



## HIGHLIGHTS OF HOPE | FEBRUARY 2018

- 2 A Rare Combination | 4 Prestigious Award to Study Colon Cancer | 5 Science on Saturday | 6 Coming Together to Take on Parkinson's Disease  
 7 Lighthouse Group—The Power of Community Action | 8 Couture for a Cure | 10 Hope on the Hill  
 12 A Conversation About Osteoporosis | 13 Event Photos | 16 Sponsors | 18 Igniting Spirit and Taking on Cancer  
 20 Sally Schaafsma, Purple Community Volunteer | 21 A Legacy Of Generosity—Alvin And Hylde Tuuk | 22 Memorials & Tributes

# A RARE COMBINATION

## Science and philanthropy team up to help patients with little-known diseases

**A bench-to-bedside effort to better understand and treat rare diseases aims to provide answers where there are now only questions.**

"Rare diseases are often understudied, which is a real problem when it comes to helping patients," said Dr. Matt Steensma, a scientist at Van Andel Institute, a surgeon at Spectrum Health and an assistant professor at Michigan State University. "It's very difficult to tell someone, 'we know what you have, but we don't know what to do about it.'"

More than 7,000 such disorders have been identified to date; some, like Aicardi syndrome, affect only a handful of people, while others, such as neurofibromatosis type 1, affect thousands but still fall below the 200,000-person cap that marks a condition as rare. An estimated 25 million people in the U.S. have a rare disease, a large proportion of whom are children.

"These patients deserve the best we can give," Steensma said. "They deserve answers and effective treatments—that's what we hope to accomplish."

### Going after the outliers

About eight years ago, Steensma teamed up with Dr. Bart Williams, a bone disease expert and now director of the Institute's Center for Cancer and Cell Biology, to create the Outliers Program, a unique research endeavor designed to identify the causes of rare diseases and to find ways to treat them. Their efforts are bolstered by the expertise of the Institute's Bioinformatics and Biostatistics Core and collaborators at Michigan State University College of Human Medicine.

First up on their docket? Oculocutaneous syndrome (OES), an exceedingly uncommon disease first identified in two unrelated patients in Grand Rapids in 1993. When the Outliers Program began in 2009, only 18

"These patients deserve the best we can give. They deserve answers and effective treatments—that's what we hope to accomplish."  
- Dr. Matt Steensma

patients had ever been diagnosed with the disorder, which causes severe lesions on the scalp and debilitating bone growths on the jaw.

Using samples from one of Steensma's patients, the team identified the cause of the disease—a mutation to *KRAS*, one of the most heavily studied cancer genes. This discovery placed OES, unquestionably a rare disease, in "the middle of the incredible science and innovation surrounding *KRAS*," Steensma said.

"More importantly, our care of the patient was changed for the better. Now we know that there is an increased risk of cancer, and we can monitor for it appropriately," Steensma said. "This project was a wonderful collaboration between the strong clinical expertise at Spectrum Health Helen DeVos Children's Hospital and the scientific expertise at Van Andel Research Institute. There aren't a lot of places in the country where you can do this type of work—West Michigan is unique in that aspect."

### The ripple effect

Progress in rare disease research can often be hindered due to a lack of funding, with dollars frequently going to more common diseases such as cancer. Although this is beginning to change, philanthropic support remains critical for propelling this promising work forward.

The Outliers Program itself is a prime example. It is completely funded by donations, including a grant from Wells Fargo that helped establish the program, and continuing support from Steensma and Williams's own colleagues through VAI's Employee Impact Fund (EIF), which is sustained by the Institute's employees.

"The support our colleagues provide through the Employee Impact Fund makes a world of difference," Steensma said. "With the OES project, for example, it allowed us to verify our initial results and create a model for the disease that is also now being used in a broader setting to study *KRAS* in colon and pancreatic cancers."

In May, Steensma's team was awarded a second round of EIF funding, this time to support research into Aicardi syndrome, a disorder that almost exclusively affects females and that is characterized by developmental problems in the brain and eyes that may lead to seizures, learning disabilities and blindness. There have been fewer than 60 documented cases of the disease in the world.

Finding the underlying mutations that cause a rare disease like OES or Aicardi often has broad implications; because the systems that keep our bodies healthy and functioning are so intricately intertwined, a discovery in one disease can directly impact what we know about another.

"We call it the 'ripple effect'—often, the science behind why a rare disease occurs is really the same science as why a cancer occurs," Steensma said. "By studying rare diseases, we may not only come up with a way to help people battling these conditions but also develop treatments for more common disorders like cancer or hypertension. It really opens the window to studying the underlying biology in a different context." 🌊



DR. MATT STEENSMA

"...the systems that keep our bodies healthy and functioning are so intricately intertwined, a discovery in one disease can directly impact what we know about another."

- Dr. Matt Steensma

## A TEAM EFFORT

Since 2014, the Institute's Employee Impact Fund has supported many research, education and community outreach initiatives, including:

- Exploring epigenetics in a common lung cancer
- Supporting *Partners in Science*, Van Andel Education Institute's hands-on scientific research program for high school students
- Testing potential new medications for osteoarthritis prevention and treatment
- Studying a method for possible breast cancer prevention
- Establishing *Rallying to the Challenge*, a meeting designed by and for Parkinson's advocates to amplify the patient voice and perspective

## VAN ANDEL INSTITUTE GRADUATE SCHOOL STUDENT EARNS PRESTIGIOUS AWARD TO STUDY COLON CANCER

**Graduate students at the Institute are more than just students—they are up-and-coming professional scientists who make valuable contributions to the life-changing research that goes on each day in our labs.**

That's why we're proud to celebrate Nicole Vander Schaaf, the first Van Andel Institute Graduate School student to be awarded funding through the National Cancer Institute's highly competitive F31/Ruth L. Kirschstein Predoctoral Individual Research Service Award program, which supports students' doctoral research. The award provides more than \$129,000 in research funds over three years. It's an outstanding achievement and one that will help Nicole investigate important questions that could help change the way we view and treat colon cancer, which claims more than 50,000 lives annually in the U.S. alone.

We caught up with Nicole to talk about her work in the lab of her mentor, Dr. Peter W. Laird, how this grant will help move cancer research forward and what got her interested in science.

**Tell us about your research. What will this grant support?**

**NVS:** The goal of my research is to better understand the epigenetic abnormalities of colon cancer cells. Epigenetics is the branch of science that studies how the expression of genes within a cell is regulated without altering the cell's genetic code. Scientists have long known that cancer cells contain mistakes in the genetic code that cause the cells to grow uncontrollably. More recently, scientists have discovered that the epigenome of cancer cells is also altered in a way that promotes cancer. We hope to identify key epigenetic changes that benefit cancer cells, which will help us develop new ways to treat this devastating disease.

**Why is this work important?**

**NVS:** Previous research from our lab showed that intestinal cancer cells with genetic mistakes are incapable of forming tumors when certain epigenetic machinery is disabled. This suggests that colon cancer cells may depend on epigenetic changes for survival and/or growth. If we can identify these cancer-promoting epigenetic changes, we can design therapies to target and hopefully kill cancer cells. Colorectal cancer is the third leading cause of cancer-related deaths in the U.S., so these discoveries have the potential to benefit thousands!

**How did it feel when you found out the grant was being funded?**

**NVS:** I was excited and honored that the National Cancer Institute is investing in my scientific training and in a project that has the potential to help us understand what drives cancer at the most basic level.

**Why did you decide to pursue science as a career?**

**NVS:** I fell in love with science in high school when I discovered that there was so much more to life than I could see with my plain eyes (i.e., microbes and cells under a microscope). Originally, I wanted to become a high school science teacher, but my parents encouraged me to explore all of my career options. Having lost a grandmother to colon cancer, I thought it would be neat to become a cancer researcher someday, so I decided to study biology and give scientific research a try. I did a few summer research internships as an undergraduate and loved the notion that research allowed me to use my intellect, curiosity and creativity to potentially impact human health. I chose to further my training in science and research by pursuing a graduate degree in the sciences, which will equip me for a career in research, industry or university-level teaching. ♪

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NICOLE VANDER SCHAAF

# STUDENTS AND ADULTS TEAM UP AT VAN ANDEL EDUCATION INSTITUTE'S SCIENCE ON SATURDAY!

Throughout the year, elementary and middle school students team up with adults at Van Andel Education Institute (VAEI) for their Science on Saturday program. Each session is a fun and exciting way to encourage curiosity, creativity and critical thinking while helping the participants learn how to think and act like scientists. VAEI offers four sessions based on the student's grade level:

## Explorations at a Species Level:

First and second graders use their senses and scientific tools to observe one of the many organisms living at VAEI. After the session, students take their new organism friend home!

## Explorations of Species Survival:

Third and fourth grade students interact with a variety of animals, from insects to bearded dragons, to discover what they need to survive in the wild. During the session, students and adults make a model animal habitat.

## Explorations of a Food Web and Owl Pellets:


Fifth and sixth graders investigate how energy flows through a food web while observing the eating preferences of different organisms. Students and adults get hands-on experience by dissecting an owl pellet to learn how an owl derives energy from its food and construct a bone diagram to take home.

## Explorations of the Whole Organism:

Seventh and eighth graders learn how to observe and handle VAEI's plants and animals as they explore the very building blocks of life—cells and DNA. During this session, students extract their own DNA!

“My favorite part of the experience was when I got to hold and pet some of the animals. It was so much fun, I can't wait to do it again!”  
- Science on Saturday student

Science on Saturday is a great way for kids and adults to share weekend time together, think creatively and engage in purposeful learning. If you're interested in enrolling in one of the Science on Saturday sessions please visit [vaei.vai.org/student-programs](http://vaei.vai.org/student-programs).

VAEI seeks philanthropic support to provide scholarship opportunities for students. For more information on ways you can support Science on Saturday and other education programs, please contact Teresa Reid, Major Gifts Officer at [teresa.reid@vai.org](mailto:teresa.reid@vai.org) or 616.234.5040. 



SCIENCE ON SATURDAY PARTICIPANTS AT VAEI

# COMING TOGETHER TO TAKE ON PARKINSON'S DISEASE



RALLYING TO THE CHALLENGE PARTICIPANT

**For two days each fall, the Institute welcomes hundreds of scientists, physicians and people with Parkinson's who join together with a singular goal in mind—to find ways to beat the disease, which afflicts an estimated seven to 10 million people worldwide.**

It's all part of *Grand Challenges in Parkinson's Disease* and *Rallying to the Challenge*, one of our annual scientific symposia and its accompanying patient meeting hosted in partnership with The Cure Parkinson's Trust.

Here are three of the most important takeaways from 2017's events:

### **Lethargic cells may contribute to Parkinson's.**

Each cell in the body contains mitochondria, biological power plants responsible for churning out energy to keep cells up and running. Scientists have long suspected that problems with energy production may play a role in Parkinson's by interfering with normal processes required for cell health. Interest in this area has ebbed and flowed over time, but recently, a series

of discoveries have revitalized interest and sparked new clinical trials aimed at slowing or stopping disease progression. Which leads us to...

### **Treatments for other diseases may be game-changers in Parkinson's.**

Many of these clinical efforts are looking at new uses for existing medications, including the diabetes drugs exenatide and liraglutide and the respiratory medication ambroxol.

That's because the diseases these drugs are designed to treat share many of the same underlying features found in Parkinson's. By using medications that have already passed a rigorous gauntlet of safety tests, scientists have the potential to significantly shorten the time it takes for an effective therapy to get in the hands of patients.

"As the global population ages, the number of people with Parkinson's and other neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's is expected to increase," said Dr. Patrik Brundin, VARI associate director of research and an internationally


recognized Parkinson's expert. "Just as there is an urgent need for better therapies, there also is great hope in both scientific and patient communities that we are drawing close to a major change in how we treat the disease. Repurposing medications is a critical part of this."

### **Involving people with Parkinson's in research and clinical trial development is crucial.**

As part of *Rallying to the Challenge*, a dedicated group of people with Parkinson's tackled several pressing issues, including the implications of drug repurposing, differentiating between "hype versus hope" and examining the factors that influence patient participation in research.

Their recommendations? That scientists and physicians conducting clinical trials ensure the patient perspective is incorporated in trial design and that potential risks and rewards of participation are communicated clearly and in context. The same goes for research results—findings must be presented in a way that minimizes hype and accurately conveys the study's implications for people with the disease. Lastly, they emphasized the importance of a team approach.

"Collaboration is key to moving research forward," said Israel Robledo, a Parkinson's advocate and member of the Parkinson's Movement Executive Council, an initiative of the Trust. "*Rallying to the Challenge* provides the opportunity to do this by providing input to the research community about issues that are important to the patient community. From this experience, we know that our voice is being listened to in the process."

*We hope to see you this year! Grand Challenges in Parkinson's Disease: Non-Motor Symptoms and Rallying to the Challenge will be held Sept. 26–27, 2018, at Van Andel Institute. Visit [grandchallengesinpd.org](http://grandchallengesinpd.org) to learn more.* 

## HONORING EXCELLENCE



### Jay Van Andel Award

Each year at *Grand Challenges in Parkinson's Disease*, the Institute honors a pioneering scientist who has made significant contributions to Parkinson's research. This year's *Jay Van Andel Award for Outstanding Achievement in Parkinson's Disease Research* went to physician-scientist Dr. J. William Langston, whose groundbreaking work revolutionized the way Parkinson's is studied.



### The Tom Isaacs Award

Last April, the Parkinson's community lost Tom Isaacs, one of its greatest champions. As a person with Parkinson's and co-founder of The Cure Parkinson's Trust, Tom brought together scientists, physicians, companies and, critically, people with Parkinson's to make a concerted effort for a cure. To honor his memory, the Institute and the Trust were pleased to present Prof. Tom Foltynie of University College London with the inaugural *Tom Isaacs Award*. Prof. Foltynie's clinical research on the diabetes drug exenatide is a critical step toward a potential new therapy that may slow the disease's progression. Nominations for the 2018 award will open in March at [cureparkinsons.org.uk](http://cureparkinsons.org.uk).

# LIGHTHOUSE GROUP—THE POWER OF COMMUNITY ACTION

**Lighthouse Group, a West Michigan-based insurance company, enthusiastically embraces the power of community action.** Members of Lighthouse Group regularly volunteer time, sponsor events and raise money to benefit nonprofits throughout Michigan. One of Van Andel Institute's (VAI) most dedicated and generous event sponsors, Lighthouse Group has contributed more than \$100,000 to benefit the Institute's biomedical research and science education initiatives.

Eve Rogus, vice president and principal of Lighthouse Group, is a passionate supporter of VAI's mission to improve health for current and future generations. For more than six years, she has helped facilitate Lighthouse Group's partnership with the Institute.

"We believe passionately that VAI will develop new therapies and cures for cancer and other diseases," Rogus said. "We consider it a privilege to partner with VAI as it continues to forge ahead to achieve its goals."

Supporting organizations like VAI comes naturally to Lighthouse Group. For 20 years, its mission statement has included a commitment to community involvement,

"Our support for the Institute is based on the notion that we can help scientists develop better and faster treatments for cancer and other diseases and make a difference locally at the same time."

- Eve Rogus

reflecting its belief that well-placed philanthropy can change the world.

"Our support for the Institute is based on the notion that we can help scientists develop better and faster treatments for cancer and other diseases and make a difference locally at the same time," Rogus said. "By contributing to the health sciences in West Michigan, we support job growth, the perpetuation of knowledge and the global integration of the Grand Rapids community."

Thank you for your continued support, Lighthouse Group! 




THE LIGHTHOUSE GROUP TEAM

## 12<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL COUTURE FOR A CURE

More than 600 people celebrated the creative energy of fashion and purposeful philanthropy at Van Andel Institute's (VAI) 12<sup>th</sup> annual Couture for a Cure. The event, presented by Leigh's and title sponsor Amway, put guests right next to the runway and directly supported the Institute's pediatric cancer research.

The event was conceived by Carol Van Andel and Rebecca Wierda, owner of Leigh's, as a way to leverage the duo's passion for fashion in order to benefit the Institute's important mission. Couture for a Cure has continued to establish itself as West Michigan's premier fashion event— attracting some of the world's most creative fashion designers.

In October 2017, Los Angeles-based fashion duo Creatures of the Wind highlighted their Fall 2017 collection, featuring bohemian-chic designs and playful sensibilities. Leigh's also showcased new trends in women's fashion, rounding out a night of splendor and impactful fundraising.

"One might wonder what fashion and science have to do with one another, but it's not a stretch to see the parallels. Both rely on inspiration, hard work and a contagious creative energy. Both invest in the power of the human heart and hand," Carol Van Andel said. 



MODELS ON THE RUNWAY






(STARTING AT THE TOP, LEFT TO RIGHT) CAROL VAN ANDEL SPEAKING; REBECCA WIERDA, SHANE GABIER & CAROL VAN ANDEL; VIOLINIST RITSU KATSUMATA.

## 17<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL HOPE ON THE HILL GALA

**“The Games People Play,”** Van Andel Institute’s 17<sup>th</sup> annual Hope on the Hill Gala, transformed the Institute into a colorful world of games, fun and excitement. Since its beginning, Hope on the Hill has grown into the Institute’s flagship event and one of Grand Rapids’ most popular fundraisers.

We were honored to have Fifth Third Private Bank serve as the event’s title sponsor—continuing a 17-year partnership with the Institute.

The event welcomed more than 800 guests into the heart of the Institute and featured live entertainment by world-renowned mentalist Oz Pearlman, delectable cuisine, signature cocktails, music by AB, dancing and a variety of interactive game stations.

All proceeds from Hope on the Hill benefit the Institute’s work in biomedical research and science education. 



(STARTING AT THE TOP, LEFT TO RIGHT) DAVID & CAROL VAN ANDEL, BRIAN & LORI VANDER BAAN; OZ PEARLMAN ON STAGE WITH A GUEST; TONY GATES & TIM FEAGAN.



(STARTING AT THE TOP, LEFT TO RIGHT) DAVID VAN ANDEL & TIM LONG; EVENT GUESTS.


## A CONVERSATION ABOUT OSTEOPOROSIS HOSTED BY CAROL VAN ANDEL

**More than 10 million Americans have osteoporosis, and more than 44 million have low bone density. More than half of the adults in the United States are at risk of bone fractures.**

A Conversation About Osteoporosis hosted by Carol Van Anandel featured presentations by scientists and clinicians who addressed these risks, the benefits of osteoporosis medications, current research into new therapies and information on how individuals can become their own healthcare advocates. Speakers included Dr. Bart Williams, director of Van Anandel Research Institute's Center for Cancer and Cell Biology; Dr. Michael Jakubowski, chief medical officer of Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital; and a keynote address from Dr. Sundeep Khosla, the Dr. Francis Chucker and Nathan Landow research professor of medicine and physiology and a Mayo Foundation distinguished investigator.

Funds raised from the event will go toward a collaborative research agreement between Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital and Van Anandel Research Institute that will uncover new ways to better serve patients with rare skeletal disorders.

The Institute's health-focused events are a fantastic way to learn about new advancements in biomedical research and clinical care and hear from leaders in the health sciences and medical community. Past events have featured topics such as men's health, women's cancers and depression.

*Individuals, businesses or organizations interested in becoming an event sponsor can contact Sarah Rollman at [sarah.rollman@vai.org](mailto:sarah.rollman@vai.org) or 616.234.5712.* 



(STARTING AT THE TOP, LEFT TO RIGHT) CAROL VAN ANDEL SPEAKING; EVENT GUESTS; EVENT EMCEE MARANDA; PANELISTS & MARANDA DURING THE Q&A.

## CURIOSITY & COCKTAILS



(STARTING AT THE TOP, LEFT TO RIGHT) KASIE SMITH & RACHAEL ROHDE;  
SCOTT ZUBRICKAS; EMILY NICHOLS & KYLE OSOWSKI.

## DESIGNS ON A CURE



(STARTING AT THE TOP, LEFT TO RIGHT) JOANN WESTWATER, DAVID & CAROL VAN ANDEL & JEFFERY ROBERTS; DESIGNS ON A CURE SHOW ROOM; STEVEN BAUMANN, ANDREA PETRAY OF A. RUDIN, CHRISTIAN SENSABAUGH & JUDY GIORDANO OF A. RUDIN.

# VAI GOLF OUTING



(STARTING AT THE TOP, LEFT TO RIGHT) JACK DOLES, KURT HASSBERGER, DAVID VAN ANDEL, KIRK GIBSON & AARON VAN ANDEL; KIRK GIBSON SPEAKING; JOHN & DEB KAILUNAS WITH KIRK GIBSON; TIM LONG, KATHY & PHIL VOGELSANG & TIM MYERS.

# THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS EVENT SPONSORS

To learn more about sponsoring an event contact Sarah Rollman at [sarah.rollman@vai.org](mailto:sarah.rollman@vai.org).

## Curiosity & Cocktails

ADAC Automotive  
Adamy Valuation  
Cumulus Broadcasting  
David & Carol Van Andel Family Foundation  
Grand Rapids YMCA  
Greenridge Realty  
Jana Hall  
John Hancock Retirement  
Modern Day Floral  
Lee & Alexandra Perez  
Soils & Structures  
Townsquare Media  
Truscott Rossman  
West Michigan Woman

## Designs on a Cure

ASI Interiors  
Belwith Products  
Calamos  
Caminiti Associates Inc.  
Goldman Sachs  
Grand Ventures  
Horwood Marcus & Berk Chartered  
Jeffery Roberts Design  
McDonnell Investment Mangement  
Mike Bell, Inc. & Westwater Patterson  
Rowerdink & Stafford Families  
SemelSnow Interior Design  
Square 1 Bank, a division of  
Pacific Western Bank  
Watson Smith Carpet

## VAI Golf Outing

Aquinas College  
Cornerstone University  
Crystal Clean Auto Detailing  
Custer, Inc.  
Discovery Financial  
Ellis Parking  
Erhardt Construction  
First National Bank  
Dan & Lou Ann Gaydou  
Grand Rapids Christian Schools  
Grand Ventures, LLC  
Ben & Molly Hunting

Kerkstra Precast  
Lighthouse Group  
Macatawa Bank  
McDonnell Investment Management  
The Veldheer, Long, Mackay & Bernecker  
Group of Merrill Lynch  
Parkinson's Association of West Michigan  
Priority Health  
Regal Investment Advisors  
Rockford Construction  
John & Therese Rowerdink  
The Sharpe Collection  
Nick & Karen Sherman  
Standard Lumber  
Thomas & Mary Stuit  
Townsquare Media  
U.S. Bank  
David & Carol Van Andel  
Dave & Beth Van Portfliet  
Brian & Lori Vander Baan  
Wells Fargo  
West Michigan Woman

## Couture for a Cure

Amway  
ARTISTRY  
Bluewater Technologies  
Brian DeVries & Barbara Pugh  
Cheeky Strut  
Chuck & Christine Boelkins  
CityFlatsHotel  
Consumer's Credit Union  
CWD Real Estate Investment  
David & Carol Van Andel Family Foundation  
Divani  
Eileen DeVries Family Foundation  
Eurest  
Jana Hall  
Paul & Sheryl Haverkate  
Jandernoa Foundation  
Jeffery Roberts Design  
Dr. Peter & Veronica Jones  
Lake Michigan Credit Union  
Leigh's  
Lighthouse Group  
McAlvey, Merchant & Associates

Mercy Health  
Modern Day Floral  
Tom & Brenda Rinks  
The Steve & Amy Van Andel Foundation  
Todd Wenzel Buick GMC  
Townsquare Media  
(Channel 95.7, 100.5 The River, 98.7 WFGR)  
Sharon Van Dellen  
West Michigan Woman  
Wheelhouse  
Greg & Meg Willit  
Jim & Jane Zwiers

## Hope on the Hill

Ag Business Solutions  
Al & Robin Koop Trust  
Amway  
Amway Grand Plaza  
AON  
Aquinas College  
Matthew & Shari Berger  
BHS Insurance  
Dave & Jill Bielema  
Franco & Alessandra Bianchi  
Bluewater Technologies  
Charles & Christine Boelkins  
Buist Electric  
B93 iHeartMedia, Inc.  
Jerry & Suzanne Callahan  
Cancer & Hematology Center of  
Western MI, PC  
Cascade Rental Center  
Chop House  
CityFlatsHotel  
Coldwell Banker  
Colliers International  
Crowe Horwath, LLP  
Cumulus Media  
Tom & Tracy Curran  
Currie Foundation  
Custer, Inc.  
Czech Asset Management  
Davenport University  
David & Carol Van Andel Family Foundation  
The Dick & Betsy DeVos Family Foundation  
Divani



### Hope on the Hill (cont.)

DK Security  
The Douglas & Maria DeVos Foundation  
Eenhoorn, LLC  
Ellis Parking Company  
Erhardt Construction  
Eurest  
Extend Your Reach  
Ferris Coffee & Nut Co.  
Fifth Third Private Bank  
First & Main  
FOODesign by Chef Brech  
Fred L. Hansen Corporation  
Grand Valley State University  
Grand Ventures, LLC  
Martin & Peggy Greydanus  
Jana Hall  
Hope College  
Howard Miller  
Huizenga Group  
Ice Sculptures Ltd.  
I.C.N. Foundation  
Independent Bank  
Jandernoa Foundation  
Jim & Ginger Jurries  
JW Marriott  
John & Nancy Kennedy  
Kinney Family  
Kitchen 67  
Lake Michigan Credit Union  
Ray & Jeannine Lanning  
Leo's

Lighthouse Group  
Gary & Vicky Ludema  
Macatawa Bank  
McAlvey, Merchant & Associates  
Meijer  
Mercy Health  
Metro Health  
MLive Media Group/The Grand Rapids Press  
Modern Day Floral  
Dave & Kim Moorhead  
MSU College of Human Medicine  
Norris, Perne & French, LLP Investment Counsel  
Tim & Karen O'Donovan  
Owens-Ames-Kimball Co.  
Peter C. & Emajean Cook Foundation  
Pioneer Construction  
Pitsch Companies  
Preusser Jewelers  
Priority Health  
The Richard & Helen DeVos Foundation  
Rockford Construction Co.  
Rowerdink, Inc.  
Secchia Family Foundation  
The Sharpe Collection  
six.one.six  
Slows Bar BQ  
Spectrum Health  
Rob & Susan Stafford  
Steelcase  
Stephen Klotz Family Foundation  
The Steve & Amy Van Andel Foundation  
Taconic Charitable Foundation

Thomas S. Fox Family  
Townsquare Media  
(Channel 95.7, 100.5 The River, 98.7 WFGR)  
U.S. Bank  
USA Financial  
Van Eerden Food Service Co.  
The Veldheer, Long, Mackay & Bernecker  
Group of Merrill Lynch  
Russ & Chris Visner  
Warner Norcross & Judd, LLP  
Wells Fargo  
West Michigan Woman  
Wheelhouse  
Williams Kitchen & Bath  
Wolverine Worldwide  
Women's Lifestyle Magazine  
Jim & Jane Zwiers

### A Conversation About Osteoporosis hosted by Carol Van Andel

Jana Hall  
John & Nancy Kennedy  
Leigh's  
Lighthouse Group  
Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital  
McAlvey, Merchant & Associates  
Radius Pharma  
Townsquare Media  
West Michigan Woman  
Dr. Bart & Wendy Williams



## PURPLE COMMUNITY FOOTBALL GAMES—IGNITING SPIRIT AND TAKING ON CANCER

**On any given weekend during the fall, people across the country gather under the Friday night lights, braving the cold weather, to cheer on their hometown high school football teams.** Football games help bring people together, uniting students, teams and the community around a common cause. And as dozens of high school football teams demonstrated this year, football games can even fight back against cancer. In 2017, teams across Michigan hosted Purple Community games to benefit cancer research at Van Andel Institute (VAI). The games, filled with emotion and camaraderie, honored people affected by cancer and gave everyone in attendance a reason to be hopeful.

### Chippewa Valley Big Reds

Scott Merchant, head coach at Chippewa Valley High School in Clinton Township, Michigan, has coached hundreds of young athletes during the past nine years, but there's one player he will never forget.

One day, a junior, just starting out on the varsity team, didn't show up for practice because he was experiencing back pain and fatigue. When he went to the doctor and was examined, he received a devastating diagnosis—he had testicular cancer that had spread throughout his body. He wasn't able to play in a single game, but even after surgery and aggressive treatments, he remained there for his team and cheered them on throughout the season from the sidelines. Sadly, before he could graduate, his life was tragically cut short, and he passed away from the disease.

Merchant holds the memory of this young man close to his heart, and every year when his team gathers together for a kick-off dinner before the school's annual

cancer awareness game benefiting VAI and the Believe Foundation, he makes sure to tell this young man's story.

"So many people are affected by cancer, but when it gets one of your players, and it happens right in front of your face, it really hits home and inspires you to take action," Merchant said.

Every player on the Chippewa Valley Big Reds team plays in the cancer awareness game in honor of a friend or loved one who has been affected by cancer. Merchant is in awe of the young players' commitment to the cause and of the community support the game receives each year.

"It's truly more than just a football game," Merchant said. "We have 72 kids playing ball, eight coaches, and when you add it up, it's 80 stories of people who know someone who is fighting this disease. Our players know it's an honor to play in a

game that benefits nonprofits that are on the front lines battling cancer."

### South Christian Sailors

A belief in giving back is often a value that's passed down between generations. Mary Woltjer, a mother of three and one of the lead organizers of the South Christian High Purple Out game, believes her school's generosity stems from faith, community and a culture of compassion.

In 2017, the school hosted a game that raised more than \$37,000 to benefit cancer research at VAI. In total, Woltjer has helped organize five years of Purple events, and to date the school has raised more than \$70,000. While this amount is impressive, the events have become more than a source for fundraising, but a way to honor those who have been impacted by this indiscriminate disease.

"One of the boys we honored during the game was a student and football player who was diagnosed with Hodgkin's



SOUTH CHRISTIAN SAILORS



CHIPPEWA VALLEY BIG REDS

lymphoma—he's now in remission, but we still wanted him to know how much support he has in our community," Woltjer said.

The game also honored Bob Blacchiere, who had served as South Christian's head football coach for nearly 40 years and was diagnosed with brain cancer in 2016. A member of the Michigan Coaches Hall of Fame, Blacchiere helped generations of South Christian Sailors achieve their dreams. During the game, members of the football team, students, friends and family joined Blacchiere on the field to say "thank you" for his spirit and his service.

"We rally around each other here when a member of our community is sick or hurting," Woltjer said. "We aren't just a school, we are a community, and we are a family."

#### Traverse City West Titans

A deep and significant sense of community connects the students, parents and faculty of Traverse City West High School. Terra Walters, mother and Pink Game event coordinator, is proud of her school's spirit and sense of togetherness and activism.

"Giving back to our community and helping others is part of Traverse City West Football's philosophy," Walters said. "Most people know someone who has been affected by cancer. Supporting research at VAI is something our community has really embraced, and everyone looks forward to our Purple Community Pink Game."

The school's Pink Game began four years ago as a way to support three football moms who had been diagnosed with breast cancer. Head coach Tim Wooser reached out to Purple Community and began a partnership that has raised more than \$19,000 for cancer research at the Institute.

The event continues to be a source of pride for everyone involved, and Walters enjoys being part of an event that honors lives lost to cancer and gives students the opportunity to show their support for their friends and loved ones who have been affected by the disease.

"This past year, two moms of seniors were honorary captains alongside their boys—one is currently undergoing breast cancer treatment, and the other is a nine-year survivor," Walters said. "They walked out with their sons during the coin toss with everyone watching and it was a very special and emotional moment for all."

Thank you, Chippewa Valley Big Reds, South Christian Sailors and Traverse City West Titans, for spreading the message of hope, for honoring those who have been affected by cancer and for supporting cancer research at Van Andel Institute!

*If you are interested in hosting in a Purple Community game at your school, please contact Ashley Owen, senior event coordinator, at [ashley.owen@vai.org](mailto:ashley.owen@vai.org).*

"Our players know it's an honor to play in a game that benefits nonprofits that are on the front lines battling cancer."

- Scott Merchant



TRAVERSE CITY WEST TITANS

## NEVER STOP GIVING BACK—SALLY SCHAAFSMA, PURPLE COMMUNITY CABINET VOLUNTEER CHAIR

**For Sally Schaafsma, volunteering isn't a hobby or an occasional activity; it's a full-time job.** When Sally retired from a successful career as a teacher and business woman, she knew she wanted to spend her days helping others, giving back to her community and making the world a better place. Today, Schaafsma volunteers with a number of Grand Rapids-based charities and organizations, including Van Andel Institute's (VAI) Purple Community.

"I call myself a community volunteer, and I have always wanted to use my skills and abilities to help—wherever I could," Schaafsma said.

**"It's important to support scientists and organizations who are doing research that will help find new therapies and, ultimately, cures for these diseases."**

**- Sally Schaafsma**



SALLY SCHAAFSMA

Working alongside Purple Community associates, interns and other volunteers, Schaafsma uses her organizational skills and leadership abilities to help the team prepare for the many grassroots fundraising events they organize throughout the year. As the Purple Community Cabinet volunteer chair, Sally also has the opportunity to share her professional work experience and mentor the team's junior volunteers and interns.

"One of my favorite aspects of volunteering with Purple Community is working with people from all different age groups, and in particular with the younger people just starting their careers—I feel like I can really help them and share the knowledge that comes from my years of experience," Schaafsma said. "It really gives me a great

feeling to work with so many wonderful young people."

The Institute's mission and work in biomedical research and science education drew Schaafsma to volunteer with Purple Community.

"Like so many people, my family has been directly affected by the diseases VAI studies," Schaafsma said. "It's important to support scientists and organizations who are doing research that will help find new therapies and, ultimately, cures for these diseases. I love having the opportunity to share information about the Institute's work with people at Purple Community events, and it's even better when we get new people involved in our mission."

Schaafsma believes volunteering is one of the most meaningful things a person can do with their time, and she hopes others will join her in helping build the Purple Community volunteer program.

"There are so many ways to volunteer," Schaafsma said. "Everyone has skills they can give to an organization, whether it's behind the scenes or working with the public. Every one of us can help our communities and the causes we believe in."

*For information on how you can join Sally and volunteer with Purple Community, contact [purplecommunity@vai.org](mailto:purplecommunity@vai.org).*

## A LEGACY OF GENEROSITY—ALVIN AND HYLDA TUUK

**Alvin and Hylda Tuuk believed in the American dream. Second generation Dutch immigrants, they met and married after Al served his country in World War II.** Together, they raised a family, started a successful business and later became examples of the American dream in the West Michigan community. People of modest means, the couple's drive for a better life was shaped equally by the Great Depression and the experiences they lived through during World War II. They worked hard and instilled in their four children the value of education, the power of American capitalism and the importance of charitable giving.

In 1985, Hylda lost Al to prostate cancer before they had the chance to enjoy their golden years. Committed to making a difference, she arranged to give a portion of her estate to fund research that could give hope to people facing this difficult disease. In February 2017, Hylda passed away at the age of 93. She left a generous planned gift that will benefit prostate cancer research pilot studies in the laboratories of Dr. Xiaohong Li and Dr. Bart Williams.

"Growing up and living for much of their lives in West Michigan, both my parents were impressed by the business success and the generous spirit of the Van Andel family. My siblings and I were proud to make a gift to benefit the Institute's cancer research on their behalf," said Hylda and Al's daughter, Mary Tuuk, vice president and chief compliance officer at Meijer. "Van Andel Institute has been an incredibly positive force both in the health science community and the community as a whole. It has been a tremendous catalyst for growth in the region while making an impact on a global scale. It is heartwarming to know that our gift will go directly to fund important research being conducted right here in Grand Rapids."



THE TUUK FAMILY

**"It is heartwarming to know that our gift will go directly to fund important research being conducted right here in Grand Rapids."**

**- Mary Tuuk**

will live on in the work of the Institute's scientists and the impact they have on improving the health of current and future generations.

*Interested in learning more about the Society of Hope and planned giving at VAI? Visit [vai.org/society-hope](http://vai.org/society-hope) or [vai.org/plannedgiving](http://vai.org/plannedgiving) or contact [teresa.reid@vai.org](mailto:teresa.reid@vai.org).*

In recognition of Alvin and Hylda Tuuk's legacy of generosity, they were posthumously inducted as members of Van Andel Institute's (VAI) Society of Hope. The Society of Hope recognizes individuals who have notified us they are including VAI in their will or other deferred giving plan. The Tuuks' spirit of purposeful giving

## MEMORIALS

We appreciate your trust in us to fight disease in memory or in honor of your family and friends—with hope for a healthier tomorrow. To make a gift in memory or honor of a loved one, please call 616.234.5552.

### Dr. Art Alberts

William Alberts  
Carole Howard

### Betty Anderson

Carole & Bill Warren

### Robert C. Anderson

David & Lynne Robinson

### Vivian G. Anderson

David & Lynne Robinson

### Cindy Antonides

Ricky & Debra Yeager

### Allan L. Arnoys

Robert Arnoys

### Harold E. Atkinson

Kenneth & Elizabeth Foster

### Mary Badanek

Kenneth & Katherine  
Sanders

### David J. Baines

Roger & Kelley Stranger

### James Barcelona

Patricia Barcelona  
Amanda Beirne  
Karen Dillon  
Erin Elliott  
Kimberly Engerer-Mindick  
Erin Gaeta  
Anne Houser  
Kerry Ketring  
Nancy Kramer  
Jacob Lambert  
Rachele Lawton  
Richard & Susan Liftin  
Megan Looby  
Carol Marshall  
Jane McMeekin  
Gregory Moss  
Brooke Oprsal  
Troy Rambo  
Dan Shust  
Christine Steinmetz  
Tamara Unger  
Jack Volk  
Candance Wise

### Dianne S. Barrenger

Ann Barrenger

### Keith Bassett

Regena Bassett

### Mildred Bauer

Arthur & Jan Schmude

### Ernest Bevins

David Bevins

### Mitch Bogart

Jim & Joyce Thomasma

### Mickey Boucher

Mike & Pam Murray

### Frank Campbell

Paul & Lynn Getzin

### Ronald E. Coats

Keith & Carolyn Murphy

### Harold E. Cook

Marilyn Cook

### Dan & Mary Creger

David & Tamara Kroll

### Julio Cuevas

Ivannia Cuevas

### Frank W. Diehl

Bruce Tuttleman

### Carson O. Donley

Elizabeth Donley

### Kathleen Drennan

Patrick & Kristine Brady

### Delbert C. Dykstra

Kenneth & Cheryl Haverdink

### Melissa A. Eden

Keith & Carolyn Murphy

### Bud Elve

Mark & Anne Elve

### Thomas C. Evert

Jean Swaney

### Roy Ferguson

Keith & Carolyn Murphy

### Joe Fisher

Amy Nelson

### Butch Forystek

James Johnson

### Betty J. Frederick

Raymond Frederick

### Vickie L. Gilbert

Dayna Anderson  
Peggy Church  
Amber Corneillie  
Oscar & Kathleen Hernandez  
Irving & Nancy Humphreys  
Mark & Jaimi Kent  
Maynard & Imogene Klein  
Selena Marr  
Mark & Mary Beth Meijer  
Edward & Judith Mortensen  
Bob & Paula Reister  
Ann Videtich  
Kathleen Videtich  
James Ward  
James & Nanette Ward  
Cynthia Watson  
Jean Williams  
Tonya Woollard

### Rose Gillett

Douglas & Kelly Hutchings

### Fredrick S. Gleason

Sandra Gleason  
Thomas & Hazel Palmer  
Tamara Van Stee  
Oma Werner

### Mary M. Grigware

Jean Swaney

### Carol A. Haarman

Stephen Haarman

### Bruce L. Hansen

Patricia Ter Haar

### Charles Heise

Keith & Carolyn Murphy

### Steven M. Hertel

Antoinette Hertel

### Jim Hickey

Catherine Amodeo

### Lawrence E. Hicks

Mary Lou Hicks

### Grandpa Holzgen

Arden Holzgen

### Robert Horgan

Craig & Debra Marshall

### Marion L. & W. Hudson

Lamoreaux R. Ph.  
Thomas Lamoreaux

### Stuart D. Huntley

George & Jane Muscott

### Mark L. Kastner

Brenda Kastner

### Marian Katzenstein

Dr. Dorothy C. Armstrong

### Donald R. Kozal

Anonymous

### Eve Kranenberg

Jean Swaney

### Sanford C. Leestma

Samuel & Donna Anema  
Vincent Biondo  
Shane Brown  
Brian Busch  
Sue Carlson  
James Curry  
Jack Edwards  
Karen Gernaat  
Thomas & Margaret Jager  
Leo & Carlene Korchak  
Marjory Leestma  
Melvin & Marlene Nylaan  
Jason Papes  
James Reddington  
Jack & Mary Siebers  
Cora Sinke  
Jessica Squire  
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### Wade Mackay

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### Lawrence Miller

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Ella Topp

### Gay N. Moody

James & Marilee Hulswit

### Jane Nichols

John Nichols

### Kathryn L. Olinger

Randy Olinger

### Robert E. Pearson

Karen Kamerschen

### Brenda Peterson

Michael DeBoe

### Denise Picardat

Bethany Mulligan

### Richard L. Pullen

Ruth Kemp

### Karen Randolph

Cathy Mathews

### James R. Schmalz

Leslie Schmalz

### Richard Stewart

William Stewart

### Susan L. Suwyn

Cathy Bottema  
Scott Cavanaugh  
Jack & Jennifer De Boer  
Thomas DeBoet  
Ty & Jennifer Hallock  
Lance Hartman

# MEMORIALS (CONTINUED)

Mike & Sue Jandernoa  
Potter's House  
Dale & Susan Prins  
Jeffrey & Sally Tucker

## **Billy Swaney**

Thomas & Susan Swaney

## **Russel B. Swaney**

Thomas & Susan Swaney

## **Shirley Ann Swaney**

Thomas & Susan Swaney

## **Ronald W. Swiderek**

Lisa Aragon  
Mario & Geraldine Contreras  
Michael Eichenhorn  
Timothy & Karen McCann

Michael Ruppeck  
James & Janet Sicoli  
Alice Swiderek  
Mindy Tykocki  
Gail Yaremchuk

## **Daryl Ter Haar**

Patricia Ter Haar

## **James R. Teunis**

Kathleen Teunis

## **Edwin P. Thompson**

Michael & Belinda Fisher  
Lee RiedlCelebrant  
Ina Tiffany

## **Harry C. Van Dyke**

David & Susan Clark

Mr. John Estabrook  
Michael & Patricia Mull  
Louis & Sue Robach  
West Michigan Tag &  
Label, Inc.

## **Lois Van Dyke**

West Michigan Tag &  
Label, Inc.

## **Karen S. VanBuren**

Clarie Bomer  
Susan Butcher  
Mark & Margaret Christensen  
Bonnie Converse  
Reginald & Margaret  
Dunnigan  
Gordon & Kathy Howes  
Julie Ingle

Robert & Cheryl Mckay  
Jean Morgan  
Keith & Carolyn Murphy  
Joanne Woods

## **Timothy S. Vanderveen**

Dr. & Mrs. Theodore S.  
Vanderveen

## **Marlene Vis**

Lonnie Vis

## **Annette Weingate**

Arlene Pitsch

## **Eric Westra**

Ben Cook  
Christina Cooper  
Annette Goris

Janelle Holland  
Deborah Schnelker  
Kathleen StrykerClark  
George & Jacqueline Van Ryn

## **Robert Williams**

Paul & Charlene Fitzpatrick

## **Gene Yost**

Carole Yost

## **Dan Young**

Joseph Young

## **James R. Zeller**

Paul & Charlene Fitzpatrick

# TRIBUTES

## **James Barcelona**

Robert Barcelona

## **Charlotte Besse**

Julie Tice

## **Gerald Bovenkamp**

Chris & Julie Bovenkamp

## **Peg Bowen**

Susan Formsma

## **Taylor Anne Dartey**

Gina Stolieckas

## **Erin J. Dean**

Boyd & Susan Corrigan

## **Micki Digby**

Dr. & Mrs. John C. Vaughan III

## **Robert C. DuHadway**

James & Judith Czanko

## **Cleo Dutkiewicz**

Ina Dutkiewicz

## **Kimberly Flynn**

James & Kimberly Flynn

## **Connie Francis**

Christine Cummings

## **Brett R. Holleman**

Albert & Susan Clark

## **Joel Hosner**

Joel & Maybeth Maatman

## **Jerry Isreals**

Patrick & Sue Van Duinen

## **Vivian Jones**

Randel & Therese Jones

## **Bernard P. Kamerschen**

Karen Kamerschen

## **Barbara Kramer**

Lawrence & C. DeClarke  
Kramer

## **Philip Longstreet**

Donna Tolan

## **Mary Meyer**

Christine Cummings

## **Kenneth Peirce**

Don & Debbie Amos

## **Gail Ravell**

David & Renae Simpson

## **Matthew Reitsma**

Duke Suwyn

## **Steve Saltsman**

Mathew & Jennifer  
Fahrenkrug

## **Gordon Scripps**

Justin Barr

## **David & Weezie Smith**

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## **Clarence Suelter**

Carl & Jenifer Nelson

## **Susan L. Suwyn**

Scott Cavanaugh  
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## **David & Carol Van Andel**

Jim & Gail Fahner

## **Henry Van Ry**

Jason & Judy Shoemaker

## **Kimberly Van Stee**

Alvin & Joyce Docter

## **Shirley Veltema**

Dr. Melodee Vanden Bosch

## **Mary Weglicki**

Kathy & James Weglicki

*These lists represent gifts made between July 2017 and January 15, 2018. The accuracy of these lists is very important to us. Please contact 616.234.5552 if an error has been made.*


## GIVE HOPE FOR TOMORROW

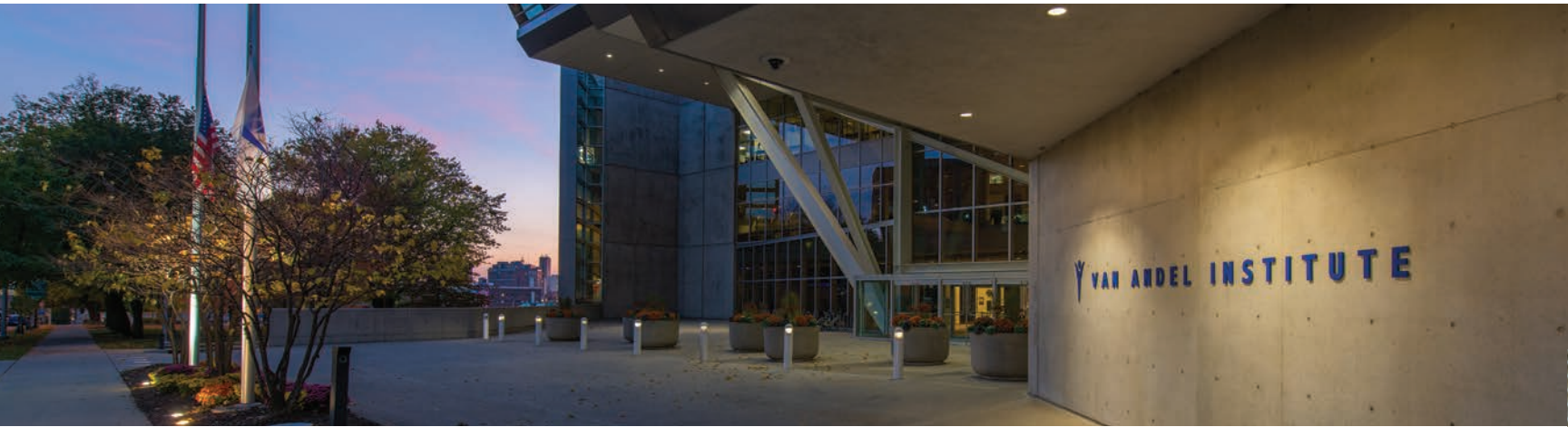
If you have ever wanted to make a significant difference in Parkinson's disease and cancer research, there is no better time than now. Our researchers are working hard to create a future free from these devastating diseases. We can help you find a way to make a satisfying gift that moves our mission forward for generations to come, while at the same time saving you money and possibly providing you with income advantages and tax savings.

Donors who support the Institute through a planned gift become members of Van Andel Institute's (VAI) Society of Hope. The Society of Hope recognizes individuals who have notified us that they have included VAI in their will or other deferred giving plan. Members of the Society receive exclusive benefits throughout the year, and new members can join at any time. Through our acknowledgment of and gratitude toward these exceptional people, we hope that their generosity will inspire others.

Is a planned gift right for you?

Please return the form below to request a free estate planning guide, or for more information, please contact Teresa Reid at 616.234.5040 or [teresa.reid@vai.org](mailto:teresa.reid@vai.org).

The generosity and compassion of donors like you is critical to our success—and will help patients and families for generations to come. 



Will you consider a gift to help us continue in our fight against cancer and other diseases that affect more of our loved ones every day?

### Donate today at [vai.org/give](http://vai.org/give).

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### Enclosed is my contribution of:

\$250     \$100     \$50     Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Check\*     Visa     MasterCard     AmEx     Discover

Credit Card Number \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to speak with someone who can provide additional information about joining the Society of Hope.

I would like to receive a FREE Estate Planning Guide.



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\*Please make checks payable to Van Andel Institute.