



Contact: Margy Meislin  
Phone Number: 212-685-4118  
Email: [mmeislin@lupusny.org](mailto:mmeislin@lupusny.org)

## **2015 NY Lupus Handbag Luncheon Supports Lupus Research to Improve Treatment and Find a Cure**

*Hosted by S.L.E. Lupus Foundation and the Lupus Research Institute*

NEW YORK, NY – April 13, 2015. More than 350 prominent women and men from New York’s fashion, society, entertainment, philanthropic and lupus communities came together today to support lupus research. The annual New York Lupus Handbag Luncheon is hosted by the S.L.E. Lupus Foundation and the Lupus Research Institute (LRI).

### **Women of Achievement Honorees**

The **2015 Women of Achievement** honored were: **Dr. Betty Diamond**, Investigator and Head, Center for Autoimmune and Musculoskeletal Diseases, The Feinstein Institute for Medical Research and Professor of Molecular Medicine and Medicine, Hofstra North Shore-LIJ School of Medicine; **Brett Heyman**, Founder and Creative Director, Edie Parker; and **Teri Wilford Wood**, Associate General Counsel, IBM and S.L.E. Lupus Foundation Board Secretary. Each honoree has made outstanding contributions in the fight against lupus.

“My mother, Carol Weisman, has lupus and has been an active Board member of the S.L.E. Lupus Foundation since 2002,” commented Ms. Heyman. “While she always looks gorgeous on the outside, I grew up watching her struggle on the inside. I support this luncheon to help raise funds for research in hopes of finding a cure for my mom and all women who suffer the devastating effects of lupus. In addition to donating handbags, this year we will contribute 10 percent of the proceeds from Edie Parker bags purchased from April 13 – 20 to the S.L.E. Lupus Foundation with the code LUPUS10.”

“With grants from the LRI and the S.L.E. Lupus Foundation I was able to focus my career primarily on lupus, and that same support has allowed many of today’s younger investigators to pursue the most novel and creative ideas that are delivering promising results,” said Dr. Diamond. “The field of lupus and autoimmune research owes a great deal to the vision of this organization.”

Teri Wilford Wood commented, “As a labor and employment law attorney, I guard against discrimination. When I learned how lupus discriminates against young women and women of color my conviction to get involved was sealed.”

Honorary luncheon co-chairs were **Matilda Raffa Cuomo**, Former First Lady of New York State, Founder and Chair of Mentoring USA; 2014 honoree **Desiree Gruber**, President and CEO, Full Picture, Co-Creator & Executive Producer, *Project Runway* and Co-Founder, Theodora & Callum; and opera legend **Jessye Norman**.

## **NY's Leaders Support Lupus**

Active Board member and lupus patient **Carol Weisman** co-chaired this year's luncheon with **Michelle Gadsden-Williams**, Co-Founder and Chief Operating Officer, Ceiling Breakers, LLC. Many members of the Foundation's Board were also involved including founder **Susan Golick, Jennie and Richard DeScherer, Bonnie Englehardt Lautenberg,** and **Fern Kaye Tessler**. The Foundation's growing **Young Leaders** group was well represented among guests and volunteers. Noted philanthropists and socialites in attendance included **Heather Albert, Jill Costas, Cindy Secunda, Kate Kelly, Katja Goldman, Nancy Poses, John Silverman, Michael Weisman,** and **Barbara Zucker**.

## **Fashion Industry Gets Behind Lupus Fight**

Several fashion VIPs attended including **Anne Keating**, Senior Vice President of Public Relations, Special Events & Corporate Philanthropy at Bloomingdale's, Inc.; **Danielle DiFerdinando**, Founder of Danielle Nicole Handbags; Foundation board member **Mary Belle**, fashion industry leader; and **Karen Giberson**, President, Accessories Council.

The silent auction featured more than 100 magnificent handbags donated by top designers and celebrities to fund lupus research. Among the collection is one of today's 'hottest' bags – the Baylee handbag from **Chloé**. Donated bags with a personal story include Brett Heyman's from **Edie Parker** and a custom design by **Tabitha Sukhai**, luxury leather goods maker Wink & Winn in memory of her best friend who recently passed away from lupus complications.

"We thank everyone whose hard work has made this luncheon an annual NY institution," said S.L.E. Lupus Foundation and LRI CEO Margaret Dowd. "Thanks to our supporters, we have generated over \$200 million to advance lupus research. And the resulting discoveries are transforming patients' lives with better treatments underway as we drive toward prevention and a cure."

Thanks go to Modern Luxury for providing guests with the latest issue of *Manhattan Magazine*.

## **About Lupus**

Systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), or lupus, is a chronic, complex and serious autoimmune disease affecting more than 1.5 million Americans. Nine out of 10 people with lupus are women. In lupus, the immune system, which is designed to protect against infection, creates antibodies that attack the body's own tissues and organs – the kidneys, brain, heart, lungs, blood, skin, and joints. Lupus is difficult to diagnose, difficult to treat, and a leading cause of premature cardiovascular disease, kidney disease and stroke among young women.

## **About S.L.E. Lupus Foundation**

The S.L.E. Lupus Foundation is the country's preeminent organization supporting patient and professional education, advocacy and novel research at a national level. It was founded 45 years ago in New York City by lupus patients and their families as the first nonprofit to serve the lupus community. Learn more at [LupusNY.org](http://LupusNY.org).

## **About the Lupus Research Institute**

The Lupus Research Institute (LRI), the world's leading private supporter of novel research in lupus, pioneers discovery and champions scientific creativity as it has successfully demonstrated the power of innovation to propel scientific solutions in this complex autoimmune disease. For more information, visit [LupusResearchInstitute.org](http://LupusResearchInstitute.org).