



## Companion Canines Advance Brain Tumor Research

For many of us, dogs are a dependable source of comfort and companionship. More recently, they also have become a critical partner in the battle against brain tumors.

Dogs and humans have similar, naturally occurring brain tumors that may respond comparably to standard and experimental treatments. Two research projects, supported by the American Brain Tumor Association, are providing no-cost surgery and treatment to companion dogs diagnosed with a brain tumor. These projects hold the potential to contribute significant data while answering crucial questions on the safety and effectiveness of promising therapies that will ultimately help advance human care.

In 2010, the ABTA awarded a \$50,000 Discovery Grant to Matthew A. Hunt, MD, assistant professor in the Department of Neurosurgery at the University of Minnesota. Dr. Hunt, along with a University of Minnesota veterinarian and immunologist, treated canines diagnosed with meningioma brain tumors – the most common brain tumor in dogs and humans – with a personalized vaccine. In addition, ABTA approved a \$200,000 research grant to Tocagen, Inc. in May for the evaluation of its Toca 511 therapy in dogs diagnosed with glioma brain tumors.

Canine research “is a whole new way to do translational research,” said John Ohlfest, PhD, a



tumor immunologist in the departments of Pediatrics and Neurosurgery at the University of Minnesota Masonic Cancer Center. Dr. Ohlfest designed the canine meningioma vaccine and study, which utilized a dog’s own tumor cells to trigger its immune system.

“We know that mouse models have taught us a lot, but they’re not always predictive of what happens to people,” said Dr. Ohlfest. While many treatments have worked in mice at least to some extent (typically with artificially created brain tumors), only some have actually translated into a successful human therapy.”

According to the National Cancer Institute, canine cancers share many features with human cancers including tumor genetics, molecular targets, biological behavior and treatment response. As a result, treatments that work well in dogs with naturally occurring brain tumors should have an effect on humans.

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## ABTA Welcomes Three New Board Members

The American Brain Tumor Association elected three new board members at the July 29, 2011 Board of Directors meeting:

### Michael Cathey

Michael Cathey is the executive director of the American Veterinary Medical Foundation, a \$5 million philanthropic/charitable arm of the American Veterinary Medical Association. Prior to joining the AVMF, Cathey served as the director of development for the Foundation of the American Medical Association, and provided more than 17 years of professional service for Boy Scouts of America.

### Brian J. Olson

Brian Olson is a financial advisor with Edward Jones Investments. Olson began his career at the Chicago Board of Trade, and in 1999, progressed into a position at Hewitt Associates where he analyzed alternate corporate pension and 401(k) plans. In 2004, Brian accepted a position as an account executive with TransUnion that ultimately led him to his career at Edward Jones.

### Ronald Petrocelli, M.D.

Ronald Petrocelli, M.D., is a retired radiologist with extensive clinical experience. Most recently, he served as chief medical officer of Siemens Molecular Imaging Business Unit where he oversaw global strategic research and clinical collaborations. Previously, Dr. Petrocelli was section head of Nuclear Medicine at Geisinger Medical Center and Health System, and Medical Director for StorCOMM, Inc. He was a medical consultant and chairman of radiology and nuclear medicine for St. Joseph Mercy Hospital in Ann Arbor, Michigan; St. Francis Hospital in Wilmington, Delaware; and Burns Clinic Medical Center and Northern Michigan Hospital in Petoskey, Michigan, where he also served as chief of staff.

### Current members of the ABTA Board of Directors:

Claudette Yasell, Chair  
Ron Petrocelli, M.D., Vice Chair  
Robert Schumacher, Treasurer  
Barbara Dunn, Secretary  
William Basden  
Michael Cathey  
Jeff Fougrouse  
Jay Krames  
Eric Myers  
Brain Olson  
Jeanne Savel



Where compassion meets commitment

The American Brain Tumor Association's Annual Meeting Dinner in July was an extraordinary evening of testimonies from remarkable individuals who independently and collectively personify the evening's theme, Strength through Change and Challenge.

ABTA co-founder Susan Kramer, and supporters Johnathan Gingras and the Porter family, showed all of us how out of fear, pain and sorrow -- can come incredible strength, courage and, yes, sometimes even joy.

Our featured speaker, Victoria Reggie Kennedy, movingly shared her very personal experiences and perspectives on her husband's brain tumor diagnosis and their shared journey.

The individuals and families whose stories were featured that night reflect the strong ties the ABTA has developed over the years with countless families whose lives have been forever altered by a brain tumor diagnosis.

And it has been with their support, that the ABTA has built a legacy grounded in an enduring commitment to brain tumor research funding and compassion for the needs of brain tumor patients and their families.

Yet, as Mrs. Kramer said in her closing comments, if her daughter Stephanie were diagnosed today, the outcome would not have been different. And that is because we still don't know who, we don't know when, and perhaps most frustrating of all, we don't know why brain tumors occur.

Brain tumors are indiscriminate. They appear in the very young, the

aging, both genders, all races and in every region of the world.

Every day, more than 500 people are diagnosed with a brain tumor. They join 600,000 others living with the fear and uncertainty that a brain tumor brings. This year, 13,000 brain tumor patients will lose their battle.

We have an enormous challenge ahead of us.

But, as the late Senator wrote in his memoir, *True Compass*, "Even this disease has proved itself an impetus for hope. In my lifetime I have witnessed advances in the medical understanding of malignancy and the treatment for it that would have been unthinkable in my early years."

He writes that he and his two children, who also had had cancer, "are among the millions who've enjoyed extended life thanks to these ongoing breakthroughs. And yet, so much more is possible."

Last spring, an ABTA benefactor awarded us with a challenge grant. The charge: match up to \$500,000 with new donations to advance the American Brain Tumor Association's pursuit of breakthroughs in brain tumor diagnosis, treatment and patient care.

It is our hope that you will join us in this effort to meet the challenge. With your support, we will improve, lengthen and, ultimately, save the lives of brain tumor patients.

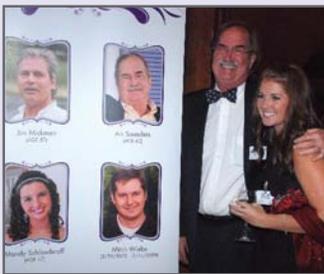
Elizabeth M. Wilson



## Four Minneapolis-St. Paul Organizations Presented with Local Grants

The American Brain Tumor Association has announced the recipients of grants totaling \$25,000 to four Minneapolis-St. Paul-area organizations whose local work is consistent with the mission of the ABTA. The grants were funded through proceeds generated at last year's "Humor to Fight the Tumor" event in Minneapolis, MN. The four recipient organizations are:

- The Angel Foundation (\$7,500 award)
- The Miracles of Mitch Foundation (\$7,000 award)
- The Sister Kenny Foundation (\$9,000 award)
- The United Hospital Foundation (\$1,500 award)



## Collaboration with Mayo Clinic Emphasizes Patient-Centered Focus

### Innovative Program Funded by Annual "Humor to Fight the Tumor" event



The American Brain Tumor Association and Mayo Clinic recently established a program to provide educational support for patients coping with the diagnosis and treatment of brain tumors. The innovative program was funded with generous contributions from the annual Humor to Fight the Tumor event in Minneapolis.

Jan Buckner, MD, professor of oncology at Mayo Clinic, announced the program at the American Brain Tumor Association Annual Meeting Dinner in July. The program includes the appointment of a nurse educator to provide individual coaching and education to patients and their families. In addition, patient education materials, the ABTA website and electronic resources, and the ABTA patient support CareLine will be readily available to patients and families at the Stephen and Barbara Slaggie Family Education Center, on the main floor of the Gonda Building at Mayo Clinic.

"I am thrilled to announce this effort which has resulted in a new dedicated nurse educator and enhanced patient education materials exclusively for brain tumor patients and their families at Mayo Clinic,"

said Dr. Buckner. "This milestone reflects the unwavering commitment of both organizations to improve outcomes for patients with brain tumors."

"The American Brain Tumor Association has always admired Mayo Clinic's philosophy that puts the needs of the patient first," said ABTA President and CEO Elizabeth M. Wilson. "The gift to support these enhanced services reflects a shared commitment to providing optimal education and support to brain tumor patients and their families facing this diagnosis."

Support for the joint effort is provided to the ABTA by proceeds from the annual "Humor to Fight the Tumor" gala in Minneapolis. The event is organized by brain tumor survivor Joelle Syverson and a committed group of individuals and families affected by a brain tumor diagnosis. Since its inception in 2003, the event has raised more than \$1 million for brain tumor research and patient-family support. More than 700 individuals attended the 8th annual "Humor to Fight the Tumor" event at The Depot in Minneapolis this past September.

## Headlines

VOLUME 38, NUMBER 2

**Our mission:** The American Brain Tumor Association exists to eliminate brain tumors through research and to meet the needs of brain tumor patients and their families.

**Garett Auriemma:** Director, Marketing & Communications  
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In the University of Minnesota study, owners agreed to have their dogs' tumors (all meningiomas) surgically removed. In each case, a portion of the dog's tumor cells were kept, grown, mixed with an FDA-approved immune activator, and re-injected into the animal to trigger their immune system to ultimately destroy the brain tumor.

"We needed to know that when we removed the tumor, that we would be able to grow enough meningioma cells to make the vaccine, which is not the same as a glioma cell that typically grows faster," said Dr. Ohlfest. "And then, we needed to determine an appropriate and effective dosage."

*"...the fact that we also may be able to help people – to actually have human patients who benefit from the treatment, without the side effects of chemo and radiation – brings tears to my eyes."*

Dr. Elizabeth Pluhar

Today, the dogs that participated in the study, including one that underwent surgery nearly two years ago, are all tumor free. Additionally, all the dogs made antibodies that recognize their own tumor cells, showing that the vaccine is functional.

"The data we have suggests that the vaccine is better than either surgery, or surgery and radiation," said Dr. Hunt. And the results "provide more evidence to support what we do in people."

Dr. Hunt and his team are utilizing the data they've obtained to secure additional funding to continue their research, which they hope will ultimately lead to human clinical trials.

"We've had wonderful results," said G. Elizabeth Pluhar, DVM, PhD, associate professor in the Department of Veterinary Clinical Services at the University of Minnesota. "If we do surgery alone – at least historically, regardless of the tumor grade – the dogs live between 4.5 and 7.5 months."

In addition, the dogs had virtually no side effects from the vaccines, which were administered every two weeks – beginning two weeks after surgery – for a total of six vaccines. Each dog had an MRI immediately after surgery, at six months and at one year.

At the University of California, Davis School of Veterinary Medicine, Peter J. Dickinson, DVM, PhD, DACVIM, a veterinary neurologist, is testing

Tocagen's Toca 511 & Toca FC viral vector to deliver a prodrug activator gene selectively to cancer cells and specifically, whether it can successfully spread through a large glioma tumor, and at what dosage, to ultimately alter the tumor's genetic make-up and allow selective tumor destruction using subsequent prodrug therapy.

In this ongoing study, the treatment is administered to dogs diagnosed with either a glioma or meningioma brain tumor, following a stereotactic biopsy. Two to three weeks later, the tumor is removed and evaluated for viral spread throughout the tumor. Following surgery, the dogs may also receive radiation treatment and/or the prodrug therapy.

"Right now we're asking: 'How well is the virus spreading throughout the tumor? How much Toca 511 do we need? What is the best way to administer the treatment?'"

The answers will help determine optimal treatment parameters that may ultimately aid Tocagen's human clinical trials that are ongoing at leading brain cancer centers in the US (see [www.clinicaltrials.gov](http://www.clinicaltrials.gov); trial ID# NCT01156584).

"The dog can work much better (than a mouse) as a translational step," said Dr. Dickinson. "We are treating the dogs with the best care we can provide at the moment. In a way, we are borrowing their tumor, so we can get answers to these questions.

"It is wonderful to help the dogs and their owners," said Dr. Pluhar of the canine research. "Often the dogs are more like their owners' children; part of the family. But the fact that we also may be able to help people – to actually have human patients who benefit from the treatment, without the side effects of chemo and radiation – brings tears to my eyes."



## ABTA Honored with 2011 Ellyn Bushkin Friend of the Foundation Award



On October 24, the Oncology Nursing Society Foundation honored the American Brain Tumor Association with the 2011 Ellyn Bushkin Friend of the Foundation Award. Craig J. Byrum, ONSF director of development and Margaret Hansen Frogge, RN, MS, a member of the ONSF board of trustees and immediate past president, presented the award to ABTA President and CEO Elizabeth Wilson. Two members of the ABTA Board of Directors—Chair Claudette Yasell and Vice-Chair Ronald Petrocelli, MD—were also on hand for the presentation.

“The Ellyn Bushkin Friend of the Foundation Award is given to an individual or group who clearly exemplifies charity, leadership and service,” noted Frogge, “and the American Brain Tumor Association,

in support of small research grants over the years, certainly exemplified these attributes.”

Since 1995, the American Brain Tumor Association has provided the Oncology Nursing Society over \$80,000 to fund ten neuro-oncology small research grants. During the presentation of the award, Byrum spoke about researchers who were able to grow and receive larger funding because of their initial grants from the American Brain Tumor Association.

“Two of the researchers that were funded by American Brain Tumor Association grants went on to receive external grants totaling over \$3 million dollars,” added Wilson. “We are thrilled that our funding is leading to million dollar grants for these researchers to continue their very important work.”



“However we are touched by brain tumors, we are **not alone**. That is what the ABTA shows us; that is what the ABTA does for us.”

**Not alone** because even the simple act of making a donation to the American Brain Tumor Association is now part of something larger.



With *The Challenge for the 500\**, gifts from new donors, and increased gifts from previous donors, **will be matched dollar for dollar, up to \$500,000.**

With your gift going twice as far, those coping with a brain tumor diagnosis will know, more than ever, that they are not alone.

**We thank you for your generosity.**

\*Visit [www.abta.org](http://www.abta.org) for more details on this incredible matching gift offer.



American  
Brain Tumor  
Association

Where compassion meets commitment

## Victoria Reggie Kennedy Highlights Two Days of Learning, Sharing and Understanding for Brain Tumor Patients and Families

“From the day my husband was diagnosed with a brain tumor, it wasn’t just his disease, it was *our* disease. I thought of it and referred to it as *our* tumor.”



Ryan Porter, Gina Porter and Jonathan Gingras

With those words, Victoria Reggie Kennedy gave an emotional and inspiring recap of the nearly year-and-a-half journey she and her husband, U.S. Senator Edward

M. Kennedy, shared as they battled and braved his brain tumor diagnosis together. Kennedy spoke at the 2011 American Brain Tumor Association Annual Meeting Dinner, part of the ABTA’s Patient-Family Connections Meeting & Retreat, which took place on July 29-30 in Lincolnshire, IL.

Kennedy described the 15 months following her husband’s diagnosis as “a story of hope and happiness—of love and laughter—and of outstanding medicine and optimism.”

The dinner was held on the first night of the two-day meeting, which brought together brain tumor experts and individuals living with a brain tumor diagnosis and their families, from throughout the United States. Nearly 300 participants heard the latest on brain tumor quality of life strategies, research findings and treatment trends.

“The American Brain Tumor Association mission is compelling all of us to move forward,” said

Kennedy. “I am so proud to be here today—so proud to be a part of your extended family.” Kennedy’s words resonated strongly with the patients and families in attendance. “All of us here today in this room are part of a very special club,” she told them. “It’s not a club that we would have chosen, but brain tumors have impacted our lives in powerful ways.”

Kennedy’s remarks followed Jonathan Gingras’ presentation of the Joel A. Gingras, Jr. Award to Ryan and Gina Porter. The Porters have hosted their “Train for the Brain” event for the last 14 years in memory of their son, Justin, who died at age 6 from a brain tumor. The Joel A. Gingras, Jr. Award is named in honor and memory of a beloved brother and son. Joel’s family and friends have hosted events for more than 20 years, raising more than \$1 million for brain tumor research and patient-family education and support



Victoria Reggie Kennedy

“We are extremely grateful to Mrs. Kennedy, the Gingras and Porter families, and the brain tumor experts who shared their knowledge, commitment and passion,” said ABTA President and CEO Elizabeth Wilson. “They made the Patient-Family Connections Meeting a memorable and valuable experience.”

The American Brain Tumor Association annual meeting was sponsored by Cleveland Clinic, Genentech, the MD Anderson Proton Therapy Center, the Mayo Clinic, NorthShore University HealthSystem, Novocure, The Northwestern Brain Tumor Institute, Cyberknife Center of Chicago, The University of Chicago Medical Center, AdeptBio and Diplomat Specialty Pharmacy.

Webinars covering a wide range of topics—including many of the presentations from this year’s Connections Meeting & Retreat—will be made available online throughout 2012 at [www.abta.org](http://www.abta.org).

## Patient-Family Meeting Provides Opportunity for Learning and Growth

This year’s Patient-Family Connections Meeting & Retreat provided attendees with a variety of opportunities for learning more about both scientific research and personal support and care through meetings with ABTA researchers and Support Group Leader Training.

Meeting participants were able to visit with 23 ABTA grant recipients during a scientific poster session, where the researchers presented their results. Talking with patients was a “first” for many of the researchers. The patients shared stories of the challenges presented by brain tumors and asked

◆ Continued on page 7

thoughtful questions, providing the researchers with both inspiration and realism.

“Definitely keep integrating the science with the patient meeting,” shared one researcher. “Interacting with the patients and hearing their stories really put value behind the work that I’m doing.”

For patients and their families, the research session was a glimpse into the future. Participants enjoyed learning about new drugs, new treatment approaches, and the diverse fields of study being pursued by this next generation of brain tumor research leaders. “The new trends were very exciting,” noted one family member. “I really appreciated the chance to visit with the researchers.”

### Facilitator Training Guides Support Group Leaders

The meeting was also host to a half-day Support Group Facilitator Training. This session offered information, tools and techniques for brain tumor support group leaders, as well as for health care professionals and volunteers interested in starting or leading a support group for patients and their families navigating a brain tumor diagnosis.

Eighteen participants – nine social workers, six nurses and three volunteers – took part in the training. The social workers received three National Association of Social Workers (NASW) continuing education credits, while nurses received three American Association of Neuroscience Nurses (AANN) credits.

“Support groups can provide a ‘safe haven’ of comfort and understanding for patients and families coping with a brain tumor diagnosis,” noted Jennifer Westlund, the ABTA’s director of national programs and services. “And trainings such as these mean that an ever-increasing number of people across the country will have access to skilled facilitators who are trained to meet the challenges inherent in leading such a group, and who are able to successfully guide and support participants no matter where they are in their personal brain tumor journey.”

To learn more, or to find a brain tumor support group in your area, call our CareLine at 1-800-886-ABTA (2282) or send an email to [abtacares@abta.org](mailto:abtacares@abta.org).

## American Brain Tumor Association Announces 2012 Fellowship & Grant Opportunities

Applications are now being accepted for the 2012 Basic Research Fellowship, Translation Grant and Medical Student Summer Fellowship (MSSF) programs.

The ABTA Research Funding Program encourages career development in the field of brain tumor research, explores opportunities for innovative research, and seeks collaborative funding opportunities. Advanced imaging techniques to make diagnosis and surgery more precise and effective, and innovative approaches to halting tumor cell growth are just two examples of ABTA-funded research that is resulting in new discoveries and laying the groundwork for future breakthroughs in many areas.

- **Basic Research Fellowship:** These two-year training awards support new and early career scientists entering the field of brain tumor research. The experience provides an opportunity in which bright and motivated investigators learn from experienced mentors.

- **Translational Grant:** These awards help scientists further develop studies on the cusp of moving from the laboratory into patient testing. These one year grants support the collection of the preclinical data researchers need to apply for major funding from other sources.
- **Medical Student Summer Fellowships:** The intent of this program is to motivate talented medical students to pursue a career in neuro-oncology. Medical Student Summer Fellowships are granted to current medical students wishing to spend a summer conducting brain tumor research.

Applications for these programs are due in the ABTA office no later than 5pm (CST) January 10, 2012. For more information, instructions and downloadable applications please contact [grants@abta.org](mailto:grants@abta.org) or visit the Funding Opportunities page at [http://www.abta.org/Research\\_Progress/ABTA\\_Funding\\_Opportunities\\_/304](http://www.abta.org/Research_Progress/ABTA_Funding_Opportunities_/304).



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**Annual 5K Event Breaks Attendance and Revenue Records**

Over 4,000 runners and walkers attended the American Brain Tumor Association's 6<sup>th</sup> Annual 5K event at Soldier Field on May 14 and helped to raise more than \$1 million for research and patient-family programs.

The lead fundraising team was the 160-member Team WILL POWER from Glenview, IL. The team consisted of the friends and family of William "Will" Hicks. Hicks was diagnosed with a malignant brain tumor in January 2010, and passed away 10 months later at the age of 26. Team WILL POWER raised nearly \$45,000 for brain tumor research, and patient-family education and support.

In 2012, the ABTA 5K, Breakthrough for Brain Tumors, in addition to its Chicago event will expand to New York City.

"The expansion of this signature event will allow us to continue and increase our critical funding of brain tumor research, as well as the delivery of desperately needed resources and support to patients and families living with this disease," said ABTA President and CEO Elizabeth Wilson.

**Running Team Reaches New Heights, Looks to Grow in 2012**

Sixty-one members of the ABTA Running Team took part in the Bank of American Chicago Marathon on October 9, raising more than \$120,000. After months of fundraising and training, the team came together from all over the country to show their dedication to individuals and their families coping with a brain tumor diagnosis. Special recognition goes to our top fundraiser, Nimish Mohile, for raising nearly \$8,000.

Starting in 2012, the ABTA Running Team will be re-christened Team Breakthrough and will be participating in the Chicago Half Marathon, the Bank of America Chicago Marathon and races around the country. Participants who join Team Breakthrough's endurance program will be fully supported as they raise funds and train for a half or full marathon, all while helping the 600,000 people in the United States who are living with brain tumors.

To learn more about being part of Team Breakthrough, please visit [www.abtarunners.org](http://www.abtarunners.org) or contact Alisha Kassam at 773-577-8763 or [akassam@abta.org](mailto:akassam@abta.org).

**The American Brain Tumor Association's  
5K Event is "Breaking Through" in 2012**

Visit [www.breakthroughforbraintumors.org](http://www.breakthroughforbraintumors.org) for more details



**breakthrough  
for brain tumors**



**CHICAGO ~ Spring 2012**

**NEW YORK ~ Fall 2012**

**Have you purchased your American Brain Tumor Association Holiday Cards yet?**

Send a special greeting while helping to support ABTA programs. The last day to order personalized cards is December 9, 2011 (December 12 for non-personalized cards). Order online at [www.easyholidaycards.org/ABTA](http://www.easyholidaycards.org/ABTA). Questions? Call Erica at 773-577-8750.