EVERY GIFT MATTERS
Annual Fund supports programs in need throughout MD Anderson

AMONG FRIENDS
Gloria Hicks: Helping others is her hobby

HOPE grows
Cultivating options for high-grade serous ovarian cancer patients
ONE is a physician who pioneered cancer drug combinations to treat cancer. Another is a basic scientist who found a new way to treat cancer with the immune system. Both have been elected fellows of the American Association for Cancer Research Academy.

**AACR ACADEMY WELCOMES NEW FELLOWS**

By Scott Merville

Emil J Freireich, M.D.

Emil Freireich holds the Ruth Harriet Ainsworth Chair in Developmental Therapeutics and is a distinguished teaching professor, director of the Adult Leukemia Research Program and director of the Special Medical Education Programs.

At the National Cancer Institute in the late 1950s, Freireich’s revolutionary approach to treating childhood leukemia reversed previous bleak survival prospects and led to today’s 85% survival rate. He was the first to separate platelets from donated blood, allowing direct treatment of young patients who often bled to death due to low platelet counts. In the 1960s, Freireich moved to MD Anderson, where he extended combination treatment to adult patients.

“Dr. Allison’s passion for discovery illuminated the biology of T cells in the finest tradition of basic science research, leading to an entirely new approach to treating cancer,” says Ethan Dmitrovsky, M.D., MD Anderson provost and executive vice president. “Dr. Freireich’s dedication inspired bold innovations in clinical care that have saved the lives of countless men, women and children. We’re proud that they’ve been recognized with election to the AACR Academy.”

Jim Allison, Ph.D.

Jim Allison is chair of Immunology, executive director of the Moon Shots Program immunotherapy platform and deputy director of the David H. Koch Center for Applied Research of Genitourinary Cancers. He holds the Vivian L. Smith Distinguished Chair in Immunology.

Allison’s basic science discoveries led to the development of the immune checkpoint blockade treatment strategy. Allison showed that the CTLA-4 molecule on T cells turns off immune response. He developed an antibody that unleashes T cell attack on cancer by blocking this immune checkpoint. The finding led to the first drug to extend the survival of stage 4 melanoma patients and is now applied to all cancers.

“Dr. Allison’s passion for discovery illuminated the biology of T cells in the finest tradition of basic science research, leading to an entirely new approach to treating cancer,” says Ethan Dmitrovsky, M.D., MD Anderson provost and executive vice president. “Dr. Freireich’s dedication inspired bold innovations in clinical care that have saved the lives of countless men, women and children. We’re proud that they’ve been recognized with election to the AACR Academy.”

**MARGARET L. KRIILGE LEGEND AWARD**

Laurie Glimcher, M.D., the Stephen and Suzanne Weiss Dean of Weill Cornell Medical College and provost for medical affairs of Cornell University and former president of the American Association of Immunologists, is the latest recipient of the Margaret L. Kripke Legend Award.

Glimcher founded the Primary Caregivers Technical Assistance Programs at the National Institutes of Health to support postdoctoral women scientists with child care responsibilities through additional funds for laboratory assistance. Under her leadership, Weill Cornell opened an on-site child care center last year.

“I’ve dedicated my career to supporting and recognizing women physicians and scientists so they can not only succeed, but go further than they ever thought they could,” says Glimcher.

Established in 2008, the Kripke Award recognizes a person who has made significant contributions in advancing and promoting women in cancer medicine and cancer science. It honors Professor Emerita Margaret L. Kripke, Ph.D., for her advocacy for and promotion of women in academic medicine and science. Kripke, a distinguished scientist, achieved many firsts for women at MD Anderson, culminating in her promotion to executive vice president and chief academic officer. She recently was appointed chief scientific officer of the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas.

The award is supported by The Vivian L. Smith Foundation, the estate of Elizabeth P. Scott and Polo on the Prairie, a U.S. Polo Association-sanctioned fundraiser in Albany, Texas.

**Lifetime achievement**

Kantarjian hailed for leukemia research, patient care

By Scott Merville

Hagop Kantarjian, M.D., professor and chair of Leukemia, has received a lifetime achievement award for his dedication to research and clinical practice from Castle Connolly Medical Ltd. in New York. Kantarjian leads the nation’s largest leukemia practice, known for participation and leadership in developing treatments through research and clinical trials.

“Dr. Kantarjian has helped vastly improve survival and quality of life for leukemia patients everywhere,” says Thomas Buchholz, M.D., executive vice president and physician-in-chief.

Kantarjian has developed a number of treatments, including chemotherapy combinations and the single agent clofarabine for acute lymphocytic leukemia (ALL); the hypomethylating agent decitabine, approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for myelodysplastic syndromes in 2006; liposomal vincristine, FDA-approved in 2012 for ALL; and ruxolitinib, approved for myelofibrosis in 2011.

He also championed multiple targeted therapies for chronic myeloid leukemia, including imatinib, dasatinib, nilotinib, ponatinib, bosutinib and omacetaxine, all of which received FDA approvals between 2001 and 2012. He’s currently developing monoclonal antibodies in adult ALL.

On the MD Anderson faculty since 1983, Kantarjian holds the Keolie Margaret Kana Research Chair and is associate vice president of Global Academic Programs. He was recently appointed as the Baker Institute Scholar in Health Policy.
This spring we celebrated a major milestone: the 25th anniversary of The Anderson Assembly. Established in 1989 to recognize 23 exemplary donors distinguished by their compassion, commitment and lifetime contributions of $1 million or more to MD Anderson, The Anderson Assembly now comprises some 255 people, families, foundations, organizations and corporations across the nation and internationally. Their pivotal involvement and major financial contributions have ensured MD Anderson’s ongoing growth and progress at critical junctures throughout the institution’s history.

On behalf of our faculty, staff, volunteers and patients, MD Anderson is honored to have the commitment of this elite group, whose impact over the past 25 years has been immeasurable. We’re enormously grateful for each member’s incredible commitment to our mission of Making Cancer History®.

I hope you’ll enjoy reading about The Anderson Assembly and our 25th anniversary celebration in a related story on page 10.

The results of such generosity are reflected in the world-class research and patient care programs that maintain MD Anderson’s reputation as the premier cancer care center in the U.S. Every day, our faculty, staff and volunteers see and feel the impact firsthand in the eyes and hearts of patients, families and caregivers. That’s a priceless return on investment.

Our pledge to be responsible stewards on behalf of all who contribute their time and financial resources to MD Anderson is unwavering. Thank you for joining us in our journey as, together, we make a difference in the lives of cancer patients and their families everywhere and for generations to come.
Survivors Say

Debbie Zelman

Debbie Zelman, of Davie, Fla., is the president and founder of Debbie’s Dream Foundation: Curing Stomach Cancer (www.debbiesdream.org).

“If Gloria Hicks is in the room, you’ll probably join her unofficial fan club by the end of the experience. The petite grandmother of three packs a punch of enthusiasm that radiates through the MD Anderson Cancer Center Board of Visitors, which she joined in 2003.

“I don’t have many millions of dollars, but I’m very high energy,” she says. “I like to put events together, and I like to get the word out about MD Anderson.”

Last year, the Corpus Christi native gathered 5,000 middle school students to watch an IceRays North American Hockey League game and hear a smoking prevention message from the institution’s cancer experts. This year, she hosted a women’s health seminar called Why “XX” Matters. The event brought doctors from the Laura W. Bush Institute for Women’s Health at Texas Tech University, where she’s on the national advisory board, to present alongside MD Anderson physicians.

Hicks and her husband, Ed, have owned a car dealership in Corpus Christi since 1972, and both continue to work there full time. “My dad had prostate cancer 50 years ago,” she says. “He went through clinical trials at MD Anderson, and they gave him 13 extra years. MD Anderson’s been pretty special to me since then.”

Hicks supports the institution’s mission as a volunteer, spokesperson and donor, something she’s done since 1980.

“IT’s such a great institution,” she says. “I have MD Anderson in my will because we’re going to see more and more cancer, and I want to save people’s lives.”

Video: www.youtube.com/mygivingtomdanderson

PHILANTHROPY IN FOCUS

Programs Hicks has supported over the past 34 years include:

- The Rolanette and Berdon Lawrence Bone Disease Program of Texas
- The Annual Fund
- George and Barbara Bush Endowment for Innovative Cancer Research
- UT System Capital Improvement Program
- South Campus Research Initiative: Center for Advanced Biomedical Imaging Research
- Chaplaincy Community Programs Fund

- Dallas A Conversation With a Living Legend®
- Triumph Over Kid Cancer Foundation
- Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan Institute for Personalized Cancer Therapy
- Morgan Welch Inflammatory Breast Cancer Research Program and Clinic
- San Antonio A Conversation With a Living Legend®
- Blanton-Davis Ovarian Cancer Research Program
Since her diagnosis in 2010, Diana Chow has been concerned about the lack of funds for ovarian cancer research. She had a cause to champion when she heard that MD Anderson had selected high-grade serous ovarian cancer as one of the moon shots.

My solution is raising awareness of my type of cancer and of the need for philanthropic dollars to support much-needed research. Research is important. It gives me options. I put my life on hold the year after my husband passed away. But I realized I have to keep living. I have faith in MD Anderson — it gives me the hope and the strength to keep going.

Video: www.youtube.com/mygivingtomdanderson

What's your moon shot? Contact us at promise@mdanderson.org and tell us why MD Anderson's Moon Shots Program is important to you.
Annual Fund puts donations to work where they’re needed most
By Dawn Dorsey

Every gift counts. That’s a fact proven almost 67,000 times a year when people around the world and across the country help eradicate cancer by giving to MD Anderson’s Annual Fund. Maybe they can’t give millions, but together these generous donors make a huge impact. The Annual Fund, supported mainly by a direct mail program that raised more than $6.5 million last fiscal year, is earmarked for unrestricted funds. This means the institution can use the money where it’s needed most for initiatives that might otherwise go unfunded.

The MD Anderson Cancer Foundation Administrative Board channels applications to receive Annual Fund assistance. The board comprises internal leaders who strive to find the perfect place for these gifts, balancing every aspect of the institution’s mission: patient care, research, prevention and education.

Pioneering research
Innovative research claims the biggest piece of the funding pie. Grants up to $50,000 provide seed money to help early-stage research programs gather the preliminary data needed to compete successfully for federal and state grants. These groundbreaking projects, led by some of MD Anderson’s best and brightest junior and mid-career physicians and scientists, are vital for...
Sowing Success
Seed money jump-starts novel research

Using internal seed grants made possible partially by the Annual Fund, Sattva Neelapu, M.D., has built $2 million in competitive peer-reviewed external grants and publications in leading scientific journals.

His work focuses on lymphoma, a group of blood cancers that affect 750,000 people in the United States. They’re often chronic conditions that require years of treatment, with significant side effects.

“My goal is to harness the power of the immune system and develop a cure,” says Neelapu, an associate professor in Lymphoma/Myeloma. “I want to develop immunotherapies that are highly effective with minimal or no toxicity.”

Unrestricted funds from MD Anderson made his first grant possible. This encouragement gave him the confidence to compete for peer-reviewed outside funding nationally.

“I don’t think I would have been as successful at securing external funding without the seed funding,” he says. “Each grant has helped me generate preliminary data to make my proposals more competitive.”

Discovering new ways to prevent, diagnose and treat cancer. Thanks to internal funding, talented trailblazers can pursue exciting new paths.

“Unrestricted funds give us flexibility and are a vital piece of our research picture,” says Ethan Dmitrovsky, M.D., provost and executive vice president, who chairs the board. “They quickly provide essential resources to projects that have great promise but haven’t yet compiled the preliminary data now needed to successfully compete for outside grants.”

Making every gift count

In addition, the Annual Fund provides resources to a number of education and patient care initiatives. It’s helped make possible many patient care programs, including studies on stress and quality of life in cancer patients, an on-campus police escort program for patients and families and coffee service for inpatient hospital units.

“When people give to MD Anderson, it’s a true investment on their part and a significant sharing of trust,” says Patrick Mulvey, vice president for Development. “Everyone here has a deep appreciation for the thousands of people working every day toward Making Cancer History.”

To contribute to the Annual Fund, visit www.mdanderson.org/gifts or use the attached donation envelope. Thank you for making a difference in the lives of cancer patients everywhere.

13,000 donors have given for five years or more
379 donors have given for 20 years or more

* Fiscal Year 2013 (Sept. 1, 2012-Aug. 31, 2013)
Fashion is glamorous; sarcoma is not.

It’s a tagline the Amschwand Sarcoma Cancer Foundation uses when referencing its annual fashion show in Houston: Catwalk for a Cure. Designed to raise awareness and funds, the signature event aims to conquer sarcoma, one of the deadliest of cancers.

“Because it’s rare, sarcoma receives limited research funding,” says foundation president Melissa Amschwand Bellinger, who lost her husband to sarcoma in 2001. “We’re excited that our recent $200,000 donation will help establish a comprehensive sarcoma database and tissue bank at the institution that, once fine-tuned, can be replicated at other centers. We’re proud that the institution is creating the first of its kind. Unlike fashion shows, there’s nothing glamorous about a database and tissue bank, but it’s exciting as it provides us with that essential foundation we need to make progress.”

The generous gift will contribute significantly to sarcoma research and patient care, says Patrick Hwu, M.D., chair of Sarcoma Medical Oncology. “We see more adult and pediatric sarcoma patients in a day than most cancer centers see all year, and we have more than 2,500 tumor tissue samples,” says Hwu. “The knowledge we’re gaining will offer new insights into sarcoma and will lead to better treatment options for sarcoma patients.”

Tom Amschwand was diagnosed with sarcoma in 1999, on the couple’s second wedding anniversary. He lost his mother to sarcoma in 1995. “When we looked to get behind a national sarcoma group, we realized there wasn’t one,” says Melissa. “There was no one organization funding sarcoma research, creating awareness and offering support for patients and families. Tom’s vision was to change that.”

For a decade, the foundation’s Catwalk for a Cure has been its primary fundraiser, bringing in more than $2 million of support. Melissa says the event attracts attendees through fashion, but they leave inspired by the foundation’s message.

Learn more about the foundation at www.sarcomacancer.org.

Across the spectrum
Foundation lends its support to young and old

By Miriam Smith

James Archer had his way; he’d spend most of his time at his ranch in Sonora, Texas, population 2,893.

In March, the rancher, businessman and philanthropist paid a third visit to his other favorite place in the Lone Star State, MD Anderson Children’s Cancer Hospital. “Visiting MD Anderson and touring the floors has been really touching,” he says.

Archer stopped by to see how his recent $4 million gift is improving the quality of care for childhood cancer patients. He met with some of the researchers and staff who benefit from his funding. Lois, Archer’s wife of 18 years, was in the couple’s hometown of San Angelo welcoming the birth of their 10th grandchild.

“Maybe it’s after I’m gone that one of these grandkids may encounter cancer,” says Archer. “Maybe by then we’ll have done a small part to help MD Anderson cure childhood cancer or at least extend lives.”

Half of the Archers’ gift supports various areas of the children’s hospital, including ON to Life, which optimizes nutrition and establishes healthy eating habits, and the Pediatric Education and Creative Arts Program (see related story, page 7).

The other half of the gift goes to the Neurodegeneration Consortium, a collaboration of MD Anderson, Baylor College of Medicine and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to advance the study and treatment of Alzheimer’s disease, Parkinson’s disease and chemotherapy-induced neuropathy.

The Archers founded the James B. & Lois R. Archer Charitable Foundation in late 2011. “We wanted to make a difference in saving people’s lives,” Archer explains. “Since we made that our focus, my life has changed. It was never about me, but now it’s really about helping others.”
Predicting pancreatic tumor response
Study shows CT scans have secondary benefit

By Will Fitzgerald

Computed tomography (CT) scans to guide pancreatic cancer treatment may provide an important secondary benefit. According to new MD Anderson research, the scans also reflect how well chemotherapy will penetrate the tumor.

The research, published in the Journal of Clinical Investigation, is the first human study to address the issue of chemotherapy delivery to pancreatic tumors, a problem previously shown in animal studies.

“We found that the distribution of intravenous dye used in CT scans is a surrogate for chemotherapy delivery in the tumor,” says Jason Fleming, M.D., a professor in Surgical Oncology, medical director of Perioperative Services and corresponding author of the study. “Our results indicate that combining data from routine CT scans and using a mathematical formula developed by our team can predict response, guide patient treatment and improve drug delivery.”

This research was primarily supported through grants from the Lustgarten Foundation, the Methodist Hospital Research Institute, including the Ernest Cockrell Jr. Distinguished Endowed Chair, and the National Institutes of Health Physical Sciences Oncology Centers.

Paying it forward
Kindness of strangers inspires the Haasch family’s generosity

By Miriam Smith

World War II survivor, hiking enthusiast, and now, a man who’s defeated cancer, 74-year-old Werner Haasch, of Palm Harbor, Fla., has a zest for life unmatched by many his age.

When Haasch was 6, Polish soldiers forced his family out of their home in Germany. With nowhere to turn, Haasch’s mother wrote to distant relatives in Wisconsin for help. Unbeknownst to the Haasches, those relatives had died. The post office forwarded the letter to another family who sent the Haasches care packages for the next five years.

“They came from heaven,” says Haasch. “It was complete, blind generosity,” says Haasch’s daughter, Fran, of The Fran Haasch Foundation, of Palm Harbor.

In late 2013, Haasch was diagnosed with a rare head and neck cancer, and his doctor suggested radiation and partial removal of his tongue. Fran’s priority was for her dad to maintain a good quality of life, so she researched other options.

She learned that Steven Frank, M.D., medical director of MD Anderson’s Proton Therapy Center, is a pioneer of intensity modulated proton therapy (IMPT), which modulated proton therapy (IMPT), which

attacks cancer cells yet minimizes damage to surrounding tissues and organs. Even before she and her father had met the doctor, Fran was so impressed with Frank’s work that she donated $100,000 to his research.

Haasch completed his treatment in December and is thrilled to return to his active lifestyle. The family plans to visit Greenland this year.

“It’s absolutely necessary that I stay alive to spend time with my grandchildren and travel the world with them,” Haasch says. “Dr. Frank gave me that opportunity. I owe him my life.”

Forcing cancer to self-cannibalize
Preclinical study shows promise

By Scott Merville

Under stress from chemotherapy or radiation, some cancer cells avoid death by consuming a bit of themselves, allowing them to essentially sleep through treatment and later awaken as a tougher, more resistant disease. Autophagy, or self-eating, is a natural cellular defense. For cancer cells, it’s a way to survive treatment. Autophagy puts the cell in an inactive, quiet state called quiescence, allowing it to recover.

Interfering with the cancer-promoting protein prolactin and its receptor can turn this mechanism into a lethal, runaway form of self-cannibalization, say MD Anderson researchers in the journal Cell Reports.

“Our findings provide a clinical rationale for using prolonged autophagy as an alternative strategy for treating cancers,” says Yunfei Wen, Ph.D., first author of this study and an instructor in Gynecologic Oncology.

Research support came from the National Cancer Institute of the National Institutes of Health, the U.S. Department of Defense, the Chapman Foundation, the Meyer and Ida Gordon Foundation and the Blanton-Davis Ovarian Cancer Research Program.
DIRTY JOB

PHILANTHROPY IN ACTION

it's a

Turning heads and raising funds

By Victor Scott • Photos courtesy of WCA

“You know, it’s not every day you see a pink garbage truck rolling down the street,” says Nancy Bryant, vice president for Information and Systems at WCA. “Being in the waste industry and ‘going pink’ provides a unique opportunity to catch people’s attention.”

WCA, a solid waste company founded in 2000 that employs approximately 1,100 people in 12 states, has raised more than $20,000 to support breast cancer research at MD Anderson. WCA takes pride in offering outstanding customer service and giving back to the communities it serves. Creating awareness of and support for MD Anderson’s breast cancer research strengthens WCA’s team culture philosophy and creates a way to give back in a truly meaningful way, says Bryant.

“In 2012, the WCA team decided it was time to ‘give back in a big way’ to the communities that support us,” says Christy Williams, executive assistant. “The WCA team worked hard to find the most impactful cause we could get behind as a company.”

The decision to support MD Anderson was easy, says marketing communications specialist Chris Maltba, “knowing how so many people are touched by cancer, especially breast cancer.”

To raise awareness, WCA took “going pink” to a new level by painting a variety of its garbage trucks, roll-off containers and commercial dumpsters. To raise funds, the company hosted a golf tournament on a course built, ironically, on a reclaimed landfill. It also launched Pink Shirt Friday, a popular program for employees.

“Pink Shirt Friday is a fun way for our employees to support MD Anderson,” says Williams. “We donate $4 for each person who agrees to wear a pink shirt on the last Friday of each month and $1 each time they wear it.”

“We couldn’t be more proud of the WCA team and the momentum they’ve generated,” says Bryant. “We feel when it comes to raising funds for MD Anderson, the sky’s the limit.”

Video:
www.youtube.com/mygivingtomdanderson

Above: Eye-catching pink garbage trucks bring attention to WCA’s commitment to supporting MD Anderson breast cancer research. To generate momentum, employees go pink on the last Friday of each month.

The Anderson Assembly celebrates 25 years

By Victor Scott

How do you thank a friend? For those who’ve committed $1 million or more to MD Anderson, it’s an invitation to The Anderson Assembly. The distinguished group of MD Anderson’s most philanthropic friends marks its 25th anniversary this year. Since 1989, the assembly has grown from 23 members, mostly Texas residents, whose donations totaled more than $63 million, to 255 members in 24 states and eight countries and total donations of more than $1 billion.

On April 23, MD Anderson supporters and staff celebrated the milestone at the Four Seasons hotel in Houston. Harry Longwell, chair of the MD Anderson Cancer Center Board of Visitors, served as master of ceremonies. Also on hand were winners of the inaugural R. Lee Clark Fellows award. The Clark Fellows program, named in honor of MD Anderson’s first president, highlights junior faculty members whose early excellence indicates their potential to become future cancer leaders. Clark’s granddaughter, Melina Fiveash, was an honored guest. John R. Seffrin, Ph.D., chief executive officer of the American Cancer Society, delivered the evening’s keynote address on the importance of philanthropy in preventing and putting an end to cancer.

The Anderson Assembly takes its name from the MD Anderson Foundation. Established in 1936 by Houston businessman Monroe Dunaway Anderson, the charitable foundation eventually created the Texas Medical Center and MD Anderson.
Laurel Davis stays busy. Basketball, dance, drama, piano, soccer, softball and swimming occupy most of her time throughout the year. Recently, the 9-year-old from Houston added cancer fighting to that list.

“Last year in school we made pillows for ladies at MD Anderson with breast cancer,” says Laurel. “Since then, I’ve been thinking about what I could do to help our family and friends with breast cancer. I’ve always wanted to have a dance camp at my house for little girls and thought that would be a great way to raise money for breast cancer research.”

Laurel set the date for Dancer for Cancer dance camp. She created a flyer and designed T-shirts. She recruited friends to help coach and selected girls age 7 and younger as students.

“For weeks the coaches practiced their dance on the playground at school and at our house,” says Renee Davis, Laurel’s mother. “I mean, these girls were so committed.”

Word soon spread and 20 students arrived at the Dancer for Cancer dance camp on Laurel’s front lawn. The two-hour event included pink-colored food and drinks, as well as full makeup for each girl.

“We felt so cool because the little girls were so excited to be hanging out with the ‘big girls,’” says Laurel.

The camp ended with a performance for the coaches and students’ parents.

“Our whole front yard was covered with little girls in pink,” says Renee. “The parents thought it was just adorable.”

Laurel says she’s very proud about the success of her first dance camp, which raised $1,070.

“So many of our loved ones have battled cancer with the support of MD Anderson,” says Renee. “Laurel’s seen firsthand what that’s like through the care my mother’s receiving there as she endures her third type of cancer. I like to think that Laurel’s efforts are a unique way to recognize and thank the incredible people who work there for all they’ve given us.”

—Renee Davis

Kimmie Rhodes, of Austin, is a singer and writer whose songs have been recorded by Willie Nelson, Emmylou Harris, Peter Frampton and many others. She was married to producer-writer-musician Joe Gracey for 28 years before he succumbed to metastatic esophageal cancer in 2011. Diagnosed with oral cancer in 1977, Gracey was cancer-free for 30 years following surgeries at MD Anderson, though he lost his ability to speak and sing. Here Rhodes reflects on her late husband and the hope they both found at MD Anderson.

Gracey didn’t waste one minute getting to MD Anderson (when his dentist suspected a recurrence). It was through their efforts that he felt his life had been saved.

It was my first experience there. I remember telling Gracey after we walked in that day that if I had to put the way I felt into one word, it would be ‘hope.’ There was so much compassion and understanding for my husband. There’s an overall, collective consciousness of hope at MD Anderson. From the custodians to the top surgeons, it trickles up and down. It’s a world all of its own.

I was immersed in that world for three and a half years. After he died, it was hard to break away. I needed to erase those memories. I had an extraordinary experience when I returned to MD Anderson with a friend, who also had oral cancer. We walked through the door and felt that same hope. She had surgery, and she didn’t lose her voice. I went back to Austin with a success story, and now I have new memories to replace the old ones at MD Anderson. It’s comforting to know that this mechanism of hope is in Houston. People can get their lives back, and in the best way.

Do you promise? Tell us why you’re committed to Making Cancer History® by sending an email to Promise@mdanderson.org.

Laurel Davis, inspired by her grandmother, Laurel Lee Domingue, above, poses (far right, standing) with friends at her recent Dancer for Cancer dance camp that raised more than $1,000 for breast cancer research.