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JANUARY
22: Palm Beach, Florida
Making Cancer History® Seminar
30: Houston
Donor Appreciation Reception

FEBRUARY
21: Houston
2017 Boot Walk to End Cancer® VIP Party

MARCH
17: Houston
Bunny Hops and Photo Opps

APRIL
10: Midland
Making Cancer History® Seminar
26-27: Houston
Advance Team Reception and Meeting

MAY
19: Albany, Texas
Polo on the Prairie

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PROMISE
The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center
Development Office - Unit 705
P.O. Box 301439
Houston, TX 77230-1439
713-792-3450
800-525-5841
mdanderson.org/gifts
promise@mdanderson.org
youtube.com/MDAnderson

Peter Pisters, M.D.
President

Todd Pullin
Senior Vice President for Institutional Advancement

Patrick Mulvey
Vice President for Development

Brette Peyton
Executive Director, Public Relations

Sarah Watson
Editor, Program Director
Development Communications

Allison Schaffer
Assistant Editor
Senior Communications Specialist

Leslie Friedman
Senior Communications Specialist

Marily Scaria
Senior Communications Designer

Contributing Writers
Clayton Boldt, Ph.D.
Katrina Burton
Jesse Purdy
Ashley Skrljac

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Email us your thoughts: promise@mdanderson.org.
A NEW ERA BEGINS

Pisters vows to ‘listen and learn’ as he leads MD Anderson in fight against cancer

BY SARAH WATSON

Peter Pisters, M.D., has returned to MD Anderson as its fifth full-time president. Unanimously selected by the UT System Board of Regents in September, Pisters began his official duties on Dec. 1.

“I am beyond thrilled to return to MD Anderson as its new president. It’s an honor of a lifetime,” says Pisters, who held MD Anderson faculty and leadership roles for more than 20 years before becoming president and chief executive officer of the University Health Network (UHN), affiliated with the University of Toronto, in January 2015.

During his first few months as president, Pisters has embarked on a listening and learning tour across the institution to include the mission areas of patient care, research, education and prevention and to engage all stakeholders.

“I’m confident we’ll continue building on our successes while also forging a new path forward in the fight to end cancer,” he says.

Pisters oversaw more than 14,000 employees and a $400 million research enterprise at UHN. Previously, he was vice president for MD Anderson’s regional care system, comprising multiple Houston-area locations.

Following a surgery instructor position at Memorial Sloan Kettering, Pisters initially joined MD Anderson’s faculty in 1994 as assistant professor of Surgery, rising to full professor with tenure in 2004. Specializing in sarcoma and gastrointestinal cancer, he has served as clinical consultant for the Center for Global Oncology (now MD Anderson Cancer Network®), section chief for Sarcoma Surgery and assistant medical director of the Sarcoma Center. He remains a board-certified surgeon.

He also holds a master’s degree in health care management from Harvard University.

“Dr. Pisters has devoted most of his professional life to the care of patients at MD Anderson, and he gained invaluable experience in Toronto leading one of the most respected academic health centers in North America,” says Ray Greenberg, M.D. Ph.D., executive vice chancellor for health affairs, UT System. “This combination of his clinical expertise, institutional knowledge and servant leadership makes Dr. Pisters the ideal person to take MD Anderson to the next level.”
EXHIBITS EMPHASIZE GENEROSITY, COMMITMENT OF DONORS

Board of Visitors, Bush family and others celebrated in new installations

BY ALLISON SCHAFFER

Two exhibits debuted in late 2017 honoring decades-long dedication of cancer fighters who have supported MD Anderson’s mission to end cancer.

A special Bush Library exhibit opened in October at the George H.W. Bush Presidential Center in College Station, Texas, during its 20th anniversary celebrations. The exhibit features photographs, text and video highlighting the Bush family’s longstanding relationship with MD Anderson.

After George H.W. and Barbara Bush lost their 3-year-old daughter, Robin, to leukemia in 1953, they set out to inspire others to share in their quest for more effective cancer therapies. Lending their names, influence and philanthropic support over the years, the Bushes helped raise nearly $90 million to support cutting-edge research at MD Anderson. Former president Bush served as chair of the MD Anderson Cancer Center Board of Visitors (BOV) from 2001 to 2003. Both he and Mrs. Bush are Life Members of the BOV.

MD Anderson’s Faces of Philanthropy exhibit was the setting for a Nov. 7 reception preceding the board’s annual business meeting. The exhibit celebrates the countless individuals — employees, volunteers, survivors and community members — who give of their time, talent and financial resources to support MD Anderson.

Faces of Philanthropy boasts nearly 200 images across more than 2,100 square feet on Floor 2 of MD Anderson’s Main Building, in the Pavilion. Open to the public 24 hours a day, seven days a week, the exhibit exemplifies the generosity and diversity of donors throughout MD Anderson’s more than 76 years of Making Cancer History®.

“I’m hopeful that the exhibit encourages and inspires our patients and their families, helping them understand there are many people at MD Anderson who share in their journey,” says Fernando Yarrito, former executive director of Development, who led efforts for the Faces of Philanthropy exhibit and collaborated with Mary Kathryn Cooper, associate vice president for Special Programs, on the MD Anderson installment at the Bush Library. “I’m hopeful that the displays lay a foundation for understanding that without our donors, we could not have accomplished the many milestones already reached in the mission to end cancer.”
MD Anderson salutes Hicks’ service as president ad interim

MD Anderson is grateful for the leadership of Marshall E. Hicks, M.D., who served as the institution's president ad interim from March through November 2017. When he began his new role, Hicks set out to position the institution for success and an effective transition to its next leader. Many contributions during the eight-month period include his successful efforts to strengthen the institution’s finances, further develop a team-based culture and ensure the best care for patients and employees during Hurricane Harvey. Hicks has been a member of MD Anderson’s faculty for 20 years and remains one of the institution’s senior and most respected leaders. He has returned to his position as division head of Diagnostic Imaging, which he has held since 2010.

BOV LIFE MEMBER
Harry Longwell receives advisory board’s highest honor

The MD Anderson Cancer Center Board of Visitors (BOV) has extended Life Member status, its highest distinction, to Harry Longwell of Dallas. Longwell joined the BOV in 1993 and served as chair from 2014 to 2016. His leadership has helped ensure the institution’s success across critical goals and strategic initiatives.

Longwell’s giving to MD Anderson spans 35 years. In 2010, he spearheaded and chaired Making Cancer History®: The Campaign to Transform Cancer Care. The campaign exceeded its $1 billion goal a year early, raising $1.215 billion.

Longwell has been instrumental in securing significant funding from ExxonMobil Corporation, from which he retired in 2004. In addition, he has dedicated his time, counsel and support to numerous fundraising efforts including:

- the Fulfill The Promise campaign
- the Shooting Down Cancer Sporting Clays Tournament
- the South Campus Research Initiative
- the Volunteer Endowment for Patient Support
- A Conversation With a Living Legend®
- MD Anderson’s 60th, 70th and 75th anniversary celebrations

Through The Longwell Family Foundation, he has generously supported research in experimental therapeutics, personalized cancer therapy, targeted therapy, leukemia, lymphoma and myeloma, glioblastoma, lung cancer and head and neck cancers. Longwell’s generosity was integral to the foundation’s 2012 induction into the Anderson Assembly, which recognizes donors of $1 million and more.
CONVERSATION STARTERS
Three legendary figures lend names to signature fundraising events

Since 1990, A Conversation With a Living Legend® events across the country have raised almost $37 million for MD Anderson. The tradition continued in 2017 with three successful events raising nearly $2.5 million for vital cancer research and patient care programs.

DALLAS

Architect, artist and engineer Santiago Calatrava, Ph.D., was the honoree at a Sept. 14 luncheon featuring an interview with Judy Woodruff, anchor and managing editor of “PBS NewsHour.” Proceeds support MD Anderson’s Moon Shots Program®, a comprehensive effort to significantly reduce cancer deaths and transform cancer care.

Event Chair: Su-Su Meyer, Dallas
Presenting Sponsors: Andrews Distributing and Lyda Hill
Red Carpet Underwriters: Rosewood Corporation and Sewell Automotive

HOUSTON

Broadcast journalist Janet Shamlan led the Nov. 15 conversation with philanthropist Rich Kinder, executive chairman of Kinder Morgan Inc. The dinner event broke the fundraising record for past Living Legend events throughout Texas, raising approximately $1.3 million.

Co-chairs: Denise Monteleone and Ellie and Michael Francisco
Honorary Co-chairs: Patsy Fourticq, Barbara and Charles Hurwitz, Kelli Kickerillo and Todd Forester, Joan Schnitzer Levy and Cyvia Wolff
Valet Parking Underwriter: Sewell Automotive

SAN ANTONIO

A Nov. 28 luncheon honored UT System Chancellor William H. McRaven, interviewed by Fox News’ Chris Wallace. The event featured remarks by William Henrich, M.D., president, UT Health San Antonio (UTHSA), and honored police officers from UTHSA and UT San Antonio for their help in Houston during Hurricane Harvey.

Co-chairs: Kathy and Bill Johnson and Marsha and John H. Shields
Honorary Chairs: Mary and Bill Henrich, Kelly and Marshall Hicks, Peggy and Lowry Mays, Charline and Red McCombs
Longitude Chairs: Kim and Clyde Johnson IV and Paula and Clyde Johnson III
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‘CELEBRATING EVERY MILESTONE’
Breast cancer survivor marks five-year anniversary

BY ALLISON SCHAFFER

In the fall of 2012, Caroline Brown and her husband moved to Houston. If you ask her, the timing couldn’t have worked out better.

“Ten days after our move, I discovered a lump on my left breast while I was in the shower,” Caroline says. “I knew it wasn’t supposed to be there. A mammogram, ultrasound and biopsy revealed stage II ductal carcinoma, a type of breast cancer. Luckily, our move put the No. 1 cancer center in our back yard. It was the most obvious place to seek treatment.”

She made an appointment at MD Anderson and underwent chemotherapy, surgery and hormone therapy. Today, Caroline is a mother of two and a member of the Advance Team, MD Anderson’s next-generation board of leaders. In October, she celebrated her five-year anniversary as a cancer survivor.

“Throughout my cancer journey, I was a big believer in celebrating every milestone,” says Caroline. “I would always have some type of celebration with family and friends.”

At the five-year mark, Caroline knew she had to do more.

“I wanted to make sure we were celebrating in a way that gave back to MD Anderson,” she says. “My anniversary wasn’t only about commemorating that moment and raising donations. It also was about raising awareness of this disease, especially among my friends and family.”

She organized a donation ride at SoulCycle, an indoor cycling studio. More than 50 people showed up in support of Caroline, raising $9,000. She decided to give the money to MD Anderson’s Caring Fund to help employees affected by Hurricane Harvey.

“The nurses and doctors at MD Anderson continually put their patients first,” she says. “When I was a patient there, I was beyond impressed with the level of care I received. It’s humbling to be able to give back to them, when they’ve given so much more to me.”
Esophageal cancer survivor Jesse Purdy, of Georgetown, Texas, was a psychology professor for nearly 40 years at Southwestern University. Last October, Purdy received the Cattlemen for Cancer Research Survivor Award, which honors courageous cancer fighters across Central Texas.

I first came to MD Anderson in August 2016. My physician, Dr. David Rice, carefully explained, in layman’s terms, how he would remove the cancerous tissue in my esophagus and then pull up my stomach and attach it, along with part of my esophagus, to the other section. He told me about the risks and possible complications that could arise. Most important, he told me about the following blood work and CT scans, and that he would bring my case before a group of esophageal doctors. Once he had all the information, he would devise optimal treatment plans.

This approach gave me a great deal of confidence that I could, and would, be cured of cancer and that I could begin to plan for my retirement years.

A few weeks later, I received a call. The group had come to the consensus that my cancer could be eliminated by either surgery or endoscopic treatments. I chose the latter and Dr. Rice’s team readily turned me over to another team. I realized that patients are truly the biggest concern for doctors at MD Anderson.

Unfortunately, the endoscopic treatment did not eradicate my cancer. I was again turned over to Dr. Rice. He spent days following the first operation trying to understand what might have caused my inability to swallow. Again, he told me that he planned to consult with colleagues before making a final decision. I cannot emphasize enough how his attitude impressed me and gave me confidence that I was receiving world-class treatment.

These discussions led to a second operation that determined that Dr. Rice had figured correctly — my stomach had somehow twisted, cutting off the blood supply and causing it to die along with a length of my lower esophagus. Dr. Rice removed my stomach and most of my esophagus, and rerouted the remaining esophagus. A third operation in May reconstructed my digestive system. This 14-hour surgery required Dr. Rice and reconstructive surgeon Dr. Matthew Hanasono to connect the small intestine to the remaining esophagus and build a blood supply to keep the system and me alive for years to come.

Dr. Rice and his team personify what it means to be a hero whose actions, when surgeries do not go as planned, do not instill panic but rather lead to careful reflection and acquisition of more information that ultimately leads to actions that save patients’ lives. It is precisely this scenario that I have experienced firsthand and that saved my life.

Promise invites cancer survivors to share their reflections. Email promise@mdanderson.org.
Novel approach yields noteworthy progress in the fight against cancer

BY CLAYTON BOLDT, PH.D.

In October 2017, MD Anderson celebrated the five-year anniversary of the Moon Shots Program™, a collaborative effort to accelerate the development of scientific discoveries into clinical advances that save patients’ lives. Launched in fall 2012, the program has yielded notable discoveries across the spectrum of cancer care. Philanthropic support totals more than $452 million.

Conceived by Ron DePinho, M.D., MD Anderson’s fourth full-time president, the program established teams of clinicians and researchers tasked with improving the lives of patients and reducing cancer mortality. Each component undergoes internal and external peer review to prioritize and direct efforts, focusing on those most likely to have significant, rapid impact for patients. Beginning with six Moon Shots™, the program expanded in 2015 for a total of 13 disease-focused initiatives. Ten platforms provide expertise, technical support and infrastructure to support team science and accelerate the translation of data and discoveries for patients’ benefit. Philanthropic funding directly supports these areas of priority research and program infrastructure.

MD Anderson’s Moon Shots Program served as an inspiration for the national Cancer Moonshot. Two MD Anderson faculty
members — Jim Allison, Ph.D., professor and chair of Immunology and executive director of the Moon Shots Program’s immunotherapy platform, and W.K. Alfred Yung, M.D., professor of Neuro-Oncology and member of the Moon Shots Program executive committee, serve on its Blue Ribbon Panel, providing guidance and recommendations to the national effort.

**SINGULAR FOCUS YIELDS EXCITING BREAKTHROUGHS**

“Our singular vision of improving patient care has catalyzed our teams toward novel discoveries that would not have occurred without such focus,” says Giulio Draetta, M.D., Ph.D., co-leader of the Moon Shots Program; senior vice president, Discovery and Platforms; and chief academic officer ad interim.

Among these accomplishments:

- **In collaboration with the Myelodysplastic Syndromes and Acute Myeloid Leukemia Moon Shot™**, the Institute for Applied Cancer Science (IACS), a Moon Shots platform, has advanced a drug from discovery to clinical trials for patients with acute myeloid leukemia. The drug disrupts energy production in cancer cells and will advance to clinical trials in patients with solid tumors. The Moon Shots Program has managed the entire development pipeline, from laboratory discovery to clinical trials, enabling the accelerated translation to the patient care setting in fewer than five years.

- **The Lung Cancer Moon Shot™** has identified and resurrected an abandoned targeted therapy, poziotinib, for treating a rare group of lung cancer patients with specific treatment-resistant mutations (see My Moon Shot, page 10). These patients, who previously had no effective treatment options, are seeing significant response rates in Phase II clinical trials. Multidisciplinary efforts and platform support were the catalysts for preclinical discovery, testing and current clinical trials.

- **The Melanoma Moon Shot™** has opened clinical trials to evaluate neoadjuvant, or pre-surgical, treatment for high-risk patients with melanoma who would otherwise undergo surgery. Neoadjuvant therapy is a standard practice in other cancers, such as breast, but this approach was not previously feasible in melanoma due to a lack of active therapies. These trials will advance insights on the best approaches to treating patients after surgery. Additionally, using Moon Shot platforms, deep analyses of patient samples from these trials are underway to better understand why treatments do or do not work for all melanoma patients and guide new trial development.

**FOUNDATION FOR FUTURE DISCOVERIES**

“Perhaps the most important achievement is the foundation upon which current and future program discoveries will be made and lives saved,” says Andy Futreal, Ph.D., chair of Genomic Medicine and co-leader of the Moon Shots Program. “With this infrastructure, our teams of scientists, with collaborators here and abroad, are learning from...”
the very individuals we remain committed to helping — our patients.”

The research platforms continue to advance therapies to the clinic and evaluate patient data to refine clinical strategies, ensuring patients receive the best care.

The APOLLO (Adaptive Patient-Oriented Longitudinal Learning and Optimization) platform is analyzing patient samples over time to better understand how tumors evolve resistance to certain treatments. It’s harnessing the power of big data and sharing knowledge across disciplines to inform improved care of patients with all cancer types.

IACS is advancing novel drugs to the clinic, with the next expected to enter clinical trials this year. The immunotherapy platform will continue advancing immune-based therapies to make them available to more patients.

The Moon Shots Program is accelerating more than 150 clinical studies, investigating novel drug compounds as well as new approaches to improve existing drugs’ effectiveness.

The Moon Shots Program also is committed to advancing evidence-based cancer prevention and control practices that can potentially prevent up to 50% of cancers in future generations. The Cancer Prevention and Control platform has established a range of targeted initiatives to advance early-detection approaches, spread the use of actions known to reduce cancer risk and improve access to screening and prevention services. Moon Shots experts also have served as educational resources for legislators on policies related to cancer prevention and control.

“We have an obligation to lead in cancer prevention and control while working to accelerate improvements in research and patient outcomes — all of which is possible through the Moon Shots Program and MD Anderson’s commitment to Making Cancer History,” says Peter Pisters, M.D., president of MD Anderson.

Kevin Hanlon
Lung cancer survivor KEVIN HANLON, 60, lives with his wife, Denise, and their three children in Syracuse, New York, where he is president and chief executive officer of ComSource. Kevin and his brother, Bob, created an international working group for those diagnosed with the same lung cancer mutation so they can communicate and learn of clinical trials.

In early 2016, I had developed a bad cough, so I went to the doctor. He told me I had lung cancer and suggested I seek treatment.

Soon after the diagnosis, I went to a cancer hospital close to home. The hospital identified an epidermal growth factor receptor mutation called an exon 20 insertion, which is highly resistant to treatment. I had six months of chemotherapy, which was successful in knocking back the cancer. After the chemotherapy ran its allotted course, I had one year of treatments using three other therapies, none of which worked.

Fortunately during this time period I had the opportunity to meet John Heymach, M.D., Ph.D., chair of Thoracic/Head and Neck Medical Oncology and a co-leader of the Lung Cancer Moon Shot.

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When Advance Team member Daniel Darling arrived in the United States from Sydney, Australia, he had never heard of MD Anderson. But he was no stranger to the fight against cancer. Having recently lost an aunt to breast cancer, Darling set off on a mission, using his background in venture capital to help move the needle in cancer research, seeking out the most innovative cancer research institutions in the world. MD Anderson was at the top of the list.

How did you get involved in the fight against cancer?
I think everyone’s been touched by a personal story with cancer. My family has had various cases of cancer, but the one that affected me most was my aunt, Francesca. She was a nurse in Zurich, Switzerland, had two beautiful boys, had all the means in the world but died of breast cancer. That was a very real moment, and it propelled me to look at the research side of what was happening in cancer, to see what little I could do to help support frontier research efforts.

What led you to MD Anderson?
When I moved to the States, I asked some friends who were earning doctorates in oncology, “which institutions are pioneering the way in cancer research and really making the biggest impact? Is it in the United States or is it outside? And if it is, can you point out a couple?” MD Anderson was one that kept coming up at the top of the list. I had never heard of it before, and I’d never even visited Texas, but I took the reference seriously and decided to donate in Francesca’s name to MD Anderson in the area of breast cancer.

What has been most rewarding as an Advance Team member?
It amazes me that an institution as massive as MD Anderson, with the incredible impact it has in the global fight to end cancer, is not as known as it should be. I’m proud to be a member of the Advance Team, and I look forward to playing a part in expanding MD Anderson’s reach — nationally and internationally — to get the recognition it deserves.

Why do you support MD Anderson in Making Cancer History®?
As we start to live longer, more and more people will be affected by cancer. It’s really a human issue that affects the whole population, whether it’s your family, you directly or someone you know. Look at the data and you’ll see that you’ll eventually be touched by it if you haven’t been already. We need to work to understand how the body operates, how it interacts with the process of aging, with disease and all these different areas to grow our general understanding of cancer and how we can prevent it from occurring. The more you understand cancer, the more you know the word is more of a catch-all phrase for a huge amount of different kinds of disease states that are each very individual. To me, it seems like the biggest fight in health for the human population going forward. It really affects everyone, and young people might not feel it straight away. Being involved helps educate us and fuels our passion to gain more knowledge about it as we move on with life.
THOUSANDS SUPPORT MD ANDERSON’S BOOT WALK TO END CANCER

Community raises awareness and funds for research, patient care

More than 5,000 cancer patients and their family members, volunteers, friends, faculty and staff gathered Nov. 11 for MD Anderson’s second annual Boot Walk to End Cancer®.

Following the 1.2-mile walk at the Texas Medical Center, participants enjoyed a party with music, food and entertainment. The result of their fundraising efforts: more than $1 million for cancer research and patient care programs to advance MD Anderson’s mission to end cancer.

Chairs Dorothy and Malcolm Paterson led the day’s festivities, along with Marshall Hicks, M.D., president ad interim of MD Anderson.

“It has been such a joy for Malcolm and me to serve as chairs of this year’s Boot Walk,” says Dorothy Paterson. “With our family having faced three significant cancers between us, it’s especially meaningful. We are determined to do whatever we can to end cancer so others don’t have to go through what we did.”

Co-chairs were Ashley and Lance Loeffler, with Ann and Clarence Cazalot serving as honorary chairs.

“Lance and I are honored to chair the 2018 Boot Walk to End Cancer, as MD Anderson holds a special place in our hearts,” says Ashley Loeffler. “We have many friends and family members who have had cancer or currently are in treatment, and we are grateful to give back to a place that has given so much to so many.”

Justin Stapleton, KPRC-TV meteorologist, emceed the event.

LyondellBasell was Presenting Sponsor, with Bob Patel, chief executive officer, and more than 100 employees taking part. Other sponsors were Boot Barn (Diamond), Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo (Platinum), Mustang Cat (Gold), Marjac Creations (Silver), York Construction (Silver), Regina Rogers (Bronze), Constellation/StarTex Power (Bronze), IBC Bank (Bronze), Richmond Equipment (Bronze) and Theatre Under the Stars (Bronze). In-kind donors included Walmart, Houston Community ToolBank, Peli Peli and Watermill Express.

BY LESLIE FRIEDMAN

PHILANTHROPY IN ACTION
SURVIVORS, CAREGIVERS ENJOY NETWORKING AND SUPPORT AT ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Keynote speakers, breakout sessions offer hope and inspiration

BY LESLIE FRIEDMAN

Nearly 300 people gathered in September for MD Anderson’s 29th annual myCancerConnection Cancer Survivorship Conference. With a variety of breakout sessions and presentations from MD Anderson experts and survivors alike, there were messages of hope and determination for everyone.

A highlight among attendees was an inspirational keynote address by Craig Melvin, co-anchor of NBC-TV’s “Weekend Today,” and his brother, Rev. Lawrence Meadows, a stage IV colorectal cancer survivor. While both spoke highly of MD Anderson and the treatment Meadows received, Melvin shared his shock at learning of his brother’s diagnosis, considering Meadows’ healthy lifestyle. Melvin developed a story about his brother’s cancer journey for the “Today” show and was gratified at the interest and positive feedback it generated as one of the top stories of 2017.

“There are many reasons to be optimistic, thanks to the cutting-edge research at MD Anderson,” says Melvin.

Benjamin Chang, 34, of Houston, attended the conference with his mother, Yvonne. Treated at MD Anderson in 2006 for a rare brain tumor, Chang was eager to hear the latest on cancer research and meet others with similar experiences. He is grateful to the MD Anderson volunteers who made him feel comfortable while he was a patient and now volunteers his time offering refreshments in the waiting rooms at Mays Clinic.

Gloria Ayala, 54, also of Houston, became an MD Anderson volunteer in 2005 and received a breast cancer diagnosis in 2008.

“I am grateful to MD Anderson,” Ayala says. “The doctors and staff took care of me and made sure I had an amazing recovery. They inspired me to be a better volunteer.”

Like most in attendance, Chang and Ayala spent time between sessions offering others advice and support. Many participants expressed appreciation to MD Anderson for offering the annual survivorship conference as a chance to connect and discover what’s on the horizon in cancer research, patient care, prevention and education.
An MD Anderson team is among six recently named recipients of the 2017 Movember Foundation-Prostate Cancer Foundation (PCF) Challenge Awards. The $1 million awards support cross-disciplinary research to advance treatments and cures for prostate cancer.

Since 2007, the Movember Foundation has contributed more than $50 million to PCF to further new discoveries in prostate cancer research.

MD Anderson’s team of Ana Aparicio, M.D., associate professor, Genitourinary Medical Oncology; Nicholas Navin, Ph.D., associate professor, Genetics, and Andrew Sabin Family Fellow, Theocharis Panaretakis, Ph.D., visiting associate professor, Genitourinary Medical Oncology; and Brian Chapin, M.D., assistant professor, Urology, will study the impact of local therapy on outcomes of men with newly diagnosed metastatic prostate cancer, within molecularly defined subsets.

Prospective clinical trials are ongoing to determine whether men with metastatic prostate cancer might benefit from surgery or radiation to their primary tumor, in addition to the standard hormonal and chemotherapy-hormonal therapies. Prostate cancer is clinically and biologically a heterogeneous disease, with certain subsets more responsive to hormonal therapies than others, says Aparicio.

“This generous donation enables our researchers to better understand the biology that underlies responsiveness to specific prostate cancer treatments, including definitive treatment of the primary tumor,” she says. “It will allow us to arrive at a biologically based, predictive classification of prostate cancer that will accelerate the development of effective treatments.”

HILDEBRAND FOUNDATION
ASPIRES FOR MORE

$1.5 million donation boosts tobacco-free youth program

BY ALLISON SCHAFFER

For every dollar spent on addiction, pennies are spent on prevention, according to the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse. It’s a shocking statistic that spurred Mindy Hildebrand of the Hildebrand Foundation into action.

“I’ve always had a passion for education,” Hildebrand says. “As my kids started high school, I was shocked to see students starting to use tobacco. The anti-smoking message had been drilled into the previous generations, but now you have all these crazy options, like vapes. Because of my work on the MD Anderson Cancer Center Board of Visitors, I knew the importance of educating these kids to try to prevent them from developing this addictive behavior early on.”

She met with Alexander Prokhorov, M.D., Ph.D., professor, Behavioral Science and director of the Youth and Family Cancer Prevention Program at MD Anderson. Prokhorov told her about ASPIRE, an online, bilingual, teen-savvy tobacco prevention and cessation program for middle school and high school students. Developed by tobacco control researchers at MD Anderson, the program aims to motivate teens to be tobacco-free through original videos, animation and games; testimonies from peers, doctors, smokers and nonsmokers; and tips and resources to stop smoking or avoid the temptation to smoke.

“We designed the original program in 2002,” says Prokhorov. “We needed an update, incorporating the many new tobacco products in the market.”

In 2017, the Hildebrand Foundation donated $1.5 million to the ASPIRE program, funding a complete revamp.

“The donation has made a huge difference,” says Prokhorov. “Typically, we fall far behind the tobacco industry in terms of ads and technology. This has helped level the playing field.”

ASPIRE now features updated animations and videos as well as products such as e-cigarettes and hookah, retaining the evidence-based strength of the previous program.

“It’s key that teens understand what smoking is doing to their bodies,” says Hildebrand. “ASPIRE is an effective tool that resonates with teens, and I’m proud to support this program.”
MAKING BIG PLANS
President accepts young donor’s gift to end cancer

BY SARAH WATSON

Brayden Rivera, a 7-year-old from Texas City, is not one to think small. On Halloween, for example, while most of his peers concentrated on filling their trick-or-treat bags with candy, Brayden used the holiday to help end cancer. Dressed as Mario, he knocked on doors and asked for donations to MD Anderson.

“Money is a tool,” he told surprised neighbors. “Doctors have tools, but they need money to buy more to help people.”

Brayden, whose mother, Ashley Rivera, is a patient at MD Anderson’s Bay Area location, already had collected enough cash and coins from friends and family to fill a gallon-size Ziploc bag. The Halloween haul brought the total to $385, and he was determined to present the money to “the important people” at MD Anderson.

Brayden and his parents accepted an invitation to the president’s office on the 20th floor of T. Boone Pickens Tower. After much anticipation, the big day arrived, and Brayden personally handed the money to Peter Pisters, M.D. It was Pisters’ third official day in his new role as MD Anderson’s fifth full-time president (see story on page 3).

Ashley Rivera found her son’s stash while cleaning his room one day in October.

“MD Anderson needs my help,” he told her. “We need to end cancer.” Pisters thanked Brayden for his generosity and gave him an ID badge recognizing him as an honorary friend of the institution.

“Brayden, you have the opportunity to help us in Making Cancer History,” said Pisters. “Now you’re a cancer fighter, too.”

ASHLEY SKRLJAC lives in Houston with her husband, Ed, and their two sons, Jack, 6, and Henry, 3. She started a foundation to help raise money for leptomeningeal disease in memory of her mother, Jennifer Clanton.

Thanksgiving Day, 2012: My family was forever changed when we learned that my mom, Jennifer Clanton, 54, had stage IV lung cancer. She was seemingly healthy and loving life when we received this devastating diagnosis. She immediately began chemotherapy and radiation treatments at another hospital, which worked for a while.

But just over a year after her diagnosis, we found ourselves in the targeted therapy department at MD Anderson. Under the care of Dr. David Hong, Mom began a clinical trial. Her scans remained clear for nearly two and a half years.

In March 2016, after experiencing headaches for several weeks, Mom was diagnosed with leptomeningeal disease (LMD), a devastating cancer of the cerebrospinal fluid that occurs as a metastatic cancer in a small percentage of patients. We were heartbroken. Mom was told she had about eight weeks to live. She passed away seven weeks and three days later on May 23.

After Mom died, I began searching for a way to help fund more research for LMD. When I could not find any organizations dedicated to raising money for this cause, I felt compelled to take on the challenge myself. With the help of a dear family friend, Heather Grieco, we created the Jennifer Clanton Foundation to raise money for LMD research. In our first year, we raised $7,000, all of which went to the LMD program at MD Anderson. Our goal is to make an annual donation to this program.

Losing Mom to LMD was and still is devastating for me; however, I hope with our fundraising and MD Anderson’s research, better treatment options and eventually a cure will come.