

# INVESTING IN

# hope

Philanthropy in action at the UVA Cancer Center

Summer 2008  
Volume One, Number Two

## SPOTLIGHT ON RESEARCH

### Stopping Brain Tumors

**NEARLY 10,000** Americans will be diagnosed with glioblastoma multiforme (GBM) this year, including Massachusetts Democratic Senator Ted Kennedy. GBM is the most common and aggressive form of brain cancer.

Isa Hussaini, Ph.D., associate professor of pathology at UVA, believes he has discovered a way to slow, and even stop, the growth of these aggressive brain tumors. His research focuses on the enzymes that cause the explosive cell growth characteristic to GBM. By identifying chemical compounds that block the expression of these enzymes, Hussaini hopes to find a better treatment for brain tumors.

Hussaini's work is just one example of the cutting-edge research taking place in the University of Virginia's neuro-oncology center. The talent and innovation driving the program are just a few of the reasons UVA is ranked as one of the top cancer centers in the United States by *U.S. News & World Report*.



Isa Hussaini, Ph.D.



Family and friends of Emily Couric, along with many UVA Cancer Center supporters, gathered for the groundbreaking of the Emily Couric Clinical Cancer Center.



## Place Matters

### *The Emily Couric Clinical Cancer Center*

As ceremonies go, the Emily Couric Clinical Cancer Center groundbreaking on April 12th was not your typical shovels-in-the-ground variety. Instead of hand spades, a truck excavator rolled onto the site of the new center and bit a chunk out of the West Parking Garage wall as the UVA Cavalier Marching Band played on.

A different style of groundbreaking was entirely appropriate since the facility that will rise on the site is based on what UVA President John

T. Casteen III described as a bold vision for cancer care in Virginia. "Discoveries made here will advance cancer care for future generations," Casteen said.

Almost 300 guests gathered for the emotional ceremony. Katie Couric, Emily Couric's sister and CBS Evening News anchor and managing editor, called the event "bittersweet."

"We would much rather be here with Emily celebrating another great accomplishment of hers," Couric

CONTINUED ON BACK COVER

# Remembering Becca

*New fellowship honors researcher*

From a very early age, Rebecca Clary Harris wanted to be a doctor.

“She was very self-assured and determined,” says her father, Richard Clary, M.D. “She was going to do whatever work was required to reach her goal.” Harris, who became a physician following the footsteps of her father and grandfather, was 32 when she died in a tragic accident last September.

A postdoctoral fellow at the UVA Human Immune Therapy Center (HITC), Harris had been tirelessly searching for better skin cancer treatments. Her impact—and her loss—has been felt in and out of the lab.

“Becca’s drive and passion were contagious,” remembers Craig Slingluff, M.D., director of the HITC. “She cared about her work and her patients, and was dedicated to finding answers. In fact, Becca made an important discovery that will help us improve the effectiveness of our cancer vaccines.”

Slingluff presented Harris’s work at the International Society for Biological Therapy of Cancer meeting in November, and he and his colleagues are completing a manuscript reporting her findings. A new \$1.5 million grant from the National Cancer Institute (NCI) has been awarded to Slingluff’s laboratory for research that continues Harris’s work.

“Becca’s studies provided the initial data that I am sure were critical in the approval of the grant by the NCI,” says Slingluff. “The publication of her research findings will be an enduring scientific monument to her contributions to melanoma research.”

Now, the University will continue building her legacy, establishing a fellowship in her memory that will advance



Before her tragic death in September, Rebecca Clary Harris was helping search for a cure for skin cancer.

UVA’s search for a cure. The Rebecca Clary Harris M.D. Memorial Fellowship will support graduate students working with patients and conducting research in melanoma and cancer vaccine development. On March 9th, Kate and Bill Hamilton’s annual dinner for the UVA Cancer Center raised more than \$140,000 for the fund.

“It is clear that immune therapy will have an important place in cancer treatment,” says Slingluff. “Becca’s work furthered that effort. She is sorely missed.”

## How Cancer Vaccines Work

**GROUNDBREAKING RESEARCH** at the UVA Cancer Center is mobilizing the body’s own defenses in the fight against cancer—raising the possibility that we can destroy cancer cells without destroying healthy tissue.

For immunotherapy to work, a person’s immune system must distinguish a cancerous cell from a normal one. A remarkable discovery by UVA investigators led to the formation of a new type of melanoma vaccine. Craig Slingluff, M.D., director of the Human Immune Therapy Center (HITC), immunologist Victor Engelhard, Ph.D., and chemist Don Hunt, Ph.D., developed a technology that

identified a molecular cancer marker that appears on the tumorous cells of many melanoma patients. This discovery gave them a target for the development of a single vaccine that could be used for many people.

Building upon this work, UVA has pioneered a series of clinical trials not only for melanoma vaccines, but for breast, ovarian, and colon cancers—with promising results.

For more information on supporting the work of the HITC, please contact Joshua Scott at (434) 243-8432 or (800) 297-0102.



Craig Slingluff, M.D.

## Mad Hatters Tea



More than 180 women gathered in October to enjoy a fashion show with a purpose: the 5th annual Mad Hatters Tea, benefiting the UVA Cancer Center’s Breast Care Program. In addition to a parade of hats, participants enjoyed a fashion show featuring UVA physicians, nurses, staff, and breast cancer survivors as models. Participants also enjoyed a Power of Pink Art Auction sponsored by Panera Bread™ and trays piled high with delicious treats from Panera.

“The event is a light-hearted way to celebrate our Breast Care Program—along with the people who make it run,” says Patrice Neese, a nurse practitioner in the Cancer Center who took part in the festivities. “It’s a serious cause, but a fun afternoon.”

The Mad Hatters Tea helped raise more than \$6,000 this year, which will help UVA provide special services for women with breast cancer.

## UVA Student Athletes Help “Shoot Out Cancer”



For 15 years, the “Shoot Out for Cancer” has brought together the Student Athlete Mentors (S.A.M.) and community children for a good cause.

With help from the University’s Student Council, the annual spring festival raised more than \$6,200 this year for the Patients & Friends Research Fund. Money from the event will support the work of Michael Douvas, M.D., who is developing more effective treatments for young patients with leukemia.

## IN THEIR

# own words

UVA students volunteer for the cancer awareness group Plus+Energy for a variety of reasons, but Stacey Woods joined out of a deeply personal motivation: The rising third-year student was diagnosed with thyroid cancer in her senior year of high school. Her cancer is in remission, but her desire to help those still battling the disease remains as strong as ever.



**Stacey Woods**  
UVA student and  
cancer survivor

“I thought joining Plus+Energy would provide a great opportunity to raise awareness and money for a cause that hit close to home,” the Herndon, Va., native says today.

Plus+Energy was founded by two University of Virginia students who saw the effects of cancer firsthand on their families and friends. The local group—formerly known as FORCE (Fighting, Overcoming, and Responding to Cancer Everywhere)—is dedicated to building a nationwide community of college students working together to fight cancer. The group’s mission includes public awareness, patient support, and fundraising.

Each November, the group hosts the Run for the Lungs 5K, which raises money to support lung cancer research at the University of Virginia Cancer Center. Last year, the group helped raise more than \$3,000 through the Patients & Friends Research Fund for Dr. David Jones’s lung cancer research. “It is incredible to see the UVA community unite around a cause, and I am inspired by Plus+Energy’s commitment to battling this disease,” says Jones.

For Stacey Woods—who plans to teach elementary education once she receives her master’s degree—her commitment to fighting cancer remains strong. She plans to continue volunteering for cancer-related causes after she graduates. Meanwhile, a new group of Plus+Energy volunteers will carry on the work started by UVA alumni before them.

## Save the Date

**August 30** • 26th Annual Charlottesville Women's Four Miler

**September 17** • Patients & Friends Panel Discussion and Breakfast, UVA

**October 13** • Swing Fore the Cure Golf Tournament, Centreville, Va.

**October 26** • Mad Hatters Tea Party, UVA

For more information, contact the UVA Health System Development Cancer Programs team at 434-924-8432.

### UVA Health System Development Cancer Programs Team

Scott Karr, *Director of Development*  
Joshua Scott, *Associate Director of Development*

Claire Wood, *Director of Annual Giving*  
Cari Hocevar, *Development Associate*

### INVESTING IN HOPE

is published twice a year. No public funds are used for its production.

*Managing Editor:* Lee Fleisher

*Designer:* Anne Matthews

*Writers:* Margaret Edwards, Anna Emery,  
Lee Fleisher, Jeff Hanna, Lynn Woodson, John Yellig

*Photographers:* Stephanie Gross, Andrew Shurtleff, Jackson Smith

The University of Virginia does not discriminate in its programs, procedures, or practices against any person on the basis of age, citizenship, color, handicap, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or status as a disabled veteran or veteran of the Vietnam era. The University operates equal opportunity and affirmative action programs for faculty, staff, and students. The University of Virginia is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer.

Please write to us at our return address to remove your name from the list to receive fund-raising materials to support the UVA Health System.



### UVA Health Foundation

P. O. Box 800773  
Charlottesville, VA 22908-0773  
Telephone (434) 924-8432  
Toll-Free (800) 297-0102  
Fax (434) 982-1984  
www.uvahealthfoundation.org

### Place Matters

CONTINUED FROM COVER

said. "But we are really happy and grateful that so many people have come together to honor her... She thought that a first-class cancer center focused on patients and not just the disease would be a wonderful thing for this community."

### A Place of Hope and Healing

When completed in 2011, the five-story, 150,000-square-foot Emily Couric Clinical Cancer Center will provide state-of-the-art therapies and comprehensive cancer care to patients and their families—all under one roof. The building will serve as a healing environment filled with natural light, garden spaces, and images from throughout the Commonwealth.

Michael Weber, director of the UVA Cancer Center, says the building will put the patient at the center of a "matrix of care" and treat individuals based on the specific characteristics of their cancers.

"This building will give us the space and resources we need to treat the *whole* individual, not just the disease," he said. "The Emily Couric Clinical Cancer Center will help us extend hope—realistic hope—in the face of a cancer diagnosis."

### Emily Couric's Legacy

The UVA Board of Visitors approved the naming of the new facility to honor the late Virginia senator for her efforts to acquire new resources for cancer care and research. In his remarks, Virginia Governor Tim Kaine called Emily Couric a wonderful public servant.

"Our lives are all very short. Some—

Emily's and other's—are too short," Kaine said. "In that shortness, we hope we gain some perspective. We have to be wise and focus on the things that matter and let go of the things that don't. Things that matter are: care for others, advancement of knowledge so that future generations can have it better than we do, compassion. That's what wisdom is. That's what Emily Couric demonstrated in her life."

### Laying a Strong Foundation

Strong public support has helped make the Couric Center possible. The Commonwealth of Virginia appropriated \$25 million for the project, and the UVA Medical Center committed an additional \$20 million. Private donors stepped forward to provide more than \$16 million toward construction costs.

Fundraising continues for the project and for a proposed Education and Resource Center that will offer patients additional resources and mobilize caregivers, community organizations, and citizens in the fight against cancer.

"When fighting cancer, hope matters," said R. Edward Howell, vice president and chief executive officer of the UVA Medical Center. "Today we take an important step toward building a place full of hope and healing—and a promise for a brighter future for all of us."

*For more information on the Emily Couric Clinical Cancer Center, or to make a gift, please contact the UVA Health System Cancer Programs team at 1-800-297-0102 or 434-924-8432.*

Non-Profit Organization  
US Postage  
**PAID**  
Charlottesville, VA  
Permit No 164