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October 28, 2009

Golf tournament raises \$100,000 for experimental cancer treatment

Here is a new release about the Ray Walsh Memorial Golf Tournament on Nov. 6 in Atascocita:

They're hitting the greens to make some "green" at the Atascocita Golf Club. The Ray Walsh Memorial Golf Tournament has raised an amazing \$100,000 for experimental cancer research and treatment - providing help to families battling terminal Lymphoma. But friends and family of the late Ray Walsh say they're just getting started.

As they prepare to welcome golfers to the 5th annual charity tourney on Friday, November 6th, from 10:30 to 4:00 PM, organizers say they'll keep on swinging until doctors find a cure. A rare form of Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma claimed the remarkable life of Ray Walsh in 2005.

"My dad had the personality and joyous presence that transformed the lives of those around him," says daughter Terry Walsh Crews. "Together with my mom, he found the tremendous love and generosity to raise seven happy children and 23 foster kids - one of whom he adopted - because he had such a huge heart."

Proceeds from the tourney go to the Ray Walsh Research Fund, established at The Methodist Hospital in Houston's Medical Center. The fund supports cutting-edge research by doctors at The Methodist Hospital, Baylor College of Medicine and Texas Children's Hospital. This past April, the Ray Walsh Foundation made its largest donation yet of \$23,000.

One of the nation's top cancer fighters, Dr. Hector Preti of The Methodist Hospital in Houston says, "the (Walsh) research fund supports one project in particular - an advanced, phase 2 study or clinical trial. We're trying to find new drugs or combinations of existing drugs that will work better to combat Lymphoma." Preti says the trials help patients whose Lymphoma has relapsed and have no hope of a cure from traditional treatments.

Every year, the foundation holds its tournament on one of Walsh's favorite courses - the Atascocita Golf Club in Humble. A passionate golfer, the gregarious Walsh enjoyed playing with friends and family. The event celebrates the life of Ray Walsh who was known for mentoring younger colleagues during a 35-year-career at

Shell Energy North America —which is a major sponsor of the tournament.

Organizers want to honor the memory of Walsh by raising more money for experimental treatments, giving families hope when the prognosis is bleak. That was the grim scenario for Walsh as he faced a relapse of his cancer in late 2004.

The Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma had returned after a 5-year remission and his only chance of survival was a bone marrow transplant. Yet the toll of chemotherapy had weakened his body to the point where he was too weak for surgery. "Go home," he was told by one doctor, "and call hospice."

Into this dreadful scenario came The Methodist Hospital's Dr. Hector Preti. He told Ray about a clinical trial underway that could give Walsh one more shot. Preti administered the trial treatment to Walsh and it met with initial success. Walsh regained enough strength to withstand a grueling bone marrow transplant. And as a result of the treatments, his life was prolonged for half-a-year. Among other things, Walsh was able to see the birth of his newest grandchild.

The transplant was not enough to keep the cancer at bay, and Walsh finally succumbed to the cancer in July 2005. But Dr. Preti says, "when a patient wants to live, we should be there. We should find the means to prolong their life." Knowledge gained from Ray's experience helps to develop treatments for future patients. Preti just received a call from a doctor in another state with a similar case— "a patient with the same type of rare T-Cell Lymphoma that Ray had - it's very rare." But with the knowledge gained, "we're working to come up with improved protocols and treatments that we hope will work."

And one thing that seems to be working is the effort to raise money. Friends and family from across Texas, New York, California, Illinois, Hawaii and the rest of the country volunteer to man the holes, give out refreshments, cheer the golfers on, and administer the tournament events. For the Walsh family the affair has become a labor of love. Dr. Preti points to this "unprecedented response" as one of the many things born out of Ray's experience: "For one thing, the Ray Walsh Foundation came into being. We now have the benefit of a group of motivated people who are forever engaged in the effort to find new treatment plans and an innovative approach to conducting research. Out of these interactions, we also get our ideas and inspiration."

Dr. Preti too, found himself touched by Walsh's irrepressible personality. "I can tell you this: what we have gained from knowing Ray Walsh, is his spirit. He always had a joke whenever I'd see him. He always made me laugh. He was such a great man— it was an honor to know him."

For more information about the Ray Walsh Foundation, Fund and Golf Tournament, please visit www.raywalshfoundation.org or call 281-380-8548.