

DONOR PROFILE

By Courtney McCrimmon

Determined to Make a Difference

A Glimmer of Hope Seed Funding Leads to \$3 Million Grant for Breast Cancer Research

“ONLY RESEARCH WILL CURE BREAST CANCER. I have great hope in research,” said Diana Napper. As the founder and president of A Glimmer of Hope Foundation (GOH), Napper has dedicated the last 25 years to fighting breast cancer. Her organization has raised money to support cancer research, patient support programs and research studies in premenopausal breast cancer throughout Western Pennsylvania.

Napper began her mission in 1994 to honor the wishes of her best friend, Carol Jo Weiss Friedman, who passed away from breast cancer in 1990. Originally a promise to fund a hospice in Carol Jo’s name, Napper realized her mission was bigger than she initially realized — she wanted to support breast cancer patients and their families as well as contribute to scientific research.

“Women with breast cancer are under extreme stress. They have to manage their diagnosis in addition to working and caring for their families. At A Glimmer of Hope Foundation, we acknowledge how much anxiety is tied up in a breast cancer diagnosis. We are committed

to funding initiatives that provide immediate comfort and support, while also supporting longer-term research projects,” said Napper.

GOH has funded integrative health services for breast cancer patients, including yoga, massage therapy sessions, acupuncture, transportation solutions and childcare. These initiatives align with Napper’s commitment to providing patients with support and comfort in real time, while through funding laboratory research, she embraces longer-term progress.

Recently, GOH’s support of liquid biopsy research at Magee-Womens Research Institute and UPMC Hillman Cancer Center led to a \$3 million grant from the National Institutes of Health for Adrian Lee, PhD, professor of Pharmacology and Chemical Biology, University of Pittsburgh; The Pittsburgh Foundation Chair in Precision Medicine; director of the Institute of Precision Medicine, and Steffi Oesterreich, PhD, Professor of professor of pharmacology and chemical biology, University of Pittsburgh; The Shear Family Foundation of Breast Cancer



Research; co-director of Women's Cancer Research Center, a collaboration between MWRI and UPMC Hillman Cancer Center; and co-leader of Cancer Biology Program at UPMC HCC.

"A Glimmer of Hope Foundation supported an observational study that allowed us to collect blood from women with breast cancer every time their disease advanced," explained Dr. Lee. "Essentially, we are establishing a blood bank to help us understand the mechanisms that cause breast cancer to spread. Our goal is twofold: we want to sequence the blood draws we've collected, and our collection to become a resource for researchers throughout the country."

According to Dr. Lee, the initial investment from GOH allowed researchers to build a unique resource that appealed to the NIH as well as other organizations.

"It's an investment that we believe is ultimately going to lead to a transformative understanding of our breast cancer knowledge," said Lee. "You can't overestimate the critical importance of seed grant funding like this."

"Research doesn't move quickly most of the time, but I don't find that discouraging," said Napper. "Collectively, we can all work together to make a difference, and I don't think there's ever been more hope than there is now."



"Only research will cure breast cancer. I have great hope in research."

Diana Napper

Learn more about Glimmer of Hope and their work at www.symbolofthecure.com.