

# PULSE

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PHILANTHROPY IN ACTION AT UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA HEALTH SYSTEM



UVA's LGL research dream team (l to r): Dr. Tom Loughran, Holly Davis (clinical research coordinator), Dave Feith, PhD, and Kristine Olson, PhD.

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## CREATING HOPE AND POSITIVE OUTCOMES

UVA Becomes a Destination for LGL Leukemia Patients Worldwide

**AS A SUCCESSFUL ENTREPRENEUR** in the Silicon Valley technology industry, Lane Bess is a hard-charging risk taker who makes things happen. But when doctors diagnosed him in 2011 with large granular lymphocyte (LGL) leukemia—an uncommon and incurable blood cancer—he felt a rare sense of helplessness about his future.

Determined to affect a positive outcome, Bess traveled across the country to seek care and learn more from the man who discovered the disease, Tom Loughran, Jr., MD, director of UVA Cancer Center.

Now, true to his entrepreneurial nature, Bess has found a way to do something productive in hopes of helping himself and others. Bess and his wife, Letty, have given \$2 million to position UVA as the world's premier destination for patients and families seeking innovative treatments for LGL leukemia.

“You can be wildly successful in business and achieve financial freedom, but you can't buy your health. But just maybe I can help impact the progress toward finding answers and hopefully someday a

better treatment or cure,” says Bess, the former CEO of Palo Alto Networks and now an angel investor. “The desired outcome of this investment, first and foremost, is that people will be relieved of a feeling of helplessness and gain a better understanding of the nature of this disease—and how they may receive better treatment for a better life outcome.”

About 1,000 U.S. patients are diagnosed each year with LGL leukemia, a chronic condition in which a person's white blood cells clone themselves and multiply, attacking the bone marrow and joints. While there is no cure for the disease, many patients like Bess effectively manage their conditions with immunosuppressant therapies such as methotrexate, a drug commonly used to treat rheumatoid arthritis.

Loughran's research has focused on identifying the genetic changes that drive the development and persistence of LGL leukemia. Thanks to the Bess gift, the team is engaged in comprehensive, whole genome sequencing to identify new targets for future clinical trials and possibly a cure for the disease.

*Continued on page 2*

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*This gift has the potential to dramatically impact LGL and leukemia research worldwide and to provide new hope to patients.*

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# UNITED AROUND COMPASSIONATE CARE



Mel Haney's gift, in memory of his wife Muriel, helps to ensure that compassion remains an integral and growing part of clinical care.

**F**ROM UNDERGRADUATE TO PHD STUDENTS, compassion is a vital thread woven into every nurse's education at UVA and considered a nonnegotiable ingredient in patient care. And though it's often missing in today's addled, stress-filled healthcare environments, when present, compassion is a powerful force.

It's also a force that can stir generosity and ignite collaboration.

Such was the case with Greene County, Va., resident Mel Haney, who derived immense comfort from the exceptional palliative care his wife, Muriel, received before she passed away in 2012. The kindness and dignity with which they were treated as a family made such an impression on Haney that he was inspired to make a gift to the School of Nursing, with the aim of ensuring that instruction in compassion would be an integral and growing part of clinical care.

That gift created the Melton D. and Muriel Haney Interprofessional Conference on Compassionate Care at the End of Life, formalizing a young but already

robust partnership among the School's Compassionate Care Initiative, UVA School of Medicine's Center for Biomedical Ethics and Humanities, Martha Jefferson Hospital, and Hospice of the Piedmont.

"Compassionate care at the end of life makes such a difference, not only for the patient, but for the family," says Haney. "This conference is my way of giving back, to educate the whole clinical team involved in palliative care and hospice, and inspire nursing and medical students to improve quality of life for patients and families."

First held in November 2013, the second conference took place in April 2015 in UVA's School of Nursing. Sessions ranged from conveying bad news to helping children grieve, and from the ways different racial and cultural groups deal with end-of-life issues to the comfort therapy animals offer the dying and their loved ones. Cumulatively, the events have drawn hundreds of health professionals to the school.

"This conference is a wonderful coming together of the community—different organizations and professions—all committed to education and compassionate care at the last phase of life," says conference co-organizer Susan Bauer-Wu, PhD, the Tussi and John Kluge Professor of Contemplative End-of-Life Care and director of the Compassionate Care Initiative. "Mr. Haney's generous gift allows us to continue this unprecedented collaborative event in perpetuity, having a positive ripple effect for many years to come." ●

*LGL Leukemia—continued from page 1*

A portion of the funds will be used to enhance the UVA-based National LGL Leukemia Patient Registry, the world's largest collection of clinical samples and associated patient data for the disease. Data collection of this magnitude will allow UVA to accelerate the pace of research and make connections and discoveries that would not be possible otherwise. A portion of the fund will also help cover travel expenses for likely LGL leukemia patients from other parts of the U.S. who can't afford to travel to UVA to see Loughran.

In addition, the gift will support

the creation of a dedicated web resource responsible for leading patient education, conversation, and activities, providing a forum for individuals with LGL leukemia to communicate with each other—and perhaps feel a little less helpless in the face of their diagnosis.

"It's just fantastic that Lane and Letty have contributed so generously to our work on LGL leukemia, and our research team is very excited," Loughran says. "This gift has the potential to dramatically impact LGL and leukemia research worldwide and to provide new hope to patients." ●



Lane and Letty Bess want to change the future for LGL cancer patients.

# GEORGE CHRIST, PHD



## RESTORING HOPE THROUGH REGENERATIVE MEDICINE

Advances in medical technologies since World War II mean that more and more soldiers are surviving extraordinary injuries sustained on the battlefield. However, many of these injuries caused by explosive devices—such as lost limbs and severe burns—are disfiguring and debilitating.

George Christ, PhD, who joined UVA last October as a professor of biomedical engineering and orthopaedic surgery, is leading UVA's efforts to develop therapies that will regenerate muscle tissue and restore these patients to a normal life.

"There are more than 52,000 soldiers wounded in action in recent conflicts, and about 80 percent of these injuries involve soft tissues of the head, neck, and extremities that result in permanent cosmetic and functional issues," says Christ, who also serves as director of basic and translational research in the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery at UVA School of Medicine. "Many of these soldiers are young people in their mid-20s, and their injuries can be life-shattering."

Known internationally for his work in tissue engineering, regenerative medicine, and muscle physiology, Christ is part of the Armed Forces Institute of Regenerative Medicine (AFIRM), a consortium of public and private institutions partnering with the federal government to help soldiers wounded in combat. He is moving toward FDA approval on his team's tissue engineered muscle repair technology.

The concept for regrowing muscle starts with taking a small number of cells from the patient and expanding them in the lab. Next, the cells would be put on a "scaffold" to be stretched appropriately and then implanted into the patient's body to stimulate a "Genesis effect" promoting the growth of muscle tissue.

The technology has the potential to heal injuries and diseases in civilians as well. Christ currently is developing a clinical application in adults with cleft lip. He believes UVA has talented and committed faculty and staff who can collaborate with him to advance the research.

"Developing these technologies requires a total team effort," says Christ, a co-inventor on more than 26 patents/patents pending related to gene therapy and regenerative medicine treatments. "UVA definitely has the potential to make this groundbreaking effort succeed."



PHOTOGRAPH © COE SWEET

### CHALLENGE

*To develop regenerative technologies that can restore muscle function and appearance following traumatic injury, with a focus on wounded soldiers.*

### IMPACT

*Offer healing and hope to tens of thousands of soldiers, as well as civilians, with devastating injuries and to create a platform of related technologies that may have multiple applications for injuries and different conditions.*

### ACTION

*Collaborate with UVA researchers and organizations worldwide from a broad variety of disciplines to develop technologies that accelerate the body's ability to repair following traumatic injury.*

*"If we can treat these serious injuries in wounded warriors, we can have a major impact on healthcare in general because we will have a fundamental understanding of how to regenerate, or regrow, muscle on a bulk scale. We also have to create the environment at UVA that makes all of this possible. More sources of funding will absolutely accelerate our progress."*

# MAKING INFINITE RIPPLES

Smith Endowment Offers Lasting Support for Alzheimer's Research and Medical Scholarships



**“MY PARENTS WERE THE BIGGEST** influences in my life,” says Howard Clayton “Clay” Smith, Jr., MD (MED ’79), “and, near the end of her life, my mother suffered with Alzheimer’s disease. Even as a physician, there was little I could do to help her.”

Smith determined then that he would do what he could to help Alzheimer’s patients like his mother. Recently, he created the Dr. Howard Clayton Smith, Jr. and Katherine Moffett Smith Endowed Alzheimer’s Research Fund. Income from the fund, named for Smith and his mother, will fund Alzheimer’s research in UVA’s Department of Neurology.

“We could not be more grateful to the Smiths for this gift,” says Karen Johnston, MD, chair, UVA Department of Neurology. “This funding will support innovative and promising research in Alzheimer’s disease and jumpstart new projects with the

potential to change Alzheimer’s care for the millions of people who will be diagnosed in the coming decades. Endowed funds give us permanent and flexible funding, which is the best way to ensure progress.”

“Alzheimer’s continues to be a significant disease with explosive potential for the future with the aging of the Baby Boomers,” says Smith. “Progress is being made in this research, and I thought it was appropriate to make a donation in my mother’s honor. If Alzheimer’s is ever cured, then the funds will go to support research in anxiety and depression, conditions that plagued many of my patients when I was in practice.”

Smith, who practiced as a family medicine physician in the Richmond and Virginia Beach areas until his retirement in 2013, also created the Dr. Howard

Clayton Smith, Jr. and Howard Clayton Smith Endowed Medical Scholarship Fund to honor his father. The scholarships will support UVA medical students with an interest in family medicine.

“Although it sometimes feels like a dying breed, family medicine is essential in our time,” says Smith.

Both of Smith’s gifts are endowments, meaning that only the interest, never the principal, is spent.

“I was attracted to the endowment concept,” says Smith. “Our tenure on this planet is finite, but the endowment mechanism allows a lasting footprint. We can have a personal impact forever.”

He also encourages others to follow his path, with whatever size of gift they can make.

“In life, we make large splashes and sometimes only small ripples,” says Smith. “An endowment makes those ripples last—and makes a gift especially impactful. Even a small gift makes a difference. No matter what size pebble you throw in the water, it will have an enduring ripple.”

In the case of Smith’s gift, the ripples could lead to better treatment, or even a cure, for one of the world’s most devastating illnesses. ●

## SUPPORT THAT ENDURES

Endowed funds secure the future of priority initiatives across UVA Health System—allowing donors to make a lasting impact. With an endowment, only the interest is spent each year, while the principal continues to grow. To learn more, visit [UVAHealthFoundation.org](http://UVAHealthFoundation.org) or call 1.800.297.0102.

## U.S. NEWS HONORS FIVE UVA SPECIALTIES

**FIVE UVA SPECIALTIES ARE RECOGNIZED** among the nation’s best in *U.S. News & World Report’s* 2015–2016 “Best Hospitals” guide. UVA’s Diabetes & Endocrinology program is tied for 39th, placing UVA among the top 3 percent of U.S. hospitals with a nationally ranked program. Four additional specialties were honored as “high-performing” meaning they rank

among the top 25 percent nationally in their specialties: cancer, nephrology, neurology & neurosurgery, and orthopedics.

These five adult specialties join four pediatric specialties—neonatology, orthopaedics, pulmonology, and urology—that are nationally ranked in *U.S. News’* 2015–2016 “Best Children’s Hospitals” guide.



The connection between Stuart and Betsy Houston (center) with CHRC Director Ariel Gomez (left) and UVA Children's Hospital Physician-in-Chief James Nataro (right) was instant and deep.

PHOTOGRAPH © STEPHANIE GROSS



*Joy comes from giving and making a difference.*



## THE JOY OF GIVING

**T**WELVE YEARS AGO, BETSY AND STUART HOUSTON embarked on their first journey to UVA Health System.

It was not for good reasons.

Betsy had suffered a massive gastro-intestinal hemorrhage and was flown to UVA on the Pegasus helicopter. Eleven days later, she was discharged. The couple credited UVA doctors and nurses with saving her life.

But it was more than that, Stuart Houston says. The two immediately felt a part of the UVA family, and the connections they established during that first visit grew stronger with each passing year.

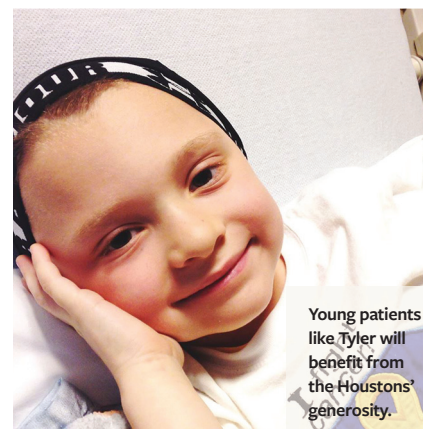
“It is a debt we can never repay,” Houston says, and you can hear his wife in his voice. Her peaceful passing in the spring of 2015 made the impact of her incredible life all the more clear to everyone who knew her.

Together, the couple became active supporters of UVA Health System, inspiring everyone they met. Their first gift fostered research presentation opportunities for medical fellows, with a focus on those specializing in gastroenterology and interventional radiology—the two departments most crucial to Betsy’s initial treatment and recovery. Their support enables fellows to submit proposals, travel, and present their studies at both national and international conferences and symposiums. Life-long learners, the Houstons knew how important this additional resource was for the doctors of tomorrow, and wanted to ensure every fellow had the opportunity to present his or her passion to an audience of peers.

But that was only the beginning. Fast forward, and there are few areas at UVA that the Houstons’ generosity has not touched. The UVA Children’s Hospital, and specifically the Child Health Research Center (CHRC), held special meaning for the couple. Their gift to the CHRC—the establishment of a speaker series that begins in the spring of 2016—will provide invaluable knowledge to students and healthcare professionals at UVA, as well as interested members of the Charlottesville community. The first speaker, Dr. Mario Capecchi, is a Nobel Laureate who co-chairs the Department of Human Genetics at the University of Utah School of Medicine.

“Betsy and Stuart Houston always understood the importance of pediatric research for today’s patients and for future generations,” says James Nataro, MD, physician-in-chief at UVA Children’s Hospital. “We are so grateful to benefit from their support.”

The Houstons’ generosity also continues to support Joanne Pinkerton, MD, medical director at UVA’s Midlife Health Clinic. Betsy Houston played a key role in developing a public relations plan to promote Charlottesville’s first community Midlife Women’s Symposium. This year’s event will be held in her honor, and Pinkerton credits much of the symposium’s continued success to the advocacy and strong communications foundation that Betsy provided.



Young patients like Tyler will benefit from the Houstons’ generosity.

“Betsy and Stuart always brought vision and strategic planning to every project they got behind, helping to ensure success on all levels,” says Pinkerton.

Training in clinical medicine was also a priority for the couple. They knew firsthand the importance of the patient-caregiver relationship and wanted it to remain a priority for future nurses and doctors. To this end, they supported UVA’s interprofessional education program, which involves both the School of Medicine and the School of Nursing.

When asked why they gave across the Health System, Stuart Houston sums it up in one word: joy.

“Joy comes from giving and making a difference,” Houston explains. “It is a blessing to have enough to give, and a privilege to give.” ●

# EDUCATING OUTSTANDING RESIDENTS AND FELLOWS

Former Orthopaedics Chair and His Wife Keep Department Strong



Dr. Bobby Chhabra led a department-wide effort to establish the residents' education fund in honor of his mentor, Dr. Wang.

PHOTOGRAPH © JACKSON SMITH

# F

OR NEARLY THREE DECADES, GWO-JAW WANG, MD (RES '74), inspired generations of UVA's orthopaedic residents with his skills and compassion. Bobby Chhabra, MD (Med '95, Res '01), chair of the UVA's Department of Orthopaedics, is one of those former residents who considers Wang a role model in caring for patients and running a successful medical practice.

"I am very fortunate to have trained with Dr. Wang," says Chhabra, "as are several members of our faculty. His mentorship opened many doors in my academic career. His accomplishments in patient care, education, and innovative musculoskeletal research are still the gold standard for our department. His continued involvement with UVA Orthopaedics provides guidance to many of our faculty, including me, on a regular basis. Our department's success is a direct result of the foundation he built and the vision he instilled in so many of us."

As an expression of gratitude and to recognize his mentor's contributions to UVA, Chhabra led a department-wide effort to establish the G. J. Wang, MD Orthopaedic Surgery Resident Education Fund in Wang's honor, positioning the School of Medicine to advance and improve the quality of its educational offerings for orthopaedic surgery residents. The overall effort exceeded expectations, raising more than \$2.2 million—enough to fund the G. J. Wang, MD Professorship in Orthopaedic Surgery, in addition to fully funding the resident education fund.

Excited about the potential impact of the resident education fund, Wang and his wife Chen-Mei Amy Wang have also contributed.

"My hope is that these funds will assist the University in attracting the best possible faculty to teach the residents and help them excel in their studies," says Wang, adding praise for his wife as a partner and motivator throughout his career and personal life. "It is a privilege to know that my contributions will help to enhance the education of the physicians who graduate from UVA. I owe so much to the education that I received at UVA, and I'm happy to let others know that I truly believe in the department's mission."

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*A well-rounded education and excellence in teaching creates better doctors, who in turn, provide better care to patients.*

”

Wang served as chair of orthopaedics from 1992 to 2002. Since 1970, when Wang came to UVA as an orthopaedic surgery resident, the department has doubled in size and expanded to include specialized care centers and services such as the Hand Center, Sports Medicine Center, Spine Center, joint replacement, pediatric orthopaedics, and orthopaedic trauma surgery. Wang views this growth as a sign of the School of Medicine's enduring commitment to teaching, and, ultimately, to providing superior patient care.

"Patients are always affected by the quality of care given by their doctors," says Wang, who has received numerous awards and recognitions, including the Lifetime Achievement and Excellence in Orthopaedic Teaching Award from UVA's Department of Orthopaedics. "An outstanding faculty enhances the residents' education and training by providing excellent role models, access to superior tutoring, and exposure to special skill sets. A well-rounded education and excellence in teaching creates better doctors who, in turn, provide better care to patients. Ultimately, improving patient care is the goal of any enhancements we make in residents' education. I hope that UVA continues to strive to be among the best medical institutions in the country, encouraging both innovation and quality in its faculty and residents." ●

## WHAT DOES IT TAKE?



*Resident Education & Training Resources*



*Endowed Professorships & Faculty Support Packages*



*Departmental Program Funding*

# THE POWER OF GIVING

**LEADERSHIP GIFTS TO THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA HEALTH SYSTEM** save lives, accelerate the path of medical and nursing research, and lay the groundwork for the future of healthcare. Thanks to the dedication of our alumni, friends, grateful patients, and benefactors, we are making great strides in patient care, research, and nursing and medical education. **This list represents gifts of \$100,000 or more made to any area of the Health System from July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015.** We have done our best to ensure that every gift made during this time has been recognized. If we missed your gift, or listed your name in error, we apologize and ask that you please notify the UVA Health Foundation at 800.297.0102 or 434.924.8432.

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In the 2014–15 fiscal year, UVA Health System received:

- \$20.3 million in bequest intentions
- \$16.9 million in gifts from UVA alumni
- \$11 million from friends of UVA Health System
- \$7.7 million from current and former medical and nursing faculty and staff

\*Compass Rose Members

The Compass Rose Society honors donors who have given \$250,000 more cumulatively to UVA Health System during their lifetime.

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# PULSE

PHILANTHROPY IN ACTION AT UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA HEALTH SYSTEM

## LEADING IN ALL OUR MISSIONS

WITH THE ACADEMIC YEAR NOW UNDERWAY, the UVA School of Medicine has welcomed David S. Wilkes, MD, as its new dean. A board-certified specialist in pulmonary disease and critical care medicine, Wilkes comes to UVA from Indiana University School of Medicine, where he served as executive associate dean for research affairs and director of the Physician Scientist Initiative. He also served as director of the Strategic Research Initiative for the School of Medicine and Indiana University Health and as the university's assistant vice president for research.

"Dr. Wilkes is a nationally recognized physician scientist in lung immunology who guided the academic research programs at Indiana through a period of renewal and growth," says Richard Shannon, MD, UVA's executive vice president for health affairs. "His medical expertise, combined with his executive management skills, make him an ideal fit to lead our biomedical research renaissance."

"Dr. Wilkes has demonstrated leadership and acumen in medical research and education," adds UVA President Teresa Sullivan. "He understands the important role academic medicine plays in the life of a comprehensive research university and is well suited to lead the School of Medicine to greater heights of excellence."

Wilkes says he was drawn to UVA for the chance to work with its leaders, including Shannon; Pamela Sutton-Wallace, chief executive officer of UVA Medical Center; and Dorrie Fontaine, RN, PhD, FAAN,



PHOTOGRAPH © COE SWEET

dean of the School of Nursing. He looks forward to partnering with them to continue strengthening the Health System.

"My goal is that we excel in all three areas of our mission—research, education, and patient care," he says. "I want UVA to be the place to be among academic medical centers."

Wilkes is a prolific researcher and has been recognized as a gifted educator. He received his bachelor's degree from Villanova and his medical degree from Temple University. He completed his residency at Temple University Hospital and a pulmonary and critical care fellowship at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center. He is also a U.S. Air Force Medical Corps veteran.

Wilkes succeeds Dr. Randolph Canterbury, who served as interim dean from November 2014 until mid-September 2015. ●

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