

LWGA PRESENTS GOLF FOR A CURE

BY HOLLY TAYLOR

The 2020 Golf for A Cure (GFAC) Tournament on April 28 marks 17 years of funding cancer research by the Landings Women's Golf Association (LWGA).

The funds raised by last year's success are currently fueling critical research at the Mercer University School of Medicine in Savannah and continuing the LWGA commitment to research that first began in 2004 with the Anderson Cancer Institute.

For many years, the American Cancer Society sponsored a fundraiser tournament but discontinued it around 2002. However, the LWGA found a new mission in 2004 after Landings residents Curtis and Libba Anderson spearheaded and funded the Anderson Cancer Institute (ACI) at Memorial Hospital to draw renowned researchers to Savannah.

"Memorial Hospital was committing to cancer research, and the LWGA was very excited about funding research instead of clinical support," said Ann Higbee, one of the first GFAC chairs. "We wanted the dollars to stay in Savannah, but we also wanted to advance research that could have a global impact."

An affiliation between ACI and Mercer began in 2008 when the Savannah campus became a four-year medical school, and a new 30,000-square-foot research facility opened. Together, ACI researchers and Mercer students worked on pancreatic, breast, and prostate cancer research, supported by the LWGA, which helped fund a tissue bank for research specimens.

However, when Hospital Corporation of America acquired Memorial Hospital (and ACI) in 2018, the resulting for-profit entity was no longer eligible for



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Dr. Robert Visalli with the LWGA funded Luminex 200 Analyzer.

donations. Because of the very close relationship between Mercer and ACI, the non-profit Mercer was the obvious choice and allowed the LWGA to maintain its tradition of supporting cancer research.

Perhaps no one is more excited about the investment at Mercer's Savannah campus than the Andersons.

"Last year's tournament was a huge success on all fronts. The nine-holers loved it, and for sure, the LMGA was thrilled to be included," said Libba. "The party after was amazing, and Mercer Medical School was beyond honored."

The 2019 funds paid for four LWGA Cancer Research Scholars to spend eight weeks supporting leading cancer specialists. They researched early diagnostic markers for breast cancer, targeted cell treatments for ovarian and endometrial cancers, and the role of tumor suppressors and activators in preventing cancer development.

The \$94,562 from GFAC also financed critical upgrades to the immunofluorescence and confocal microscopes to be used in the newly named LWGA Microscopy Suite at the

Mercer research facility, according to Dr. Robert Visalli, Chair of the Department of Biomedical Sciences at Mercer.

Dr. Visalli credits the expanded LWGA funding with enabling Mercer to recruit a stem cell researcher from the University of Wisconsin by providing \$20,000 in new equipment. Dr. Raghavan Chinnadurai is now an Assistant Professor of Oncology at the Savannah campus.

"The importance of the LWGA funding to the Mercer Savannah campus cannot be overstated. It is our key source of funding to support state of the art cancer research for our brightest medical students and faculty," said Dr. Visalli.

So, start your engines! The tournament will again be open only to LWGA, L9GA, and LMGA members. The team captain may register their team on the member app or website under LWGA events. The per player entry fee is \$100, which is a tax-deductible donation, and \$30 for the fabulous post-round reception. Shotgun starts range from 1pm to 1:30pm, depending upon the course.

"The LWGA hopes to once again fill six courses," said GFAC Chair Syd Britt. "This tournament is a wonderful example of how Landings Club members come together to raise funds for critical research and demonstrate our strong sense of community."