improve the quality of patient care. The program, led by Patricia Stone, PhD, Associate Professor of Nursing, ended this summer, but there are plans to apply for a continuation grant.



*Much of the attention paid to the nation’s nursing crisis focuses on clinical practice, where the shortfall is most visible to the public. However, faculty development is crucial to ensure we can train the next generation of nurses...*

*“Who Will Care for Me?” grant recipients listening to grant presentations.*

Another "Who Will Care for Me?" grant helped establish a leadership academy aimed at increasing nurse retention rates. In this ambitious effort, involving the New York City Health & Hospitals Corporation (HHC) and four area nursing schools, 360 nurses (18 percent of the total number of the nurses employed by HHC) are participating in an intensive, year-long leadership and business skills-building program.

### Faculty shortage

In 2008, the Jonas Center turned its grantmaking efforts toward the development of nursing faculty.

"Much of the attention paid to the nation's nursing crisis focuses on clinical practice, where the shortfall is most visible to the public," notes Marilyn A. DeLuca, PhD, Executive Director of the Jonas Center. "However, faculty development is crucial to ensure we can train the next generation of nurses who will provide individuals and communities access to quality healthcare and services."

According to the National League for Nursing (NLN), the shortage of nurse educators caused more than 88,000 qualified applicants nationwide to be denied admission to nursing programs in 2005-2006 alone.

Making matters worse, of the 32,000 nurses in academe in the U.S., half intend to retire within ten years and an alarming 21 percent plan to do so in the next five years, the NLN reported in 2007.

To help remedy this situation, the Jonas Center has launched the \$2.5-million Jonas Nursing Scholars Program, which will support the education of six doctoral students in nursing and allow the host institutions to expand their postgraduate enrollments.

Each scholar will each receive four years of funding for tuition and living stipends, up to a maximum of \$70,000 per year

per scholar through forgivable loans. In return, the scholars must agree to complete a doctoral degree in four years, to limit salaried employment during the course of study, to begin teaching nursing full-time in the New York City metropolitan area within four months of degree completion, and to remain teaching in the area for a minimum of four years.

Three of the six Jonas Nursing Scholarships were awarded to Columbia University School of Nursing.

To expand its reach, the Jonas Center is using the scholars program as the foundation for a nationwide Nursing Scholars Collaborative that will engage other donors in similar pursuits. The Center is aiming for the collaborative to collectively support 25 doctoral nursing students over the next six years, and to evaluate the progress and impact of the program.

### What lies ahead

The walls of the Jonases' apartment are a bit barer these days, but the Jonases don't seem to mind. "We lived with the paintings, and we loved them," says Mrs. Jonas, who prefers to talk about the Center rather than the works of art that made it possible.

"The exciting story is what lies ahead, adds Mr. Jonas, continuing his wife's thought. "We can do so much more. And whatever we are doing can travel to other places. We need more people to support nursing, especially at the national level. We've got to put nursing at the top of the list."

More information about the Jonas Center for Nursing Excellence can be found at [www.jonascenter.org](http://www.jonascenter.org).

*Donald and Barbara Jonas at the Second Century Award Ceremony. left to right: Sarah Cook, Elaine Larson, Dean Mary Mundinger, Donald Jonas, Barbara Jonas, Nancy Reame, Karen Ignagni, Jennifer Smith, and Pat Stone.*



*Donald and Barbara Jonas with "Who Will Care for Me?" grant recipients in the School of Nursing lobby.*



# The Jonases:

## *a portrait of the philanthropists*

Barbara Jonas was one of the first students to enroll in the now-famous High School of Performing Arts, with designs on becoming an actress. Upon graduation, she enrolled at Sarah Lawrence College, where she studied psychology and literature. After two years, she left college to get married, putting any thoughts of a career on hold. She spent the next two decades raising her children, but kept current by reading the literature on child psychology and volunteering at the Child Study Association, which evaluated new studies in the field.

"I was always interested in what makes people tick, and in why some of us do well and why some of us fall through the cracks," she says.

Once her children were grown, Mrs. Jonas decided to practice psychology, not just read about it. She returned to school, first completing her long-delayed degree at Sarah Lawrence and then earning a master's in social work at Yeshiva University. Next, she became a licensed psychotherapist, practicing individual, marital, and family counseling. She also served for a time as vice chairman of the Community Services Board of the New York City Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Alcoholism Services.

Ever since, she's led a busy life in both the arts and the sciences. For more than two decades, she served as the lay mem-

ber of the Institutional Review Board at NYU School of Medicine and is currently a member of the Columbia Presbyterian Health Sciences Advisory Council. In 1992, she established the Barbara Jonas Centers for the Study and Treatment of Children at Risk in the Departments of Psychiatry at New York University and Columbia University. In addition, she has served on the boards of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and the Guggenheim Museum.

The name Donald Jonas is well known to those in the business world. Shortly after finishing high school, he entered the family retail business, beginning a long and distinguished career. "I started some businesses, and I had some good ones and some less than good ones," says Mr. Jonas, downplaying his achievements.

The record reveals that he was founder and chairman of the Barbara Lynn stores and its successor company, Belscott Retailers, both of which were listed on the American Stock Exchange from 1953 to 1975.

"I lived a New Yorker's life," he says. "I went to work, raised children, didn't have too much time for art or anything else in those days." Later, he was a co-founder of the Lecther's Housewares chain, which he led from 1973 until he retired in 2001.

Mr. Jonas' philanthropic side emerged well before the creation of the Jonas Center. Since 1963, he has served as a trustee and an honorary trustee of the Horace Mann School. He has also served on the boards of the Kipp Academy Charter School in the Bronx, the Guggenheim Museum Business Board, the American Jewish Congress, and Cancer Care, Inc.

He started the Read to Feed Program in New York City public and private schools for Heifer International and remains active with Heifer programs. He also supports educational and medical programs in the Dominican Republic.

The Jonases, who have homes in New York, Greenwich, CT, and the Dominican Republic, have been married for more than fifty years and have two children and two grandchildren.

Earlier this year, the School of Nursing awarded its Second Century Award for Excellence in Health Care to Barbara and Donald Jonas in recognition of their "transformative gift" to nursing in New York.



*Donald and Barbara Jonas (left) with "Who Will Care for Me?" grant recipients.*