

# PROMISE

**'Putting' an end to cancer**

PRO GOLFER COLIN MONTGOMERIE  
TAKES A SWING AS AN MD ANDERSON  
AMBASSADOR

**D.C. Living Legend**

RECORD-BREAKING BIPARTISAN  
EVENT RAISES \$5.2 MILLION

# MY MOON SHOT

**THREE-TIME SURVIVOR  
KENNETH WOO FINDS HOPE  
IN AML RESEARCH**

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS  
**MDAnderson  
Cancer Center**

Making Cancer History®

## A MESSAGE FROM RON DEPINHO, M.D.



PHOTO BY ERIC KAVNE

**AT MD ANDERSON, WE THINK BIG.** That's why our goal is to end cancer — not to slow it, detour it or delay it, but to end it, for good. We've set out to eradicate this complex disease that indiscriminately takes our friends and family. Our cancer fighters — more than 20,000

employees and 1,000-plus volunteers — strive every day to make this vision a reality. We're confronting cancer head-on with a message that's loud and clear: "Cancer, you don't have a chance."

You may have seen installments of MD Anderson's new ad campaign, appropriately named Confronting Cancer, which elevates this message to a new level. Compelling TV spots showcase the real heroes carrying out our determined fight: donors, volunteers, physicians, researchers, patients and survivors. I'm struck by the emotion, the indefatigable courage and the stalwart resilience reflected in these deeply personal stories. And I'm grateful to have the opportunity to honor them in our journey toward Making Cancer History®.

To end cancer is a bold idea. Some will say it can't be done. But bold ideas, based on vision and resolve, are the hallmark of great institutions. For almost 75 years, we've earned our reputation as the world leader in cancer care, research, prevention and education. In July, U.S. News & World Report's "Best Hospitals" survey once again named MD Anderson the No. 1 hospital for cancer care in the nation. We're proud and pleased to be recognized for our excellence in this national survey. The true measure of our success, however, is the number of lives we've positively affected.

Last year alone, more than 127,000 people came to MD Anderson for innovative care, prevention services, diagnostics, second opinions and consults at survivorship clinics. Our Moon Shots Program and clinical trials engine also had a notable year, providing new hope for our patients who are faltering with today's standard of care. Our academic achievements reached new vistas, and, with 33 sister institutions in 23 countries, we're spreading our knowledge to those in greatest need.

This is your impact. This is your legacy. Your generosity makes our world-class research and exceptional patient care possible, and it enables us to provide hope for cancer patients and their families around the world. Thank you for fueling our fight. I am confident that with your continued support and our collective will to succeed, cancer doesn't stand a chance.

# PROMISE

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### ON THE COVER:

When the Moon Shots Program launched in 2012, hearing about the AML Moon Shot was "like winning the lottery" for survivor Kenneth Woo and his wife, Clara. Read "My Moon Shot" on page 8. PHOTO BY F. CARTER SMITH

# American Society of Clinical Oncology honors MD Anderson leaders

## ASCO-AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY AWARD

Cites efforts in cancer prevention and control

BY CLAYTON BOLDT



PHOTO BY F. CARTER SMITH

Ernest Hawk, M.D.

**ERNEST HAWK, M.D.**, vice president and head of MD Anderson's Cancer Prevention and Population Sciences, was recently honored at American Society for Clinical Oncology (ASCO)'s annual meeting in Chicago with the American Cancer Society Award.

Executive director of the Duncan Family Institute for Cancer Prevention and Risk Assessment, Hawk holds the T. Boone Pickens Distinguished Chair for Early Prevention of Cancer and co-leads the cancer prevention and control platform within MD Anderson's Moon Shots Program (see page 8).

"The highlights of my career have been the **incredible mentors, friends, students and teams from diverse disciplines, experiences and backgrounds that I've been privileged to work with.**"

— ERNEST HAWK, M.D., vice president and head of Cancer Prevention and Population Sciences

## SCIENCE OF ONCOLOGY AWARD

Recognizes groundbreaking immunotherapy work

BY SCOTT MERVILLE

**JIM ALLISON, PH.D.**, chair of Immunology, accepted ASCO's Science of Oncology Award for pioneering research that led to a new way to treat cancer.

Allison's studies focus on developing new drugs that block immune system checkpoints or stimulate immune responses. He founded and directs MD Anderson's immunotherapy platform for the Moon Shots Program (see page 8) to cultivate and test immunology-based drugs and combinations.

Allison is also deputy director of MD Anderson's David H. Koch Center for Applied Research of Genitourinary Cancers and holds the Vivian L. Smith Distinguished Chair in Immunology. He's a member of the National Academy of Sciences and the Institute of Medicine.

"I'm grateful for this recognition and **optimistic that immune checkpoint blockade, in combination with other therapies, may be curative for many patients across different types of cancer.**"

— JIM ALLISON, PH.D., chair of Immunology



PHOTO BY F. CARTER SMITH

Jim Allison, Ph.D.

Allison also received the Pezcoller Foundation-American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) International Award for Cancer Research at its April meeting in Philadelphia. He remarked:

"This award recognizes the efforts of my research team over the years to develop strategies that will unleash the immune system to treat cancer, as well as the many other investigators, clinicians and patients whose efforts and courage made immunotherapy of cancer a reality that benefits cancer patients."

# IN THE WORKS: BLOOD TESTS FOR LUNG CANCER

## A MOON SHOTS PROGRAM INITIATIVE

BY SCOTT MERVILLE

### EXACT SCIENCES CORP. AND MD ANDERSON

are collaborating to develop and commercialize blood-based screening and diagnostics tests for the early detection of lung cancer.

“Lung cancer is, and will continue to be, America’s leading cancer killer unless we identify new approaches to diagnose it early, at its most treatable stages,” says Sam Hanash, M.D., Ph.D., director of MD Anderson’s Red and Charline McCombs Institute for the Early Detection and Treatment of Cancer. Hanash also holds the Evelyn and Sol Rubenstein Distinguished Chair and is a professor in Clinical Cancer Prevention.

The initiative is part of MD Anderson’s Moon Shots Program (see page 8). Early detection is a flagship project of the Lung Cancer Moon Shot, funded initially by the Lyda Hill Foundation.

“Lung cancer is, and will continue to be, America’s leading cancer killer unless we identify new approaches to diagnose it early, at its most treatable stages.”

—SAM HANASH, M.D., PH.D., *director of MD Anderson’s Red and Charline McCombs Institute for the Early Detection and Treatment of Cancer*

## BREAST-CONSERVING THERAPY FOR EARLY-STAGE CANCER HAS INCREASED

Access remains an issue, study shows

BY LAURA SUSSMAN

### THE FIRST

comprehensive national review of breast-conserving therapy (BCT) shows that over the past 13 years rates of using the less invasive treatment for early-stage breast cancer have increased at a steady pace. The review, published online in JAMA Surgery, also highlights important demographic factors that affect which patients have access to BCT. MD Anderson researchers found declines in disparities related to age, treatment facility type and geographic region, but they also identified several socioeconomic factors, such as insurance, income and travel distance, as key barriers to BCT.

“Strides have been made to reduce disparities in the use of this effective treatment for early-stage breast cancer. But despite significant progress, there are significant pockets of women where this therapy is underutilized,” says principal investigator Isabelle Bedrosian, M.D., F.A.C.S., associate professor, Surgical Oncology, and medical director, Nellie B. Connally Breast Center at MD Anderson. “The socioeconomic barriers are unlikely to be erased without health policy changes.”



PHOTO BY ERIC KAYNE

## ALL IN THE DNA

Tumor sequencing study highlights benefits of profiling healthy tissue

BY CLAYTON BOLDT

**PROFILING NORMAL DNA** while sequencing tumors of patients with advanced cancer provides an opportunity to identify inherited mutations, say MD Anderson researchers.

Funda Meric-Bernstam, M.D., professor and chair, Investigational Cancer Therapeutics, reported an ongoing study’s preliminary findings at the American Society for Clinical Oncology annual meeting in Chicago.

The MD Anderson research team sequenced tumor and normal DNA from patients with advanced cancer, with the goal of sharing results with patients to better educate them going forward. Sequencing normal tissue isn’t routinely done in the research environment, but comparing tumor versus normal DNA can distinguish between germline, or inherited, mutations and those found only in the tumor.

“**This is an opportunity to identify germline mutations that could have contributed to a patient’s cancer development and may be a heritable cancer syndrome that would put the patient’s family members at risk,**” says Meric-Bernstam, medical director of the Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan Institute for Personalized Cancer Therapy. “It would be important to inform the patient and family members so they can get further testing, genetic counseling and risk-reducing efforts as needed.”

This work was supported by the Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan Foundation, the National Institutes of Health and the Bosarge Foundation.



## NEURODEGENERATION RESEARCH LEADER ARRIVES

Ray to drive quest for new therapies

BY SARAH WATSON

**JIM RAY, PH.D.**, has joined MD Anderson’s Institute for Applied Cancer Science as head of research for the Neurodegeneration Consortium (NDC), a collaboration among MD Anderson, Baylor College of Medicine and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Ray has extensive experience in the pharmaceutical and biotech industries, focusing on Alzheimer’s disease, schizophrenia, Parkinson’s disease, and endocrine and metabolic disorders. Formerly director at Takeda Pharmaceutical’s CNS Research, he’s responsible for coordinating NDC efforts and collaborating with drug discovery scientists at the Institute for Applied Cancer Science to bring innovative therapies to patients with neurodegenerative disease.



## A SPECIAL KIND OF DOCTOR

Family establishes endowment for clinical fellowship

BY MIRIAM SPRADLING



PHOTO BY LARRY STERN

Paula Bottecelli and the late Charles Koller, M.D.

**EVERYONE KNEW** Charles “Chuck” Koller, M.D., a valued member of MD Anderson’s Leukemia department for nearly three decades.

They knew him by his bow ties, the bike he rode to work daily, his humility and the grin his widow, Paula Bottecelli, describes as “silly but cute.” Most important, they knew him for his compassion and love for patients.

In 2009, Koller shared the news with Bottecelli and their five children — he’d been diagnosed with kidney cancer.

“Chuck tried to minimize it, but it was all pretty scary,” Bottecelli recalls. “He always insisted he was here to help the patients, not to worry about himself.”

Koller had surgery at MD Anderson and lived a normal life for a few years before the cancer returned and spread to his lungs. He was determined to continue seeing his patients throughout his treatment.

“He took complete care of the patients, taking the time to listen and tend to all of their needs,” says Bottecelli. “He took care of their leukemia, but he also supported every other aspect, including the spiritual and the psychological.”

Shortly before he died in July 2013, Bottecelli spoke to Hagop Kantarjian, M.D., chair of Leukemia, about starting a stipend for fellows in her husband’s honor. Since then, patients, colleagues and friends have donated more than \$35,000 to the Charles A. Koller Leukemia Endowment Fund.

**“Chuck was a special kind of doctor who loved mentoring others and caring for patients. My hope is to award a fellow who exhibits the compassionate care my husband provided.”**

— PAULA BOTTECELLI



## CANCER SURVIVOR RECEIVES MD ANDERSON'S HIGHEST NURSING HONOR

Brown Foundation Award recognizes Shelby Robin

BY ALLISON IGNACIO

**SHELBY ROBIN**, a pediatric nurse and former sarcoma patient at MD Anderson, is the 2015 recipient of the Brown Foundation Award for Excellence in Oncology Nursing.

Formerly known as the Ethel Fleming Arceneaux Outstanding Nurse-Oncologist Award, the recognition is the institution’s highest nursing honor among MD Anderson’s nearly 3,000 nurses. The Brown Foundation, Inc. established the award in 1982 to recognize excellence in nursing. Since the foundation’s inception in 1951, it’s awarded more than \$1.4 billion in grants for public charitable purposes, primarily for support, encouragement and assistance to education, the arts and community service.

A selection committee of MD Anderson’s clinical faculty, patient care administration and nursing staff reviewed peer and patient nominations before narrowing the choice to three finalists.

“I’m blown away at winning this award. MD Anderson has the best nurses out there,” says Robin, who works in Pediatric Intensive Care Services at MD Anderson Children’s Cancer Hospital. “I was actually treated on the same floor where I work now. The nurses held my hand, made me feel normal, talked me through everything and helped me to not be afraid. To me, there’s no higher honor than to become one of those people for the children at MD Anderson.”

Robin accepted the award in June at a ceremony in the Onstead Auditorium at MD Anderson’s George and Cynthia Mitchell Basic Sciences Research Building. She received a cash prize of \$15,000, a commemorative pin and



PHOTO BY ADOLFO GHAÑEZ III

**“The nurses held my hand, made me feel normal, talked me through everything and helped me to not be afraid. TO ME, THERE’S NO HIGHER HONOR than to become one of those people for the children at MD Anderson.”** — SHELBY ROBIN

a crystal plaque.

“It’s so nice seeing The Brown Foundation share MD Anderson’s view of nurses and to recognize the special role we have here,” says Robin.

PHOTOS BY SHIMULIK ALMANY



In the green room prior to the program, event chairs Tom Johnson (left) and Wayne Gibbens (right) share a celebratory moment with MD Anderson's Ron DePinho, M.D.

# D.C. LIVING LEGEND RAISES \$5.2 MILLION

BY SARAH WATSON

**FORMER PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON AND GENERAL COLIN POWELL** were honored at A Conversation With a Living Legend® in Washington, D.C., April 21 at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

The bipartisan event raised \$5.2 million for MD Anderson, in a record-breaking effort led by event chairs Edwina and Tom Johnson, Beth and Wayne Gibbens, Diane and Paul Begala, Marlene and Fred Malek and Donna and Mack McLarty. Proceeds will fund cancer research within the institution's Moon Shots Program (see page 8), including a pilot Pancreatic Cancer Moon Shot.

"CBS This Morning" co-host Norah O'Donnell emceed the program, which included remarks by UT System Chancellor Bill McRaven and MD Anderson President Ron DePinho, M.D. Veteran television journalist Bob Schieffer led an onstage interview that touched on the intervention in Haiti, the problems associated with American poverty and expected challenges facing the nation's next president. The Whiffenpoofs of Yale offered a rousing a cappella conclusion, followed by a seated dinner on the Kennedy Center's Terrace Level.



From left: Bill McRaven, Norah O'Donnell, Bob Schieffer, Colin Powell, Bill Clinton and Ron DePinho



Veteran journalist Bob Schieffer interviews Bill Clinton and Colin Powell onstage at the Kennedy Center's Eisenhower Theater.



From left: Glenn Stearns, Jane Seymour and Mindy Stearns are among 650 guests from across the nation.

**Event chairs:**  
Diane and Paul Begala  
Beth and Wayne Gibbens  
Edwina and Tom Johnson  
Marlene and Fred Malek  
Donna and Mack McLarty

**Honorary chairs**  
President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter  
Mrs. Ronald Reagan  
President and Mrs. George H.W. Bush  
President and Mrs. George W. Bush  
The Honorable and Mrs. James A. Baker, III

**General chairs:**  
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Elizabeth and Mark Epley  
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Doro and Bobby Koch  
Tricia Koch  
Sandra and James Langdon Jr.  
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Laurie and Pierre Lapeyre Jr.  
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Yael and Jed Manocherian  
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Kit and Charles Moncrief  
Rob Mosbacher Jr.  
Miriam and Jim Mulva  
Tani and Tony Sanchez Jr.  
Lois and Eric Zorn



<http://bit.ly/1KLEgQx>

## EVERY PENNY HELPS

### Youngster shares hard-earned allowance to help cure cancer

BY ALLISON IGNACIO

LIKE ANY OTHER 8-YEAR-OLD BOY, Colin Breiter works hard to earn his allowance.

"I check the kitties' food and water," says Colin, of Morganton, N.C. "Their names are Fluffy and Polka Dot. I also scoop their boxes and keep them clean."

Unlike most kids his age, however, Colin isn't spending all of his cash on himself. His parents require that he donate 10% of his \$5 weekly allowance to charity. This year, Colin decided to donate \$26, one year's worth of allowance

allotted for charity, to MD Anderson's Annual Fund. "I was touched and impressed," says Eric Breiter, M.D., Colin's father. "It was sweet that he chose a charity associated with his mother's treatment."

Katherine Breiter, M.D., Colin's mother, is a breast cancer survivor and MD Anderson patient. Since her diagnosis, Colin has been looking for a way to give back, not only in her honor but also to help children with cancer.

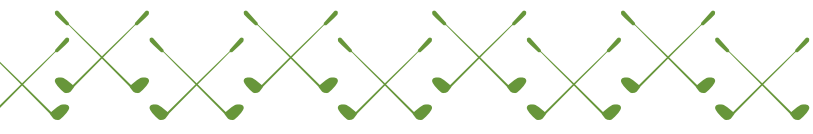
"I wanted to help cure cancer," says Colin.



Colin Breiter and mom, Katherine Breiter, M.D.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF BREITER FAMILY

"I want other kids to know there's a way."  
"Every penny helps," says his dad. "That's what I tell Colin. It's not so important how much you give but that you care enough to give something."



# PUTTING AN END TO CANCER



COMPILED BY ALLISON IGNACIO

The world of professional golf is laden with hazards, from fairway bunkers to sand traps and ponds. MD Anderson is partnering with the PGATOUR in hopes of fighting one of the most dangerous hazards of them all: the sun.

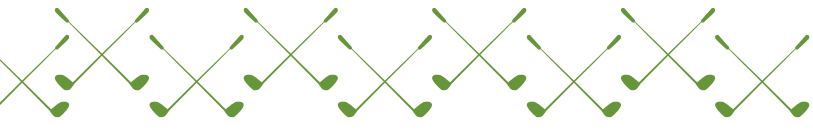


PHOTO BY ADOLFO CHAVEZ III



PHOTO BY ADOLFO CHAVEZ III

As the official cancer center of the PGA TOUR, MD Anderson will raise awareness on golf courses and at tournaments across the country. The institution will share sun safety tips and cancer prevention messages while providing sunscreen stations, shaded areas, skin cancer screenings for professional players and caddies, and more. Over the next three years, the partnership is expected to make an impact on millions of fans, players and families. The graphic below illustrates the effects of the partnership so far.



PHOTO BY ADOLFO CHAVEZ III



### THE PLAYERS CHAMPIONSHIP

MD Anderson's Strike Through Cancer pavilion was a new spectator enhancement that provided a reprieve from the sun for thousands of fans at TPC Sawgrass in Ponte Vedra, Fla. in May.

PHOTO BY TERRY HALSEY



### SHELL HOUSTON OPEN

The partnership was announced in early April at the Shell Houston Open at the Golf Club of Houston in Humble, Texas. A Strike Through Cancer pavilion was set up at the 18th hole, complete with shaded viewing areas and adjoining shaded grandstands. In addition, free sunscreen, SPF 30 lip balm and sunglasses were provided to spectators. Fans and players, including cancer survivor and professional golfer Jarrod Lyle, above, with MD Anderson's Tom Buchholz, M.D., executive vice president and physician-in-chief, also had the opportunity to "strike out" cancer on a 30-foot Strike Through Cancer wall and take interactive iPad quizzes on how to reduce their cancer risk.

PHOTO BY ADOLFO CHAVEZ III



PHOTO BY ADOLFO CHAVEZ III

### INSPIRITY INVITATIONAL

MD Anderson was also out in full force at the Champions Tour's Inspirity Invitational, late April-early May at The Woodlands Country Club.

"Nearly 5 million people receive treatment for skin cancer in the U.S. every year," says Buchholz. "Since skin cancer is the most common malignancy — and is the most preventable — public knowledge is essential to ending this disease."

PHOTO BY TERRY HALSEY



### TOUR CHAMPIONSHIP BY COCA-COLA

MD Anderson and the PGA TOUR head east to Atlanta, Ga. in late September (see Upcoming Events on page 12) for the TOUR Championship by Coca-Cola at East Lake Golf Course. Free sunscreen, shaded grandstands and educational materials will be available to the thousands of fans expected to attend. Spectators will also have the opportunity to show support and share messages of hope at MD Anderson's signature Strike Through Cancer wall.

PHOTO BY TERRY HALSEY

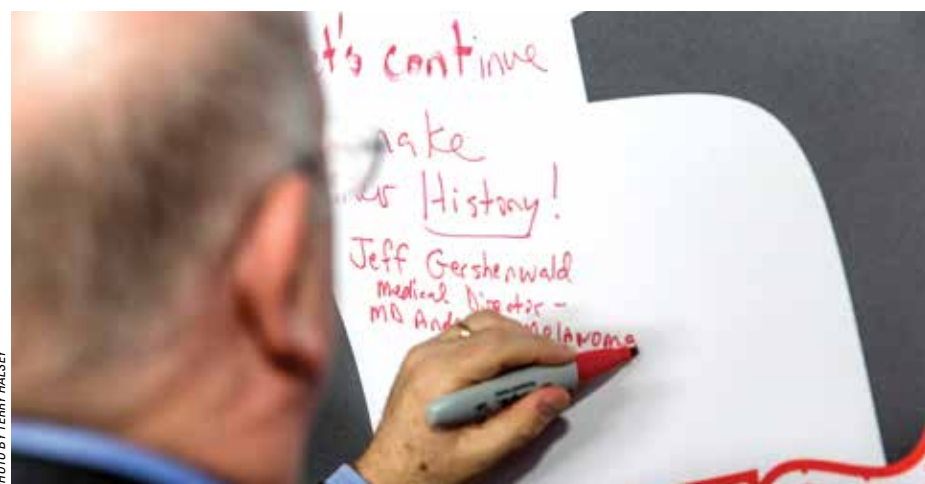


PHOTO BY CASEY PHOTOGRAPHY

### WORLD GOLF HALL OF FAME MEMBER COLIN MONTGOMERIE

has teamed up with MD Anderson in hopes of elevating awareness among his golf colleagues and fans, both nationally and internationally.

"People aren't aware of the simple things that can save lives," says Montgomerie, who was announced as an MD Anderson ambassador in June. "We have to encourage everyone around America and the global golf community to be more sensible and protect ourselves from the sun at all times."

Montgomerie's mother was diagnosed with lung cancer in 1990 and died less than a year later. Since then, Montgomerie and his family have worked to provide cancer survivors and their families with support services throughout the United Kingdom. Now, he'll focus on educating fellow golfers and fans on the importance of prevention.

"By definition, the TOUR schedule follows the sun. We start in Florida in the winter and end up north in mid-summer. We're out in the sun an awful lot more than most," says Montgomerie. "I'm here to help as much as anyone can. We're making good strides within the TOUR, but it will take all of us to try and end cancer and as the MD Anderson slogan says, make the disease history."

“IT WILL TAKE ALL OF US TO TRY AND END CANCER.”

COLIN MONTGOMERIE

PHOTO BY TERRY HALSEY



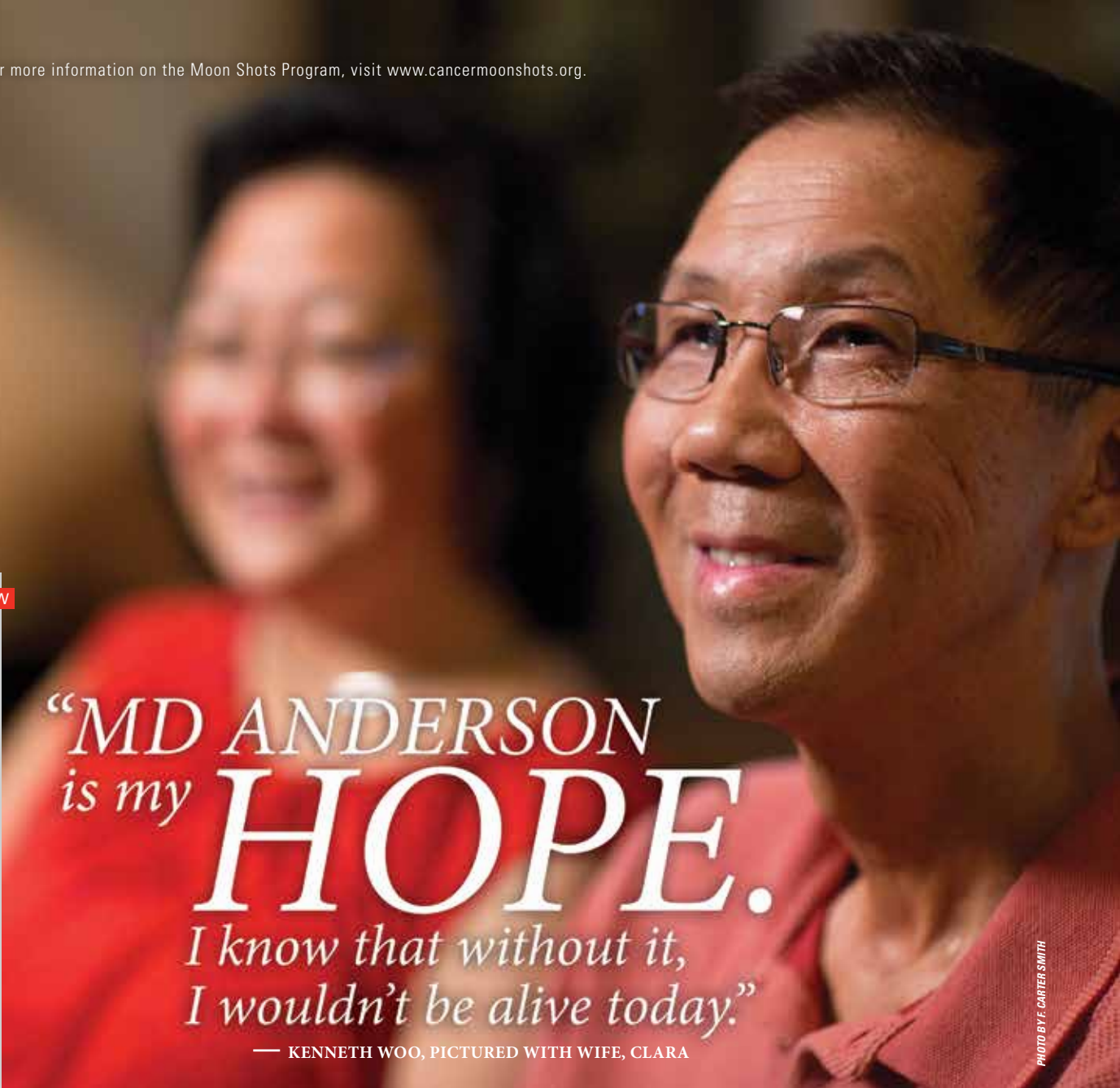
**MOON SHOTS PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

MD Anderson’s Moon Shots Program is an unprecedented, comprehensive assault to significantly reduce deaths from cancer. The program comprises six teams of MD Anderson researchers and clinicians initially focusing on these eight cancers:

- Acute myeloid leukemia/ myelodysplastic syndromes
- Chronic lymphocytic leukemia
- Melanoma
- Lung cancer
- Prostate cancer
- Triple-negative breast and high-grade serous ovarian cancers

Each moon shot team is pursuing innovative projects prioritized for greatest patient impact, from basic and translational research to biomarker-driven clinical trials. Specialized platforms provide infrastructure, systems and strategy. The ultimate goal is to apply knowledge gained from this process to all cancers. Moon shot efforts will help support all other cancer research at MD Anderson, particularly with improved resources and infrastructure. Funding is from private philanthropy, institutional earnings, competitive research grants and commercialization of new discoveries.

**As of June 30, private philanthropic commitments to the program total more than \$286.1 million.**



**My Moon Shot**

**Home team advantage**

**Three-time survivor finds hope in MD Anderson care, support**

BY SARAH WATSON

**MD** Anderson is like home to three-time cancer survivor Kenneth Woo.

“I go back and visit the nurses who cared for me. They became part of my family,” says Woo. In remission for more than 10 years, Woo volunteers with the institution’s myCancerConnection support group, following through on the pledge he and his wife, Clara, made after his second diagnosis to become “a channel of blessings for others for the rest of our lives.”

Woo’s own cancer experience began in 1993, when he was diagnosed with Hodgkin disease. After three rounds of chemotherapy and radiation at MD Anderson, his cancer went into remission. Following that, life went on happily for Woo, Clara and their baby daughter.

About three years later — two weeks before their second daughter’s birth — the couple was shocked to learn the cancer had returned.

“We dived into chemo. I’d exhausted all the radiation my body could stand,” he says.

Once Woo got past that treatment, the household returned to normalcy again. Yet in 2003, at age 45, Woo received yet another cancer diagnosis — this

time acute myeloid leukemia (AML).

He met the criteria for a clinical trial developed from a pediatric leukemia treatment and began aggressive chemo requiring a month-long quarantine. A stem cell transplant was his best shot at long-term survival. Luckily, Woo’s sister, who happened to be visiting from Hong Kong, was a perfect match.

“My doctor hugged me and said, ‘Kenneth, don’t worry. We’ll get through this together.’ That gave me such comfort, that my doctor was part of a team that would walk with me. I had peace of mind and felt that, though it wouldn’t be an easy road, I’d be OK.”

Today Woo is cancer-free. He’s grateful for the research advances that have allowed him more years to enjoy as a father, husband, brother and son.

“MD Anderson is my hope,” he says. “I know that without it, I wouldn’t be alive today.”

When the Moon Shots Program launched in 2012, hearing about the AML Moon Shot was “like winning the lottery” for Woo.

“More research means better treatment,” he says. “I hope I won’t need to use that treatment, but I know this will mean a lot to patients who come along later. It’s truly Making Cancer History.”

*What’s your moon shot? Contact us at [promise@mdanderson.org](mailto:promise@mdanderson.org) and tell us why MD Anderson’s Moon Shots Program is important to you.*



[www.youtube.com/mygivingtomdanderson](http://www.youtube.com/mygivingtomdanderson)



# Don't give up, give out

## Jaxon's F.R.O.G. Foundation helps fund pediatric brain cancer research

BY ALLISON IGNACIO

Lenzie and Cory Davis of San Antonio fell in love with their son from the moment they heard his heartbeat.

"We nicknamed him 'the heart' in utero," says Lenzie. "It's the first thing we loved about Jaxon and what led to his legacy — his heart and his ability to love and give to so many."

Jaxon was 5 when he died after an almost two-year fight with brain cancer, specifically a supratentorial primitive neuroectodermal tumor. In addition to treatments received elsewhere, Jaxon underwent six weeks of brain and spine proton radiation therapy at MD Anderson.

"The whole time Jaxon was sick, his focus was always on the other kids," says Lenzie.

Jaxon filled welcome bags with toys and blankets for children arriving at the institution's Proton Therapy Center and distributed various items to bring smiles to the other children. In his final months, he evolved his efforts to reach out to children in hospice care. Today, his family continues to run these programs through the Jaxon's F.R.O.G. (Fully Rely On God) Foundation.

**NK CELLS ON THE HUNT:** The NOAH Protocol aims to reduce and eliminate several types of pediatric brain cancer by using "natural killer" (NK) cells found within white blood cells. The NK cells are trained to hunt for brain tumors, then inserted directly into the diseased area through a surgical procedure developed by David Sandberg, M.D., associate professor, Neurosurgery, and co-director of the Pediatric Brain Tumor Program at MD Anderson Children's Cancer Hospital.

The foundation raises funds to aid in childhood cancer research and to provide support for pediatric patients. It recently contributed \$14,754 to the NOAH Protocol (see sidebar) at MD Anderson Children's Cancer Hospital. The amount represents each of the 14,754 U.S. children diagnosed with cancer the same year as Jaxon.

"Jaxon's motto was 'don't give up, give out,'" says Lenzie. "I think we all have the ability to give. There's no minimum or maximum age to kindness. We want to encourage others to impact lives, just as much as Jaxon did."

**"Jaxon's motto was 'don't give up, give out.' I think we all have the ability to give. There's no minimum or maximum age to kindness."**

— LENZIE DAVIS



PHOTO BY SNAP HAPPY PORTRAITS

## Survivors Say

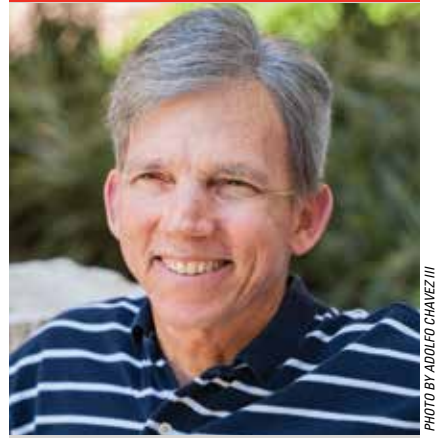


PHOTO BY ADOLFO CHAVEZ III

**PERRY RUPP**, of Roanoke, Texas, was diagnosed with multiple myeloma and underwent a stem cell transplant in 2012. Today, you'll find him hiking and driving his RV cross country, visiting as many national parks as possible along the way. He credits his recovery to the incredible doctors and nurses at MD Anderson.

When my doctor told me I needed to see an oncologist, my first question was, 'What's an oncologist?' I don't use the 'C' word. So when I heard that I needed to meet with the 'C' doctors I was terrified.

I was diagnosed with multiple myeloma. After my doctor prescribed radiation, my brother urged me to seek a second opinion at MD Anderson. 'MD Anderson writes the book,' he said. 'Everyone else just reads it.'

Jatin Shah, M.D., associate professor in Lymphoma/Myeloma, advised against radiation in favor of a stem cell transplant after three rounds of targeted drug therapy. This is why I believe it is so important to get a second opinion. Over the three weeks I was confined to MD Anderson's stem cell transplant unit, I realized that every nurse there is just as skilled and compassionate as the next.

I learned of an award available to nurses who conduct their own research projects, but it didn't provide enough incentive to encourage more nurses to pursue it. That's when I decided to help fund the Inpatient Stem Cell Transplant Nurse Innovation Award. It's my hope, as with so many things, that a monetary incentive will help give these nurses the final push to go even further than the exceptional care they're already providing. Thanks to their impeccable care, I can live life to the fullest. This is one small way that I can give back and give thanks to the nurses who dedicate so much of their lives to helping the patient.

*Promise invites cancer survivors to share their reflections.  
Email [promise@mdanderson.org](mailto:promise@mdanderson.org).*

# Despite Drought, Fans Flock to Prairie

Robert Earl Keen rocks the stage at the 29th annual Polo on the Prairie



An enormous white tent provides the backdrop for "Party" on the Prairie.

BY ALLISON IGNACIO

A year-long drought may have prevented the polo match at the 29th annual Polo on the Prairie near Albany, Texas, but it didn't stop more than 1,000 supporters from raising \$305,175 for MD Anderson.

As Henry and Melinda Musselman, chairs of this year's event dubbed "Party" on the Prairie, put it: "The horses get the year off, but the Musselman family does not."

With little water to irrigate the field and care for the horses necessary for the customary polo match, they put a unique spin on the West Texas tradition.

"So many lives have been touched by the healing powers of MD Anderson," says Henry Musselman. "We were set on once again gathering on the prairie to be thankful for all at the institution who've made a difference."

Country music legend and Houston native Robert Earl Keen took center stage at the Musselman Brothers' Lazy 3 Ranch, performing top hits such as "Feeling Good Again" and "The Road Goes on Forever." Ron DePinho, M.D., president of MD Anderson, congratulated the Musselmans on another successful event, which brought total contributions over almost three decades to more than \$5.3 million.

"Polo on the Prairie plays an enormous role in raising awareness and funds to support our mission to end cancer," says DePinho.

Guests feasted on barbecue by Joe Allen's Pit Bar-B-Que of Abilene and enjoyed a spectacular fireworks show at the evening's end. Proceeds benefit research and patient care initiatives including MD Anderson's Moon Shots Program (see page 8).



PHOTOS BY STEVE BUTMAN

Members of the Musselman family gather for the 29th annual West Texas tradition.



Robert Earl Keen entertains the crowd with an exclusive performance of the country music legend's top hits.



Joe Allen's Pit Bar-B-Que serves up a chuck wagon-style feast.

## PUTTING IT ON THE LINE

Sisterhood bands together in fight against rare forms of cervical cancer

BY ALLISON IGNACIO

MARY DAMSGAARD calls her Sisters her lifeline, her reason to continue her fight against cancer.

"We're a band of sisters who are there for each other, no matter where you are in your life," says Damsgaard. "We've created a safe place to share our deepest concerns and celebrate life's blessings."

After experiencing severe lower back pains, Damsgaard had an MRI and was diagnosed with stage IV small cell cervical cancer (SCCC). She sought a second opinion and treatment at MD Anderson, where her research led her to the SCCC/LCCC (large cell cervical cancer) Sisters. SCCC and LCCC make up a rare subtype of cervical cancer.

"The few resources I could find were through MD Anderson. This is how I found the Sisters,"

says Damsgaard.

In February the SCCC/LCCC Sisters waged a bet with Michael Frumovitz, M.D., associate professor, Gynecologic Oncology, who leads MD Anderson's SCCC/LCCC research team. If they could raise \$20,000 in one month, Frumovitz would have to ride a zip-line on the Las Vegas Strip during the Sisters' annual gathering. With the support of family and friends, the Sisters raised more than \$23,000 in the allotted time, and Frumovitz made good on his promise.

Those funds contributed to a combined donation of \$300,000, which the Sisters presented to Frumovitz and his team this spring. The donation will go to the Small Cell Cervical Cancer Fund at MD Anderson. So far the fund has been used to develop an educational website



Michael Frumovitz, M.D., zip-lines in Las Vegas in honor of the SCCC/LCCC Sisters' fundraising efforts.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SCCC/LCCC SISTERS

and create a worldwide tumor registry to help determine the best treatments for women with these diseases.

Members of the support group are united in their fight against these two extremely rare and aggressive forms of cervical cancer. Of the 11,000 new cases of cervical cancer diagnosed in the U.S. each year, approximately 100 cases will be small cell or large cell.

"We hope the lessons learned through this research can be replicated across many rare cancers," says Damsgaard.

# BETTER TOGETHER

A cancer survivor teams with athletes to help kids fight the disease

BY KELLIE BRAMLET

**A**s an 18-year-old baseball player at The University of North Carolina, Chase Jones experienced a sharp headache unlike any pain he'd known before.

He was soon diagnosed with stage IV pineal region germinoma, a type of tumor that starts in the center of the brain. It had spread to his spine.

There were few treatment options close to home. So, after a series of surgeries and bouts of chemotherapy in North Carolina, Jones came to the MD Anderson Proton Therapy Center. Despite being far from friends and family, he felt right at home.

The rest of the UNC baseball team shaved their heads in support. The gesture had a huge impact on Jones, leading him to start the Vs. Cancer Foundation, an organization that empowers sports teams, from little league to the pros, to raise awareness and money in hopes of ending childhood cancer.

Since 2013, Vs. Cancer has raised more than \$2 million, part of which has benefited research and patient care initiatives at MD Anderson Children's Cancer Hospital.

Through Vs. Cancer, teams are encouraged to host creative fundraising events. Examples include head-shaving campaigns, 100-inning games, relay races or kickball games, or just adding a yellow ribbon to jerseys. Proceeds from these events allow teams to make a donation.

Today Jones is 27, cancer-free and overjoyed at his foundation's ability to connect athletes with children who are fighting cancer.

"I don't know why I survived cancer. I don't



**"I'll be doing this as long as there are kids battling cancer."**

— CHASE JONES

know why I defied the odds. But because of that, I'll be doing this as long as there are kids battling cancer," he says.

*This story originally appeared in Cancerwise, MD Anderson's blog for patients, survivors and caregivers (www.cancerwise.org).*

## MD ANDERSON VISITS THE BLUFF CITY

Memphis dinner event brings in \$1.2 million for cancer research

BY MIRIAM SPRADLING



Memphis Mayor A C Wharton presents Drs. Ron DePinho and Fredrick Hagemeister with symbolic keys to the city.

Longtime MD Anderson supporters Kay and Charlie McVean invited about 150 friends to their home in May to learn about MD Anderson's cutting-edge research, treatment and prevention initiatives. Presenting physicians included Ron DePinho, M.D., president of MD Anderson, and Fredrick Hagemeister, M.D., professor in Lymphoma/Myeloma and a care provider for Kay and several others in attendance. Both thanked the McVeans for generously establishing MD Anderson's Lymphoma Tissue Bank. Charlie surprised attendees

with a \$500,000 gift-matching challenge, which generated \$1.2 million of support and a great deal of philanthropic interest among the community.



[www.youtube.com/mygivingtomdanderson](http://www.youtube.com/mygivingtomdanderson)



**CORKY HILLIARD**, of Austin, is the founder of Hilliard Resources, an organizational strategies and consulting company. Active in her community, Hilliard passionately defends the rights of the homeless.

"When I was diagnosed with tongue cancer in 2009, I naively got one opinion. I had surgery in Austin to remove the lesion and the side of my tongue.

When I was declared cancer-free in April 2012, they said I'd never get the same cancer in the same place again. One month later, the cancer had returned in the exact same spot. They told me the surgery and reconstruction would cause a reduced speech function and that "probably" my friends and family would be able to understand me after some time.

I'm single with no children, but I do have a ton of friends and 23 first cousins. I have to be able to communicate for my job and my life. The thought of losing my speech function shattered my independence and self-confidence. I knew it was critical to get to MD Anderson.

Two weeks later, I met eight specialists there including my surgeon, Dr. Michael Kupferman, who said, 'We'll take good care of you and I'm sure your speech will be fine.' I immediately felt an overwhelming sense of safety and comfort at MD Anderson. Knowing I had a team of experts there behind me was so reassuring.

In August, Dr. Kupferman and team removed the tumor and rebuilt the floor of my mouth using a skin graft from my thigh. I feared I'd have a major speech impediment and lose my ability to swallow and taste. That wasn't the case. I just needed speech therapy for fine-tuning. I resumed my professional work 90 days post-surgery and haven't looked back.

That December, I decided to support Dr. Kupferman's research. I understand the importance of unrestricted funds for researchers. Those funds are like manna from heaven. It was a natural thing for me to give back to someone who saved my speech and my life.

I got to MD Anderson as fast as I could, and I continue to return for regular check-ins. I've fared far better than I thought I would, thanks to the skilled and compassionate care at MD Anderson."

*Do you promise? Tell us why you're committed to Making Cancer History® by sending an email to [promise@mdanderson.org](mailto:promise@mdanderson.org).*

# PROMISE

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#endcancer

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Comments? Suggestions?  
We welcome your perspective.  
*Email us your thoughts: [promise@mdanderson.org](mailto:promise@mdanderson.org).*

	9	Donor Appreciation Event <b>Houston</b>
SEP.	17	Julie and Ben Rogers Award for Excellence <b>Houston</b>
	24-27	PGA TOUR Championship by Coca-Cola <b>Atlanta</b>
	25	Making Cancer History® Seminar <b>Atlanta</b>
OCT.	6	Donor Appreciation Dinner <b>Oklahoma City</b>
	7	Donor Appreciation Lunch <b>Tulsa</b>
	13	A Conversation With a Living Legend® honoring Emmitt Smith <b>San Antonio</b>
	28-29	MD Anderson Cancer Center Board of Visitors Annual Meeting <b>Houston</b>
NOV.	4	A Conversation With a Living Legend® honoring Bob McNair <b>Houston</b>
DEC.	1	A Conversation With a Living Legend® honoring Condoleezza Rice <b>Dallas</b>

### ACCESS ANSWERS

To become a patient: Call 877-632-6789 or  
fill out the self-referral form at [www.mdanderson.org](http://www.mdanderson.org).

For more information, please visit [www.mdanderson.org/gifts](http://www.mdanderson.org/gifts) or call 800-525-5841. • Download Promise at [www.mdanderson.org/Promise](http://www.mdanderson.org/Promise).

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