Philanthropist Kimmel’s vote of confidence

The new biomedical research tower, at the northwest corner of Ninth and Locust Streets, will bear the name of Sidney Kimmel’s wife, Caroline. The site, now a parking garage, will contain 220,000 square feet of space with 12 floors devoted to research.

Jefferson will get $70M for new tower

By Harold Brubaker

philanthropist Sidney Kimmel plans to donate $70 million to Thomas Jefferson University to help pay for a $340 million biomedical research building in Center City, a move designed to strengthen Jefferson’s Sidney Kimmel Cancer Center and its broader research efforts, Jefferson said Thursday.

The new gift comes five years after Jefferson’s medical college was named after Kimmel in recognition of a $110 million donation. Kimmel, 91, has given away $930 million of the fortune he made in fashion, including at least $350 million in Philadelphia, his native city.

What brought Kimmel, who lives in California, back to Jefferson with more money was confidence in the nonprofit’s leadership, he said in an interview this week. In 1996, Kimmel gave $10 million to the school’s cancer center, which was then named after him.

“I am so impressed with our dear friend Steve Klasko, and at the same time with Karen Knudsen heading up the cancer center. I just feel confident that I have the right team running this operation for us in Philadelphia,” he said.

The 220,000-square-foot building, with 12 floors devoted to research, will be named after Kimmel’s wife, Caroline. It will replace the parking garage for the Jefferson Hospital for Neuroscience, which is on the northwest cor-

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The planned research building is seen as a key piece of what Jefferson’s chief executive likens to a downtown version of Penn’s campus.

Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, Temple University, and Kimmel’s $110 million gift to the medical school in 2014 helped Jefferson secure matching funds to create 25 endowed professorships, bringing the school’s total to 91, and 61 scholarships, giving the school a total of 232, Klasko said.

Kimmel said he is happy with Klasko’s performance and jumped at the opportunity to help pay for the new research building at Jefferson.

“Every time I speak to Steve, I’ve indicated how strongly I feel about having a major building,” Kimmel said, mentioning his association with Baltimore’s Johns Hopkins University, which has the Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center. In 2001, Kimmel donated $150 million to Johns Hopkins for cancer research.

“That’s a major building, and everybody knows what this building’s all about,” Kimmel said of the Baltimore arrangement. In the late 1990s, Kimmel was in discussions with Jefferson about a donation for a building that would have added space for the cancer center, but that didn’t happen.

Now is the right time, Kimmel said, with more praise for Knudsen, who has been at Jefferson since 2007 and has led the cancer center since 2015.

“She’s always there,” he said. “She works hard. I’m so impressed with her energy. I just feel like we’re on the cusp of greatness with this girl.”

Kimmel’s major gifts to Philadelphia institutions include:
- Kimmel Medical College — $110 million.
- Caroline Kimmel Biomedical Research Building — $70 million.
- Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts — $63 million.
- Raymond and Ruth Perelman Jewish Day School — $25 million.
- Kimmel Cancer Center at Jefferson — $10 million.
- National Constitution Center — $5 million.