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SPARK Gala Returns April 25 to Support Cancer Research and Care

34th annual UC San Diego Moores Cancer Center Gala benefits ‘bench-to-bedside’ research



Actress and singer Megan Hilty will perform at the 2015 SPARK Gala

San Diego community members, physicians and cancer survivors will come together Saturday, April 25 at the Grand Del Mar for SPARK Gala, an evening to “ignite the fight against cancer.” The gala will feature a cocktail reception, dinner, auction and special performance by actress and singer Megan Hilty, who made her Broadway debut as Glinda in “Wicked.” Proceeds from the event will benefit patient care and research at UC San Diego Moores Cancer Center, including helping to launch a new Cancer

Immunotherapy Program.

“We are proud to have exceptional physicians, researchers and staff who are committed to delivering the best possible care for patients with cancer,” said Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla. “With support from generous donors, we continue to make great progress in understanding this disease in all of its forms and developing effective therapies.”

SPARK, the 34th annual Moores Cancer Center gala, is an opportunity for the community to recognize the advances made in the fight against cancer while garnering support to spur new discoveries. Last year, the event raised more than \$5 million for the Cancer Center through the generosity of guests as well as matching gifts.

Wanda and Cam Garner, co-chairs of the gala, know firsthand how destructive the disease can be. Cancer has touched four generations of Cam's family, primarily in the form of leukemia and lymphoma. His father died at age 49, when Cam was 17, and his sister died at age 39. His brother and mother also died of cancer-related causes, and his niece has been diagnosed.

"We want to be sure that San Diego has a world-class cancer center, with the best doctors and researchers, so that no one here needs to leave in order to receive the highest quality of care," said Wanda and Cam Garner.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of Moores Cancer Center. Part of UC San Diego Health System, Moores Cancer Center is one of just 41 National Cancer Institute-designated Comprehensive Cancer Centers in the country—and the only one in the San Diego region—that is leading a broad range of research initiatives and patient-centered programs to improve prevention, detection and care. In addition, in 2016, UC San Diego Health System will open the new Jacobs Medical Center, which will house the Pauline and Stanley Foster Pavilion for Cancer Care, a state-of-the-art in-patient facility to meet the projected needs of the region as San Diego's population grows and ages. Designed with input from cancer patients and families, the pavilion will provide the latest in technology for clinical care.

Proceeds from the SPARK Gala will help launch the new Cancer Immunotherapy Program at UC San Diego Moores Cancer Center. The funds will make possible groundbreaking immunotherapy clinical trials with novel drugs and vaccines as well as an experimental treatment in which patients' own immune cells are genetically engineered to fight their cancer. The Cancer Immunotherapy Program at Moores Cancer Center is unique to only a handful of academic medical centers around the country.

"Immunotherapy is extremely precise and is transforming outcomes in ways never thought possible," said Dr. Scott Lippman, director of Moores Cancer Center. "Our team, led by world-renowned physician-scientists Drs. Ezra Cohen and Tom Kipps, has already developed and activated several key clinical trials that include the exploration of novel immune checkpoint inhibitors. These paradigm-shifting studies show remarkable promise in patients battling cancers even when resistant to traditional therapies. In the next year, we will dramatically expand the scope of this program to include immune cellular therapy, such as adaptive T-cell transfer." Guests at the 2015 SPARK Gala will enjoy a musical performance by Megan Hilty. Since making her Broadway debut as Glinda in "Wicked," Hilty has performed in a broad range of roles, from singing with the New York Philharmonic to starring in NBC's musical drama, "Smash" and television comedy, "Sean Saves the World."

The gala will begin at 6 p.m. with a cocktail reception, followed by dinner, auction and performance by Hilty. Individual tickets are \$600 and sponsorships are available. For event details and reservations, visit [sparkgala](#) or call (858) 534-4289. To learn more about UC San Diego Moores Cancer Center, follow this [link](#).

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