



# Pinellas Partners

## DR. PILON-THOMAS A BIG HIT WITH PINELLAS PARTNERS

The Moffitt Pinellas Partners Steering Committee gathered for breakfast on November 14 at the Hilton Carillon Park, St. Petersburg, for our third meeting. Included in the discussions was the allocation of funds that are raised through Pinellas Partners events and activities. An outstanding research scientist at Moffitt Cancer Center, Dr. Shari Pilon-Thomas was warmly welcomed as our guest speaker. She presented her work on cancer immunotherapy, the education of a patient's immune system to recognize and destroy a tumor. This research program touches on treatments for every type of cancer, including melanoma.

Nearly half of all new cancers in the U.S. are skin cancers and Florida ranks second in melanoma incidents. Melanoma is an aggressive disease and if not treated early, it has a poor prognosis.

Highly impressed with Dr. Pilon-Thomas's research, the committee is pleased to announce the approval of the \$32,000 funds raised last March at the inaugural Pi-

nellas Partners Breakfast to be given to her project. The committee plans on having a check presentation at our



**Dr. Shari Pilon-Thomas is presented with a thank you gift from Joe Burdette**

next event, which will be held every year.

We are excited about our future events that will help raise additional funding needed for the immunotherapy project. It takes more than \$50,000 for seed money to develop the proposal for an approved trial. In order to see how the money raised is directly helping our community, Dr. Pilon-Thomas will give an update as to how the funding is utilized as well as

periodically deliver progress reports.

We are hoping to host our

second event around Feb/March, 2008 and are planning something meaningful and informative to our Pinellas County community. You certainly

won't want to miss that.

Please contact us if you are not already on our mailing list or know someone who wants to be included in such a worthwhile cause.

Thank you for your participation and support in helping Pinellas County get connected to Moffitt Cancer-Center.

Sincerely,

**Marsha Droste**  
*Co-chair*  
*Moffitt Pinellas Partners*

### Steering Committee Members

- Scott Andringa
- Brian Aungst
- Rob Bauer
- Dick Beagles
- Ernestine Bean
- Beverly Billiris
- Bruce Bokor
- Joe Burdette
- Gary Conners
- William Crown
- Jodie Cunningham
- Edward Droste
- Marsha Droste
- Holly Duncan
- Ron & Ann Duncan
- Jackie Edgington
- Larry Feder
- Fred Fisher
- Lucy Grinnell
- Bob "Gator" Handley
- Lindsay Hardee
- Mary Harvey
- Judy Mitchell
- Pam Muma
- Bob Passwaters
- Ron Petrini
- David Ruppel
- Leslie Schipani-Anderson
- Karen Seel
- Covington Sharp
- Gary Skinner
- Laverne Smith
- Jack Spangler
- Richard Spayde
- Susan Stern
- Dan Walker

## A STORY OF HOPE...SURVIVING CANCER

It's hard to describe what goes through your mind when you or someone you love hears those three dreaded words, YOU HAVE CANCER. ....It seems like the world, and everything you thought you knew about your life is somehow changed forever.

The day they told my brother Don that there was something "suspicious" on his chest x-ray was one of those moments. He had gone to see his primary care physician for what he thought was a pinched nerve in his neck. After going through multiple tests, the diagnosis was in....lung cancer, very aggressive and very advanced. The tumor was already the size of a softball and it had invaded the entire lower lobe of his left lung.

He was referred to a prominent thoracic oncology surgeon in his local area who told him that surgery was not an option for him. The tumor was so large and so close to his aorta that he considered it "inoperable".

The surgeon suggested he undergo chemotherapy and radiation with the hope that it might shrink the tumor and surgery might be possible "sometime in the future". There was no mistaking the expression on the surgeon's face; my brother Don's prognosis was not good.

When he called to tell me what the surgeon had said, I could hear the stark terror in his voice. At that moment, all I knew was that I had to get him an appointment at Moffitt and it needed to be immediately, before any other treatment was started.

I am so fortunate to have friends who are directly involved with The Moffitt Foundation, after a few phone calls and many tears, we were scheduled for an evaluation two days later with Dr. Eric Sommers and his incredible surgical staff at Moffitt Cancer Center.

After reviewing all of the scans and the biopsy results, Dr. Sommers assured us that while it was an extremely

complex surgery, he was confident that he could remove the tumor and that Don would have an excellent chance at a full recovery. Sitting in that exam room that afternoon, we went from feelings of fear and desperation, to ones of hope and optimism.

Five days later Don underwent a four hour operation to remove the entire lower lobe of his lung. When Dr. Sommers walked into the waiting room after surgery, we could tell by the smile on his face that the surgery had been a complete success. Dr. Sommers told us that afternoon that at the rate the tumor was growing, in another few days it would have been impossible, even for him, to do the surgery.

I can never fully express the feeling of gratitude that my family has for our friends at The Moffitt Foundation, for Dr. William Dalton and especially for Dr. Eric Sommers, his primary nurse Joe Garrett, ARNP, his medical assistant Kathy Hassler and Paul Williams R.N. from

the ICU. Not only did they give my brother his life back, they treated every member of our family with kindness, compassion and the promise of hope.

It has now been one year since his surgery, had it not been for the Moffitt Cancer Center, my brother would likely not be with us today, for that we are forever grateful.

Because of our life changing experience at Moffitt, it has become my mission to make every person I meet in my community aware of the great things that are possible and the huge strides that Moffitt Cancer Center is making every day in treating cancer. Moffitt's Total Cancer Care approach is revolutionary and we are so fortunate to be a part of the future of cancer treatment.

By

**Mary Harvey**  
**Vice-chair**

**Moffitt Pinellas Partners**

## JOURNALIST SAM DONALDSON SPEAKS OUT FOR MOFFITT

"As a political correspondent, I have witnessed the profound impact that citizens speaking as one voice can have on public policy," said renowned journalist Sam Donaldson in a recent letter urging Northern Florida residents to join Moffitt's grassroots advocacy program.

Welcome to all the new Speak Out for Moffitt members who responded to the call to action from Sam, who chairs Moffitt Cancer Center's national Board of Advisors. Your expressions of support will help legislators in all areas of Florida recognize how Moffitt Cancer Center serves the entire state. With Sam's help, the Speak Out for Moffitt coalition now numbers more than 3000 members.

To learn more about the Speak out for Moffitt program, visit:

[www.moffitcancercenter.org](http://www.moffitcancercenter.org) or contact John DeMuro, Speak Out for Moffitt Coordinator.

## FROM CONCEPT TO CLINICAL PRACTICE

Have you ever wondered how new cancer treatments are discovered? Where do the ideas come from? Where does the money come from? How long does it take?

We asked these questions of one of Moffitt's finest researchers, Dr. Shari Pilon-Thomas. Dr. Pilon-Thomas has worked with Dr. James Mulé for the past five years. During that time she has been intricately involved in many research projects, including cutting edge studies on melanoma and pancreatic cancer. Dr. Pilon-Thomas studied with Dr. Mule at The University of Michigan before he took his present position as Executive Vice President of Research at Moffitt and convinced her to move to Florida to continue their work together.

On a recent visit to her lab, Dr. Pilon-Thomas explained that there are multiple stages between a scientific theory for a potential new cancer

treatment and getting that treatment to the patient. Each of these stages requires different levels of funding and the scientists themselves are responsible for raising money at each stage by qualifying for federal grants.

Most research funding for cancer comes from the National Cancer Institute which is a division of the National Institute for Health. The NIH has a federal pool of money that is available to medical researchers who meet very stringent guidelines. There are literally thousands of scientists competing for the same federal dollars, so how well their grant application is scored will determine whose research gets to the next step. Grant applications are scored from 100-500 points with 100 points being the best possible score. Because the competition for these dollars is so

great, only scores in the low 100's are likely to get funded on the first attempt. Keep in mind, these are some of the most brilliant minds in the scientific world competing to get their theories into the laboratory and ultimately to the patient.

With the expected cuts to the federal budget, it will only get more difficult to compete for these research dollars.

The application for a federal grant is a 25 page document which must include the scientific theory to be studied, the process of the study, what the expected outcome is and how much time,

### HARVESTING MATERIAL TO CREATE DENDRITIC CELLS



money and personnel will be needed. The most sought after grants are for five years, with the opportunity for two renewals of five years each. Only the strongest, most promising studies will receive this level of funding.

Once the research is working in the laboratory model, it will advance to the animal trial stage and will need the next level of funding. If the animal study phase goes as anticipated, human clinical trials will follow. Most human clinical trials are only used on patients whose cancer has reached Stage IV and who have failed on all

other approved treatments. The clinical trial phase is very expensive to fund because, while most insurance companies will pay for basic health care for patients participating in a study, they will not pay for the scientific costs associated with the trial. The scientific costs include collecting tissue and blood samples from patients, all of the chemicals needed for the laboratory studies, patient injections and many additional associated costs. The expense to the research lab can easily exceed \$10,000 for each patient that participates in the study. While there are no guarantees, the goal of the human trial phase is that the treatment will have the expected outcome and will become part of the approved treatment protocol for cancer.

It is a very long road from scientific concept to clinical practice. The scientists must be dedicated to answering the basic science questions. It is not enough to know that a particular treatment works; we must know how and why it works in order to advance the cure for cancer. The scientists at Moffitt Cancer Center are dedicated to asking those questions and finding those answers.



**FROM LEFT TO RIGHT, MARSHA DROSTE, DR. PILON-THOMAS AND MARY HARVEY**

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*From Concept to Clinical Practice  
Continued from page 3...*

With the genetic database that Moffitt is presently building, the day will come when physicians and scientists will be able to accurately predict what treatment will be most effective for each individual patient. This approach will totally revolutionize how cancer is treated and Moffitt Cancer Center will be at the forefront of it all.

by  
**Mary Harvey**  
Vice Chair  
Moffitt Pinellas Partners

**Mission Statement**

*To contribute to the prevention and cure of cancer through education and outreach in an effort to support the work of the physicians and scientists working to cure this terrible disease that has touched all of our lives in one way or another.*

## M2GEN BREAKS GROUND

Nearly 200 people attended the groundbreaking on November 14 for M2Gen, a wholly owned subsidiary of Moffitt Cancer Center. M2Gen COO Rick Garrison, Moffitt President/CEO and Center Director, Dr. William Dalton, and M2Gen President and Chief Scientific Officer, Dr. Timothy Yeatman, kicked off the ceremony. The groundbreaking also featured Ken Hagan, chairman of the Hillsborough Board of County Commissioners; Pat Bean, Hillsborough County administrator; Moffitt board members Don Buchanan and Stephen Meyers; and Moffitt patient Ron Giovannelli.



M2Gen, which will be built on North Malcolm McKinley Drive just north of East Bougainvillea Avenue, is the result of a partnership formed in December between Moffitt and drug maker Merck & Co. Construction company Skanska USA Building Inc. and architect RS&H (Reynolds, Smith and Hills Inc.) were chosen for the M2Gen project. Construction is scheduled to begin in January and be completed in one year.

The for-profit company will develop personalized cancer treatment for patients using molecular technology. Researchers will collect tumor tissues from thousands of patients across Florida and identify the biological markers unique to each tumor. Analyzing patients' responses to specific treatments will lead to more individualized treatment featuring rapid improvement and fewer side effects.

More than 3,500 tissue samples have been collected. In October, the 10,000th patient consented to donating their tissues.

Patients, community providers, industry, government and many others will be involved in improving cancer care through M2Gen. The state of Florida, Hillsborough County and city of Tampa are providing economic incentives to bring this biotechnology to Florida. M2Gen is expected to attract new lucrative jobs to the state and bolster the Tampa Bay area's robust biotechnology industry.

## Upcoming Events

- BOWLING "BALL"**  
Moffitt Cancer Center presents the 2008 Bowling "Ball" at Splitsville to benefit prostate cancer research on Thursday, February 21. The fun-filled evening, sponsored by Moffitt's Corporate Partners Program, is designed to bring out the competitive spirit in corporate teams. Also, you can purchase a \$20 chance to win amazing prizes all night! Don't miss a FUN opportunity to PARTY HEARTY and support prostate cancer research at Moffitt!  
For more information, contact Shaina Sine at 813-745-3658.
- "AN EVENING WITH..."**  
The Ritz-Carlton, Naples  
March 7, 2008  
This spring event brings a nationally known personality to speak on a variety of topics.  
For more information, contact Sharon Hastings at 813-745-3658.
- MAGNOLIA BALL**  
Annual Black-Tie Fundraising Gala  
May 3, 2008
- For more information, contact Kathy Werner at 813-745-1340.