

Luau and Longboard Invitational Comes to Shore to Fight Cancer Aug. 21

Annual event will honor pioneering oncologist, Dennis Carson, MD

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According to the American Cancer Society, half of all men and one-third of all women in the United States will develop cancer during their lifetimes. To fight the devastating disease and raise critical funding for cancer research at the UC San Diego Moores Cancer Center, the 18th annual Luau and Longboard Invitational will be held Sunday, Aug. 21.

The surf-themed fundraiser has become a local tradition, featuring a surfing invitational where individuals can compete with surfing legends in the waves of La Jolla Shores. The competition is followed by a luau with live music, Polynesian dancers, and live and silent auctions with one-of-a-kind surf memorabilia.

"The Luau and Longboard Invitational is an extraordinary illustration of the community's support of the UC San Diego Moores Cancer Center and its achievements in research, patient care and cancer prevention," said Thomas Kipps, MD, interim director of the UC San Diego Moores Cancer Center. "Charitable support from this event helps fuel the groundbreaking discoveries that are happening at the center every day."

Since its founding 18 years ago, the event has raised more than \$5 million for research at the Moores Cancer Center to battle cancer.

"It's incredible that the founders of modern surfing gather each year to put on a friendly competition, sign autographs, mingle with spectators and do it all in the true aloha spirit with the goal of raising funds for cancer research," said Cory Reynolds, a longtime surfer and 2011 event co-chair.

Reynolds understands the importance of cancer research. In 2008, he learned he had chronic myelogenous leukemia, a diagnosis that changed his life. With treatment from the UC San Diego Moores Cancer Center, the young husband and father of two is now in remission.

"As a cancer survivor, I know firsthand how crucial fundraising events like the Luau and Longboard Invitational are to the discovery and development of cancer treatments," said Reynolds. "With these funds, physicians and scientists at the Moores Cancer Center are working tirelessly to find a cure to this terrible disease."

A highlight of the annual event is the presentation of the Rell Sunn "Queen of Makaha" Award, established in memory of Rell Sunn, a Hawaiian surfer and longtime Luau and Longboard Invitational supporter who lost her battle with breast cancer. Each year, the event volunteer committee selects an honoree who they feel has displayed a strong will, unselfishness and compassion in the battle against cancer. This year, the committee selected Dennis Carson, MD, director of the UC San Diego Moores Cancer Center from 2003 until July of this year. His tenure was marked by numerous highlights and achievements, including the opening of the cancer center facility in 2005 and the naming of the UC San Diego Moores Cancer Center as one of only 40 National Cancer Institute-designated Comprehensive Cancer Centers in the U.S.

While nurturing an atmosphere of innovation and collaboration at Moores Cancer Center, Carson is, first and foremost, a working scientist. He owns 60 patents based upon his research and has founded six biotechnology companies to pursue those discoveries. Carson discovered and developed a drug-now marketed as Leustatin-that effectively treats hairy cell leukemia, once considered deadly.

"Throughout his long career, Dr. Carson has embodied the spirit of generosity and selfless dedication to the fight against cancer," said event co-chair Taylor Peterson. "Not only are his scientific discoveries remarkable, but he has also built bridges between UC San Diego and the biotech and pharmaceutical communities that have helped speed the translation of basic science advancements to therapies for cancer patients."

For the fourth year in a row, Pfizer is the title sponsor of the unique fundraiser. As part of its sponsorship, the biopharmaceutical company will support its own team of surfing scientists, as well as the Thrivers Team, which is made up of surfers who have successfully fought cancer. "We are proud to support and participate in the Luau and Longboard Invitational again this year, and congratulate Dr. Carson on receiving the Rell Sunn Award," said Bhasker Shetty, PhD, vice president of worldwide research and development and site director of Pfizer La Jolla Laboratories. "Pfizer is also proud to collaborate with prominent research facilities like UC San Diego in discovering and developing innovative therapies to help fight cancer."

The surfing competition is free for viewing; a ticket to the luau fundraiser is \$150. For more information about sponsorship opportunities, team entries, tickets and event activities, contact the UC San Diego Moores Cancer Center at (858) 534-6797, or visit the event website at www.longboardluau.org.

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