

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **2022 UCI ANTI-CANCER CHALLENGE RAISES RECORD-BREAKING \$1 MILLION FOR PROMISING CANCER RESEARCH**

**Funds support research at the UCI Health Chao Family Comprehensive Cancer Center and its pediatric cancer affiliate, CHOC.**

IRVINE, CALIFORNIA – On Saturday, Oct. 8, more than 3,000 UCI Anti-Cancer Challenge participants, donors and supporters gathered at UCI Aldrich Park for the first time since 2019 to ride, run and walk for innovative cancer research.

Together, they helped raise \$1 million to fund promising cancer pilot projects and early phase clinical trials at the UCI Health Chao Family Comprehensive Cancer Center, the only NCI-designated comprehensive cancer center based in Orange County. Through a special partnership with CHOC, a portion of the funds will be dedicated to pediatric cancer research.

The record-breaking fundraiser greatly exceeded what the peer-to-peer campaign brought in last year. In the previous five years of the event, UCI Anti-Cancer Challenge participants had raised a total of \$2.6 million for the cause, and as a result of those funds, an additional \$21.9 million in extramural grants was rewarded to UCI investigators for their research.

“I am grateful for the overwhelming support we’ve received from our participants, donors and sponsors this year,” said Richard A. Van Etten, MD, PhD, UCI Health Chao Family Comprehensive Cancer Center director and UCI Anti-Cancer Challenge founder. “The support of our community and collaboration between over 200 UCI researchers working tirelessly to conduct promising cancer research propels us closer toward our goal of preventing, treating and curing all forms of the disease.”

UCI Anti-Cancer Challenge sponsors underwrite event costs, ensuring 100 percent of the funds raised by participants go directly toward the cause. This year’s sponsors included LA Fitness, Club Studio, Kay Family Foundation, Hensel Phelps, KTLA, Anaheim Ducks, Dunkin’, Standard Drywall, Enclos, GSK, Bristol Meyers Squibb and Helio Genomics.

Starting at 6 a.m., riders attended the event early to prepare for the 14-, 35-, 60- and 100-mile bike routes. Each group was welcomed by UCI leadership including Dr. Van Etten, Michael J. Stamos, M.D, dean of the UCI School of Medicine, and Chad Lefteris, CEO of UCI Health. At the start of the 5K and 10K run/walks, country recording artist Rick Monroe sang the national anthem and was joined by Chip Yost, KTLA reporter and bureau chief, who served as the 2022 UCI Anti-Cancer Challenge emcee for the opening ceremony.

The event also included a family-friendly festival hosted by UCI Health, where the UCI Stem Cell Clinic, Gavin Herbert Eye Institute, Susan Samueli Integrative Health Institute and Chao Family Comprehensive Digestive Disease Center connected with participants and shared about their services.

Following the activities, founder and owner of the Anaheim Hills Saddle Club, Dr. Andrew Edwards, was honored with UCI Health urologic cancer surgeon, Dr. Thomas Ahlering, during the awards ceremony for their dedication and support of cancer research. Ronit Benjamin, 2022 UCI Anti-Cancer Challenge

volunteer chair and top individual fundraiser, remarked, “Being involved in the UCI Anti-Cancer Challenge these last four years has truly been soul fulfilling for me. By honoring my father-in-law and grandparents, I’m helping others to live or have a better quality of life. Every word we speak and every action we perform affects our future, so I encourage everyone to join and make a difference!”

“We are grateful to each and every person who joined us for this year’s event, and we would like to especially highlight our Partners in Research for their generosity and support,” said Jennifer Sarraill, executive director of the UCI Anti-Cancer Challenge. UCI Anti-Cancer Challenge Partners in Research are individuals, teams and corporations that raise or donate \$50,000 or more. This year’s UCI Anti-Cancer Challenge Partners in Research include Team Benjamin & Wagner, Team Grandma Marcia, Monster Energy Cares, Lynn Capouya, Team Michelle & friends, Hensel Phelps and Sharpe Interior Systems.

With the \$1 million raised this year, the UCI Anti-Cancer Challenge funds will continue to support new projects that help investigators generate crucial preliminary data that can lead to the next breakthroughs in cancer treatment.

### **About the UCI Anti-Cancer Challenge**

The UCI Anti-Cancer Challenge is a community movement and annual ride, run and walk event to raise awareness and funds for cancer research at the UCI Health Chao Family Comprehensive Cancer Center and its pediatric cancer partner, CHOC. One hundred percent of the dollars raised by participants goes to promising cancer research. For more information, visit [www.anti-cancerchallenge.org](http://www.anti-cancerchallenge.org).

### **About the UCI Health Chao Family Comprehensive Center**

The UCI Chao Family Comprehensive Cancer Center is at the forefront of discovering new ways to fight cancer. As one of only 53 NCI-designated comprehensive cancer centers in the nation, the center combines leading-edge research, clinical trials and world-class care for patients. In 2020 alone, more than 7,250 new patients benefited from the advanced treatments provided by the center.

### **About the UCI Health**

UCI Health is the clinical enterprise of the University of California, Irvine. Patients can access UCI Health at primary and specialty care offices across Orange County and at its main campus, UCI Medical Center in Orange, California. The 418-bed acute care hospital provides tertiary and quaternary care, ambulatory and specialty medical clinics, as well as behavioral health and rehabilitation services. UCI Medical Center is home to Orange County’s only National Cancer Institute-designated comprehensive cancer center, high-risk perinatal/neonatal program and American College of Surgeons-verified Level I adult and Level II pediatric trauma center and regional burn center. UCI Health serves a region of nearly 4 million people in Orange County, western Riverside County and southeast Los Angeles County.