

SUNSCREEN EVERY DAY HELPS KEEP THE DOCTOR AWAY

By Bill Swisher

Shari Pilon-Thomas, Ph.D., uses sunscreen every day.

She does that to avoid melanoma, and she should know. Her work is helping Moffitt Cancer Center learn more about this most serious form of skin cancer.



Dr. Shari Pilon-Thomas

Pilon-Thomas is a research scientist who heads the Immunotherapy Laboratory in Moffitt's Department of Translational Science, as well as an assistant professor at the University of South Florida. At Moffitt the lab projects she's in charge of include experiments dealing with breast cancer, brain tumors, and pancreatic and skin cancers.

A chemistry major at the University of Michigan, Pilon-Thomas was planning on attending medical school. "But I had taken a graduate course in immunology in my senior year and really liked it. So at the last minute I decided I really wanted to do what I'm doing now -- cancer research," she said.

"I applied to grad school at Wayne State University in Detroit and got my degree in a classical immunology department, but I did my research in cancer biology. I worked on a breast and ovarian cancer vaccine because that was the field of my mentor, Dr. Wei-Zen Wei."

After getting her doctorate in 2002, she got a post-doctoral fellowship at the University of Michigan in the laboratory of Jim Mulé, Ph.D., and then came to Moffitt in 2003.

Her current research at Moffitt involves using a group of cells in the human body known as dendritic cells to educate other immune cells to attack melanoma tumors.

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.

One reason tumors grow, Pilon-Thomas said, is because they're able to overcome the body's immune system. "This new project is geared to shutting off the suppression tumor cells can generate that would foil the activated T-cells" -- white-blood cells whose job is to help the immune system's response to a tumor. When cells in a tumor suppress the body's T-cells, "the immune system ignores the tumor. We're trying to improve the immune system," she said.

The next step: clinical trials, the scientific term for experiments involving in-

formed, consenting human patients. How quickly those will get started "depends on the level of funding (available), approvals from the FDA and USF, and the availability of compounds. But just with the initial studies, we ought to be able to have the trials started in a year to a year-and-a-half if everything falls into place," Pilon-Thomas said.

Is the work at Moffitt pretty much what she expected? "I had no idea what I thought it would be. I had to get out the map to find the place," she said.

"But I love Tampa -- and Moffitt."

Mission Statement



Pinellas Partners

Welcome to the Moffitt Pinellas Partners June/July online Newsletter. With the success of our last luncheon, Pinellas Partners has become a connection for residents of Pinellas County who want to get involved and learn more about Moffitt Cancer Center.

More than 100 attended the April 9 luncheon at Island Way Grill in Clearwater. The event raised funds for the groundbreaking research at Moffitt. Two of Moffitt's researchers, Dr. Shari Pilon-Thomas and Dr. Steven Enkemann, discussed specific clinical experiments and answered the audience's questions.

Many who attended had lost loved ones to cancer and some were supporting those who are still in the fight. The one thing they had in common: They wanted to get connected -- and stay connected with this top research and treatment facility that is right here in Tampa Bay. It was an informative hour and funds raised will help enhance important research trials.

Pinellas Partners offers our neighbors a connection to Moffitt Cancer if they ever need care. Fundraising is highly important to assist research trials; however, the primary goal of the Pinellas Partners is to build awareness and help as many people in this area as possible avoid the utterly "lost" feeling after hearing those dreaded words "You have cancer." Help and support is very close by at both Moffitt and its affiliate hospitals. Whether it is with your talents, your riches, or your time, you can help.

Thanks to our steering committee members and those who attended the luncheon and continue to support our efforts.

Sincerely,
Marsha P. Droste
Co-chair, Moffitt Pinellas Partners
marshadroste@moffittpinellaspartners.com



Dr. Steven Enkemann



Last week Pinellas Partners Co-chair Mary Harvey visited Moffitt Cancer Center's Nurses' Week Celebration Breakfast hosted by the Foundation. Mary is a retired RN and gave a very inspirational message to the nurses in attendance. Mary Harvey has been by her brother's side through his battle with cancer and since has become a key leader of Pinellas Partners.

Steering Committee Members

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

THE 2008 MAGNOLIA BALL A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

By Mary Harvey, Pinellas Partners Co-chair

The Magnolia Ball, the most elegant of all black-tie galas in the Tampa Bay area, raised \$3.2 million for the Moffitt Cancer Center on May 3 at Tampa's A La Carte Pavilion.

With Chicago as the entertainment and a roomful of very generous supporters, the evening surpassed all expectations and became a night to remember for everyone who attended.



From left:
Ed Droste, Marsha Droste, Mary Harvey, Jack Boone

Ed and Marsha Droste were the event chairs for this magical night. Ed is the chairman-elect for the Moffitt Foundation's Board of Directors. His wife, Marsha, shares his passion for Moffitt Cancer

Center and the research to end cancer in our lifetime. The Kentucky Derby was shown on TV screens during the cocktail reception and silent auction.

After guests dined on a sumptuous feast of filet mignon and lobster tails, the live auction got under way. A trip for eight aboard a private yacht, a trip to the Masters Golf Tournament, a 12-night

Mediterranean cruise, and a trip through the Black Forest in Germany were some of the most sought after auction items.

The action grew fierce when the bidding for the private vacation

aboard the yacht *Hooters Patrol IV* got to the point where two bidders had raised the stakes to between \$48,000 and \$49,000. After a brief discussion, the owners of the yacht, Ed Droste, David Lageschulte and Dale Reginer offered the vacation to both parties for \$50,000 each.

Audience bids on all of the other items raised the total to \$197,000. Maher Chevrolet generously matched all bids that met the market price of the item, up to \$100,000, bringing the live-auction total to \$297,000.

Deborah Llewellyn, a five-year cancer survivor, gave a moving account of her battle with Hodgkin's disease and her life saving experience with Moffitt Cancer Center. Her story touched the hearts of everyone in the room as it reminded us that cancer can strike anyone, at any age.

In a very moving gesture of kindness, one of the groups that won the private yacht vacation offered it to Deborah and her new hus-

band, James. The generous donors of this magnificent trip were Coby Brooks and Mike McNeil, the CEO and vice president of Marketing for Hooters of America.

One of the most highly anticipated moments of the evening came when David Lageschulte, affectionately known as Lags, offered a match challenge of \$750,000 to the audience. Match challenges have been done at the Magnolia Ball for the past several years, but never has such a generous amount been pledged by one person.



David "Lags" Lageschulte and Anna Burns

Continued on page 3...

...Continued from page 2

Within the next several minutes paddles, were raised throughout the room as the audience not only met but exceeded Lags's challenge. Then, in a surprise announcement that stunned the crowd, Nicholas Valvano of the V Foundation pledged an additional \$750,000 to the Moffitt Foundation, bringing the total of the pledge match to \$2,549,000. This amount has not been raised in a pledge match in the Tampa Bay area in recent memory, if ever.

Moffitt will use

the \$3.2 million raised at the event for cancer research, patient care, edu-



From left:
Janice Case, Chris Frederick, Wally Pope, Ann Duncan, Ron Duncan and Jim Case

cation and the Magnolia Lodging Program, which last year provided

6,500 patients and family members with 32,000 nights of lodging during

their treatment at the cancer center.

Finally, as if we

hadn't already been treated to an amazing night already, one of the most popular bands of all time Chicago took to the stage. The crowd was on its feet immediately and didn't stop dancing until the last song was over. What an exciting end to a perfect evening.

Moffitt Pinellas Partners hosted a table of 12 and totally enjoyed the camaraderie of sharing in such a remarkable fund raising event. Next year, we hope to double or triple our participation by encouraging more of our partners to come out and enjoy this gala event.

Upcoming Event

Celebrating Survivorship at Moffitt Cancer Center

Date: Saturday, June 21, 2008
Time: 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
Location: Vincent A. Stabile Research Building
Moffitt Cancer Center
12902 Magnolia Drive, Tampa

Learn about Moffitt's new initiatives in survivorship care and research, resources and support services and speak with a panel of patient survivors. Registration and continental breakfast will be from 8 to 9 a.m. The keynote speaker is Wendy S. Harpham, M.D., an internal medicine physician, best-selling author and cancer survivor. She is the author of several books, including *Happiness in a Storm*, *When a Parent Has Cancer* and the children's book, *Becky and the Worry Cup*. Continental breakfast and lunch will be provided. The event is free, but reservations are required. Please RSVP to 1-888-MOFFITT by June 16.

PINELLAS PARTNERS PRIDE

The 2008 Magnolia Ball gave Pinellas Partners a very proud moment when Ronnie and Ann Duncan held up their paddle and pledged \$50,000.00 at the Pinellas Partners table. They were joined by 12 Pinellas Partners members who generously helped toward the \$3.2 million raised on this auspicious night.

Thank you.