

Cancer League of Colorado commits \$2 million toward University of Colorado Cancer Center to endowed chair

AURORA (Sept. 14, 2011) Cancer League of Colorado has filled a unique niche throughout its 43 years, providing seed grants for promising yet untested cancer research projects—the types of grants no other funder offers on a systematic basis in the Rocky Mountain region.

Scores of University of Colorado Cancer Center researchers have earned these grants this past decade, and parlayed them into far larger grants from federal funders such as the National Institutes of Health when these early research investigations proved to be fruitful lines of inquiry.

With a new \$2 million pledge toward a Cancer League of Colorado endowed chair at the CU Cancer Center, Cancer League now will go a step further to advance world-class cancer research here in Colorado, says Dan Theodorescu, MD, PhD, center director and professor of surgery and pharmacology at the CU School of Medicine.

“Cancer League of Colorado has helped the Cancer Center fund innovative science in the pursuit of our goal of relieving suffering from cancer,” Theodorescu says. “We may use this chair to recruit an eminent cancer scientist who will lead and pursue innovative cancer research in areas of strategic importance to our center. Together, the Cancer League’s grant funding and perpetual support of a scientific leader will help our center really make strides toward our scientific mission.”

In July 2011, 18 Cancer Center researchers received nearly \$600,000 in Cancer League seed grants. Cancer League has provided more than \$10 million in grants to Cancer Center investigators since 1985. These grants recently have supported the work of CU Denver cancer researchers Pepper Schedin, PhD, Christopher Porter, MD, and Steve

Anderson, PhD, among others.

“This endowed chair arose through detailed discussions we had with Cancer Center leaders about ‘how we can have the greatest impact in the fight against cancer in the state of Colorado.’ It became very clear that, to be one of the best cancer centers in the country, we need the best doctors. Some of these doctors cannot be recruited without the benefit of an endowed chair,” says Gary Reece, Cancer League president.

“It’s important for our membership to know that our research support continues in full force, and that we work seamlessly with the Cancer Center. That will certainly continue.”

By funding innovative cancer research projects, Cancer League has played a key early-stage role in treatments and tests that directly benefit cancer patients around the world, including sputum testing that aids noninvasive diagnosis of lung cancers.

Many of these grants, which are selected by a scientific advisory committee that includes Cancer Center members and other researchers, wind up generating \$20 in federal research funding for every dollar they grant to a researcher in seed funding.

Remarkably, Cancer League is entirely volunteer-run, with no paid staff, enabling nearly all of its annual revenue to go directly toward cancer research and service grants rather than administrative overhead. It accrues its proceeds available for grants (in 2010-11, \$670,000) via fundraisers—such as the Over the Edge fundraiser, which in 2010 featured CU Cancer Center deputy director Andrew Thorburn, PhD, rappelling off the edge of a 28-story building—400 dues-paying members, and other current and estate gifts.

“The Over the Edge event has put us on a lot of people’s radar screen. A lot of people want to give money to cancer research, but not to

overhead,” Reece says. “We’re excited to be able to support not only discoveries, but also Colorado’s research talent pool.”

The University of Colorado Cancer Center is Colorado’s only National Cancer Institute-designated comprehensive cancer center. Headquartered on the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus, the center is a consortium of three state universities (Colorado State University, University of Colorado at Boulder and University of Colorado Denver) and six institutions (Children’s Hospital Colorado, Denver Health, Denver VA Medical Center, Kaiser Permanente Colorado, National Jewish Health and University of Colorado Hospital).

Together, its 440-plus members work to relieve suffering from cancer by discovering, developing and delivering breakthroughs in the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of cancer for the citizens of Colorado, the region and beyond. Learn more at www.coloradocancercenter.org.

This grant is among more than 200,000 gifts and grants received by the University of Colorado since the 2006 outset of *Creating Futures*—an unprecedented \$1.5 billion fundraising campaign to support teaching, research, outreach and health programs on CU’s four campuses.

Contact(s): Gary Reece, Cancer League of Colorado 303-475-1635, garyreece3@gmail.com
Lynn Clark, University of Colorado Cancer Center, 303-724-3160, lynn.clark@ucdenver.edu