

TWATL LWGA March 8

The LWGA's Golf for A Cure on April 28 is poised to pass the million dollar milestone for fundraising, a testament to the chairs and volunteers who have run the tournament for 17 years.

The GFAC began in 2004 when the American Cancer Society discontinued its sponsorship of golf tournaments. The LWGA directed its support to the newly created Anderson Cancer Institute (ACI) at Memorial Hospital. Launched to bring leading cancer researchers to Savannah, ACI was named for generous and forward-thinking Landings residents Curtis and Libba Anderson.

"We liked that the money stayed in the community, yet could have a global impact," said Ann Higbee, GFAC chair in 2005 and 2006. "There was a sense of satisfaction when we saw increasing dollars being raised and ACI could buy equipment that would not otherwise be available to researchers."

When Memorial Hospital and ACI were acquired by the for-profit Hospital Corporation of America in 2017, the charitable dollars had to be redirected to a non-profit. The Mercer University School of Medicine was the logical choice because of the collaboration there that began in 2008 when the Savannah campus became a four-year medical program and established a research component.

Current Chair Syd Britt shares Ann's passion for GFAC dollars remaining in Savannah and the important work now overseen by Dr. Robert Visalli, Chair of the Department of Biomedical Sciences at Mercer.

"The energy, enthusiasm and appreciation by both the Mercer Summer Scholars and Dr. Visalli makes it all worthwhile," said Syd. "Not only are we donating to cancer research, but we are investing in future Georgia doctors through the LWGA Summer Scholars."

Behind every successful tournament and chair was an army of enthusiastic, tireless volunteers. Christine Lind was chair in 2013 when volunteers worked exhaustively on a silent auction that drove the gross proceeds over the \$100,000 mark for the first time.

Last year, the tournament was opened to members of L9GA and LMGA, resulting in 410 golfers on six courses and gross proceeds hitting a record \$102,730. Chair Anne Warhola recalled the "sheer jubilation" of the golfers, Landings staff and Mercer folks when the final number was announced at the post round reception.

Karen Sellick, chair for 2008 and 2009, remembered the first year the memory/honor doves were hung from the hall ceiling entering Plantation ballroom. "It was breathtaking," she said.

Linda Rich, 2016 Chair, said the enthusiasm of LWGA members inspired her to serve as a chair and 2017 Chair Nancy Lieb noted that even the golfers who don't play much always show up for GFAC.

First and foremost, all our chairs were driven by the common bond of cancer touching their lives in some way. Ann Higbee and Maryce Cunningham, 2018 chair, are cancer survivors. Marianne Kosiewicz, 2015 chair, had four siblings with varying degrees of cancer and Anne Warhola lost both parents to cancer.

"What always moved me the most was when we asked for people to stand who had someone who had been touched by cancer," said Karen O'Neill, chair for 2011 and 2012. "And no one was left sitting." Chairing GFAC is a big personal commitment, so let's all be sure to thank these women for making a difference and powering GFAC to its million dollar milestone.