Larry Gifford: Michael J. Fox helps preview his new book and more virtual events are being planned by The Michael J. Fox Foundation. That's next on part two of the fall preview.

Michael J. Fox: This is Michael J. Fox. Thanks for listening to this podcast. Learn more about the Michael J. Fox Foundation's work and how you can help speed a cure at michaeljfox.org.

Speaker 3: Navigating Parkinson's disease can be challenging, but we're here to help. Welcome to The Michael J. Fox Foundation podcast. Tune in as we discuss what you should know today about Parkinson's research, living well with the disease and the foundation's mission to speed a cure. Free resources like this podcast are always available michaeljfox.org.

Larry Gifford: Welcome to The Michael J. Fox Foundation Parkinson's podcast. I'm Larry Gifford, a proud member of the Michael J. Fox Foundation Patient Council, founder of pdavengers.com and the host of another podcast called When Life Gives You Parkinson's, which is beginning its third season this fall. This is part two of the fall preview, but before we look ahead, let's go over some highlights of the events we mentioned in the last episode.

The Michael J. Fox Foundation Virtual 5K/10K had 5,800 people lace up. Oh my goodness. That's awesome. We had representatives from all 50 States, Washington D.C., Puerto Rico, and 18 other countries. It also featured 400 runners with Parkinson's. More than $1.4 million was raised. 100% of that money will go out the door directly to critical research programs in need of funding. On behalf of the foundation and the PD community, congratulations and thank you to everyone who participated in the Virtual 5K/10K. The Ask the MD in conversation with Rachel Dolhun, the board-certified movement disorder specialist, and Vice President of Medical Communications for the Michael J. Fox Foundation launched and it featured Michael J. Fox Foundation board member, Jeff Keefer.

Jeff Keefer: We're all looking for that disease modifying drug. The thing that will either stop or slow this thing down and help us return to the way we were without any medication would be obviously the hope or cure. But until that time, these new compounds, to a certain extent, and for me, I'm again, fortunate, have allowed me to get back to pretty much a normal, I can do the things I love to do and have allowed me to do that while we continue to wait for those disease modifying drugs. Believe me, I'm an optimist. I think they're going to come and due in large part to the foundation, as are these first three things that we have that have come down the pipeline to help patients.

Rachel Dolhun: I think that's so important to point out that as we're so focused on a cure, on closing our doors, we're also at the same time focused on making people's lives better today. We did fund early development of Inbrija, over a million dollars on early stage clinical trials there. We funded scales to measure dyskinesia, to help enable the development of Gocovri. These drugs are helping people today. There are a lot of benefits to them.

Jeff Keefer: I think that the impact is related to people in our capability. I've seen a strength in that capability over the last really 10 years, if you will. That is really getting people in a position with the skills and capabilities to help choose that broader way of programs, but still the ones that have brought the highest probability of success. I think the other thing is we're getting much better at holding people accountable for delivering results and making sure that the money we're spending is going to yield the highest possible probability of a positive result. It falls both in the area of drugs for today that helped with the symptoms and for drugs for the future for drug modifying compounds.

Larry Gifford: It is a really great discussion. If you want to hear the whole thing or watch the whole thing, it's Ask the MD in conversation, it's a video series. You can find it at michaeljfox.org/here. Now, this was my favorite, the Michael J. Fox Foundation fireside chat with Michael J. Fox and the Foundations Co-founder and Executive Vice Chairperson, Debi Brooks.

Michael J. Fox: It was interesting. The first thing I thought was I wanted to create a foundation that focuses on research. I've been very quickly thrown into the pot when I announced that I had Parkinson's. I really became taken in by this community and different organizations. I thought there was a need for one that focused purely on research. I had no endowment, just money came in and money went out. Essentially, the money would catch up with the science. I found Debi who had a similar... I talked to her and I said, "This person can make that work. This person could take this big idea of something and help formulate it into a vehicle and do that." Jumping ahead, what surprised me about what we've become is we become so much more patient-based than I originally envisioned. Not that it wasn't always in servicing the patient, it always was, but we didn't realize the patient could be such a big part of their own rescue.

Debi Brooks: Trying to put ourselves back where we were when we started, it was impossible to know what this could become. I think it's fair to say, Michael and I are both pretty wicked optimists. He gets paid to write books about it, though. He's better at talking about it than I am. I don't think we could have imagined what we were tapping into. I think there was scientific opportunity for sure. Our approach, which was novel and was bringing real value to what was going on in the field at the time. Our approach definitely unlocked some potential, but it's clear to me that particularly Michael, as a patient and in dialogue directly with the rest of the community, we've been able to just tap in to such a desire and a need and people who are just compelled to be part of getting involved.

I have to say, it's so uncommon in a disease community for folks, people don't get diagnosed with things and look for a non-profit to get involved with and yet we really see that to the tunes of hundreds of thousands, several million, in fact, Parkinson's patients and family members who've, who've stepped up and they've just wanted to be part of this. That combination of this opportunity in science and the funds that we've been able to galvanize through so many different sources and the generosity of so many people tabbing that patient and community energy. It's magic. It really is. We might've thought we would be good at one or two of those things, but to have all those three things come together, it's really helped transform the field today versus where it was a couple decades ago.

Larry Gifford: If you want to watch the whole fireside chat with Michael J. Fox and Debi Brooks go to michaeljfox.org/here, H E R E michaeljfox.org/here and watch it and the other events on demand, michaeljfox.org/here. Thank you for participating and watching and sharing. We couldn't do all this stuff without you. There's still lots more to come this fall. Here to discuss the events that we can all look forward to. We'll ask the MD Rachel Dolhun. Hi Rachel.

Rachel Dolhun: Hey Larry.

Larry Gifford: Also joining us is the Chief Marketing Officer of the foundation, Holly Teicholtz.

Holly Teicholtz: Thank you Larry.

Larry Gifford: Soon after the big election this fall, we'll all be able to pick up a brand new book by Michael J. Fox. Come on, Holly, spill the beans, give us the scoops, exclusive details.

Rachel Dolhun: Spoiler alert.

Holly Teicholtz: Oh my gosh. First of all, I should say, nobody is more excited than me. This is Michael's fourth book. Here is a story that I can tell you. When I first started at The Michael J. Fox foundation, I called the person who had hired me at that time, the VP of communications, and I said, "Are there any books I should read?" I had worked in research communications really my whole life, but I didn't know that much specifically about Parkinson's as I first came into to this job. I said, "are there any books I should read?" She said, "Well, I don't know if there's really a Parkinson's book, but you should read Michael's memoir, Lucky Man". I will never forget. I still remember the Barnes and Noble that I walked into. This was 2005, Amazon was not even profitable yet, Larry. When I walked in and I found his little book in the memoir section and I thought, I'm going to just read this this weekend. I'm like doing my homework. I started reading it. He's an amazing writer. I couldn't put it down.

That was how I started to come to know that Michael is such a gifted communicator and storyteller. That book just stayed with me. Of course now in my job, I have all of his books and he kind of teases me because they're very dog-eared. I have lots of post-it notes across all of his books, with the different stories that he tells that either relate to our work or other people in his world that we sometimes work with ourselves at the foundation.

He has this book coming out. I will say I've seen the, I think you can now go to Amazon and see the book cover it's available for pre-order. He had showed me the book cover. They had done the photo shoot and he had the cover designs from the publisher. They had mocked up a few different options. We were at a board meeting, a foundation board meeting, and he came up to me and he showed me the one that they had picked. This was pre-COVID. This was 2019 times. It's so beautiful. The photo of him, the title of the book is No Time Like the Future: An Optimist Considers Mortality. We can talk more about that title, but I was looking at this book cover and I was like, "Oh my God, Michael, this is amazing." I grabbed my phone and I wanted to take a picture of his phone and the picture on his phone. And he was like, yeah, you can take that picture, but I'd have to kill you.

Larry Gifford: Well, lucky for us, we are close enough to the publishing date that we can now all go online and see that epic cover. Michael talked a little bit about the book during the Michael J. Fox Foundation, fireside chat on October 5th.

Michael J. Fox: Well, it's funny, I just wrote this book, No Time Like the Future. In it, I write about issues and health issues that overriding Parkinson's, which I reached a taunt with. It allows me to do what I need to do and I allow it to do what it does, and a 30 year agreement, and we were like an old married couple. Then I had spinal tumor and I had that removed and I had to learn to walk again. I learned to walk again and then I fell and shattered my arm. I found myself sitting underneath a phone that I couldn't reach to get help, getting mad at myself and saying, "If I'm in the lemonade business, I'm out of the lemonade business." How can I tell people that optimism is a panacea when I don't feel that way. I went through this moment, this crisis of not appreciating, not being able to be optimistic, not be able to be in that place, and then over time I learned a bit about gratitude, and that gratitude makes optimism sustainable. If you're grateful for the opportunities you have, you're grateful for what you've been given to do work-wise, if you're grateful for the opportunities that exist, you'd be optimistic. If you can just find those moments, those areas where... I don't know. I always feel like that you flip the coin 100 times, you're going to come up heads 51.

Larry Gifford: Remember you could watch all these events On Demand, go to michaeljfox.org/here.

Holly Teicholtz: We cannot wait for this book to come out. We're really hoping to be able to share pieces of it with our community over the course of the fall and even going into 2021. All I can tell you is I know it's going to be a great read because his books always are.

Rachel Dolhun: You said the title is An Optimist Considers Mortality, which seems pretty timely in the era that we're living in of COVID. The book really focuses on his experiences during 2018.

Holly Teicholtz: It is funny isn't it? That title in a year like this, when so many people are being asked to grapple with such a difficult, with times of loss and sickness and fear, and really all the things that genuinely do make up our own mortality. Michael didn't know any of those things when this book title was written. That was all going back to 2019 or even before.

What the book really is about, I think this is so interesting about Michael, he knows very well that he is iconically celebrated as the emblem of optimism and hope and grace and courage. What I think he's exploring in this book is what are the limits of that kind of approach? What does it mean to feel like you're losing your optimism? Because it's just one thing after another.

I haven't read the book yet. I could only imagine the beautiful things that he is going to have to say about this. What a gift to all of us to have a story like that to read in a year like 2020. It's just another thing that I feel so grateful to Michael for giving us and I can't wait. I can't wait to read it and I can't wait for everyone to be talking about it.

Larry Gifford: You'll be able to buy Michael's book wherever you enjoy buying your books.

Holly Teicholtz: Now you can probably get it these days people can probably just pick it up on Amazon. Unlike when I started at the Fox Foundation and I had to actually walk into a Barnes and Noble

Larry Gifford: In a typical year, we would have a big November gala for the Michael J. Fox Foundation, but COVID-19... We are planning a very cool virtual research round table, November 17th, marking 20 years of the Michael J. Fox Foundation. What should we expect?

Holly Teicholtz: This is going to be such a fun highlight of our fall. I hope everyone will come sign up and hang out with us for the research round table because what we're going to do is really cover off on some of the highlights of 20 years of research progress in Parkinson's. Not just the role of the foundation, but what these new developments mean for people living with the disease, whether you have the disease or someone you love has the disease. Some of the exciting really science fictiony kinds of projects that we see coming down the line in the next year.

In spite of COVID, lots of progress remains everything from targeting our RNA in new drugs that may become available to really cool new technology based treatments, ways of hopefully improving gait imbalance, helping people with some of the things like swallowing that can become so problematic in Parkinson's through very cool tech based approaches. This is really an awesome opportunity to just, it's your one-stop shop for where we've come so far and where we think we're going and how you can be a part of and why the research really is such an important part of the Parkinson's journey.

Rachel Dolhun: Larry and Holly, you've both mentioned the 20th year of MJFF a couple of times now. I've heard that there is a special podcast series in the works. Can you tell us a little bit more about that?

Larry Gifford: This is going to be a great project. I'm really looking forward to it, Rachel. It's a multi-part series exploring the history of The Michael J. Fox Foundation. The first episode will be focused on how this research machine was built and the milestones that have been achieved and that'll be available in early November.

Holly Teicholtz: It should be good as long as we can keep our hosts on track.

Larry Gifford: Wow.

Holly Teicholtz: I love to see where Larry takes our history of the Michael J. Fox foundation podcast. We'll start with the research highlights and hopefully there'll be more of those cool behind the scenes stories to come in more history podcasts over the coming year.

Larry Gifford: That gets us through November. Then on December 1st, it's Giving Tuesday.

Holly Teicholtz: Yes. Giving Tuesday. It is the highlight of the season of giving and so many organizations. Really want you to be aware that after we eat our turkey and go do all of our shopping and eat more turkey and then some more pie that there really is a day devoted to expressing support for the causes that we care about.

We really do know what a strange and out of the ordinary year 2020 is and not everyone is in a position to give. We totally get that, but we hope that if you are, you will join us. We are planning lots of cool events, all of which will be featured on our website, guests, fun stories, inspiration from our community. If you're in a position to give, we anticipate that we will be ready to match those gifts that come in from our community to the tune, Larry, of up to $2 million. It's a great day to give. We totally get that not everybody is there this year, but if you are, and you can even do a little bit of giving, if you're in such a position, maybe you can do a little more because you know that others can't do as much this year.

Our community always comes out strong on Giving Tuesday. I'm sure this year will be no exception. We can't wait to see everybody on December 1st.

Larry Gifford: Thank you guys. This is amazing.

Rachel Dolhun: Thank you, Larry.

Holly Teicholtz: Thank you so much, Larry. It has been so much fun joining you on this podcast and I want to thank you so much for everything you are doing for the foundation. I'm just going to circle back and say our tagline about being here until Parkinson's isn't. The other thing that feels so right about it in 2020 is that, we want our community to know, not just that we're here, but wherever that here is, we're here with you wherever the here is for you. I just hope that we're giving everyone lots of ways to be here with us. We can't wait. It's a season of giving like no other. It is a tough year, but we are not going anywhere until this problem is solved. I just couldn't be more privileged to work with you, Larry and Rachel and everyone in this community. Together we really are going to make finding the cure inevitable. So thank you both. Thank you to all of our listeners for everything you do.

Larry Gifford: Now it's time for virtual hugs.

Holly Teicholtz: That's the only kind of hugs we have in 2020, Larry.

Larry Gifford: I know. Thank you for listening to the Michael J. Fox Foundation Parkinson's podcast. If you like it, please leave a rating and review on Apple podcasts. It really helps us raise awareness of the podcast. Please share this episode with your friends and followers on social media. For everyone at the Michael J. Fox foundation, who is here until Parkinson's isn't, thank you for listening. I'm Larry Gifford. You can follow me on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. It's the same handle @ParkinsonsPod. Be well, we'll talk to you next time.

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