Keck Hospital of USC stroke program fetes growth, successes

By Josh Grossberg

Keck Hospital of USC has made great strides in the treatment of stroke patients, and on May 22, it was time to thank some of those responsible for making it happen.

During an appreciation reception ceremony — timed to coincide with Stroke Awareness Month — commendations were given to the staffs of 7 South, 7 North and the Evaluation and Treatment Clinic.

“You know what?” said one of the staff members. “I saw beauty in something that was in flow that, since then, I have overlooked before.”

The Stroke Program Coordinator Leslie Tarlow was brought on board to create the program in 2010. At the reception, she noted that it takes a lot of communication to run a successful stroke program.

“When we see something, we see it for what it is,” she said. “And we try to make it happen.”

At a recent Los Angeles County Medical Association mayoral roundtable focusing on health care are, from left: Donald Larson, chief medical officer and medical director for external health affairs, Keck Medical Center of USC; Eric Garrett, Los Angeles mayor-elect; Caroline Mossessian, clinical assistant professor and vice chair, administration and finance, Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, Keck School of Medicine of USC; and Michael Karp, assistant professor of clinical medicine, Keck School. The Keck Medical Center of USC co-sponsored the event, which took place at Good Samaritan Hospital.
New kidney diagnosis center established with $600,000 gift

By Amy E. Hamaker

Glen Miller could never have guessed that a 15-year-old X-ray from a snowmobile accident would lead him to the USC doctor who would change his life.

“Other than a busted ego, I was basically fine after the accident,” said Miller, CEO of Diversified Financial Management Corp. and one of the founders of the Glen and Wendy Miller Family Foundation, a not-for-profit corporation located in Hanover, Ill.

The X-ray became important again, years later when Miller’s doctor found a growth on his kidney after prostate problems. “You can see the growth on the old X-ray, although the emergency room staff hadn’t been looking at my kidneys at the time,” he said.

Miller’s doctor was able to see the growth’s development using the old X-ray and a series of new MRIs, and determined that a specialist was needed to remove it — “… hopefully just the growth.”

Through Lauren Ikas, a friend of his daughter, Miller was put in contact with Inderbir Gill, chairman of the Catherine and Joseph Aresty Department of Urology at the Keck School of Medicine of USC. “Six days later, with the biopsy in hand, Dr. Gill’s associate, Daniel Park, told me, my wife and my daughter that the operation had been ‘curative’ and that I was cancer free. You cannot imagine the joy and relief we all felt.…”

—Glen Miller, patient of Inderbir Gill, chairman of the Catherine and Joseph Aresty Department of Urology at the Keck School of Medicine of USC

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As USC celebrates the 40th anniversary of the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center, The Weekly will run in each issue through the end of the year focusing on key moments in the history of the institution.

In 1970, a task force was formed to establish a cancer center at USC. Forty years ago this month, National Cancer Institute Director Frank J. Rauscher Jr. announced the USC Comprehensive Cancer Center as one of eight organizations recognized as comprehensive cancer centers to bring results of research as rapidly as possible to the greatest number of people.

Right, donor Kenneth T. Norris Jr. (left) and Denman Hammond, founding director of the center, display the first architectural model of the new facility in a late 1970s file photo.

40  USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center

Part of the Keck School of Medicine of USC
By Mike McNulty

With one touch last summer, what was just another day in the life of a Trojan graduate student suddenly became something much more.

“It was the third day of school and I was in class, touching my neck,” recalled Caryn Roach, a student in the entry-level professional program of the USC Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy. “And I felt a big lump.”

When you’re a 30-something student enrolled in the nation’s top-ranked occupational therapy program with a bright career ahead of you in a workforce booming with employers demanding, “lump” is the last word you expect to hear, let alone feel.

Roach also has a second family — the USC Trojan family who have been so loving and supportive of her.

“Roach said that emotional support was not only a gesture to her but a broader reflection of the empathy at the heart of USC occupational therapists, present and future. “It makes me feel good, and I know that it makes other people feel proud to be a part of this group. Knowing that we’re going to go out, and we’re going to help people make their lives better,” she said. “It just feels good to be a part of that. I don’t know where else you can find a group of that many people that are so caring and so supportive in one place.”

In March, Roach finished her last scheduled treatment. With more surveillance testing ahead of her, she is technically not yet in remission. But she is already looking forward to ways of leveraging her experience to benefit others in need.

Roach also recently decided to pursue her Doctorate of Occupational Therapy, accepting a clinical residency at the Medical Center of USC with the hopes of working one-on-one with people with cancer.

“I don’t think a lot of people are getting occupational therapy, who have cancer. ‘This is where I can give my input, and it means something. I am here, I am living it right now,’ she said with an unmistakable air of gratitude. ‘I feel like a cliché, but I think that’s where I need to be because that’s where I can really help people.’

Researchers, community address critical health needs

By Paul Karan

Whether producing movies that change women’s attitudes toward cervical cancer screening, or using mobile technology to keep people with diabetes out of the emergency room, public health research in complex and painstaking work. In many cases, however, the hard part is not the science, but finding the right partners and participants.

The Southern California Clinical and Translational Science Institute (SC CTSI), whose mission is to speed the conversion of research into public health solutions, provides expertise and assistance that not only helps USC’s investigators conduct their research, but also benefits the university’s neighbors throughout Los Angeles and Southern California.

Five USC-led research teams, whose projects received key support from the CTSI Community Engagement group, presented their studies and findings at the April 24 Community Engagement Dinner meeting. The teams led studies on cultural differences in cervical cancer screening, integration of mental and physical health care, and efficacy of mobile technology use to manage diabetes and childhood obesity, as well as data collection of the health information of transgender patients.

The SC CTSI community engagement efforts serve as a sort of research matchmaker—the team approaches community groups, clinicians and health care providers to discover their most pressing public health needs. Then they identify the right USC researchers and help the investigators shape projects, find funding, carry out the research — and ultimately implement the results in real-world solutions.

For a list of all five projects visit http://tinyurl.com/no997am.
Festival of Life celebrates triumphs of cancer survivors and their families

By Josh Grossberg

It’s such a sad, sad thing that people often refer to it only by its initial — the C word.

But at the Festival of Life on June 1, the letter stood for a lot more than cancer. There was also courage, care and mostly, celebration.

Hundreds of cancer survivors and their families gathered in the Harry & Gelesta Pappas Quad on the Health Sciences Campus to commemorate their success in beating back the disease and to show others that they can do it too.

Now in its 23rd year, the event is held in recognition of National Cancer Survivors Day. It was hosted by the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center and Hospital. It also has for nearly every event, festival, Art Ulene acted as the master of ceremonies. Ulene, a Norris Cancer Advisory board member who had his own cancer scare several years ago, told the audience that they should embrace their lives.

“There is life — good life — after cancer,” he said. “We didn’t always treat that as a fact. When I was young, it was considered a death sentence.”

The event continues to be more popular with each passing year, said Alicia Syres, director of volunteer services at the hospital.

“Not only was the day for the survivors, but also gave their care providers a chance to see how their patients have progressed.”

“It’s not just for cancer survivors and their families,” Syres said. “It gives staff a shot in the arm. They see these people come back, and it’s a real boost for them.”

Speakers included cancer survivors. A few letters of thanks were read from former patients who could not attend.

For 64-year-old Lee Woolever, returning to where he had an operation for esophageal cancer was a way to be with people who understood what he went through.

“I somehow feel a connection to the university and hospital,” he said. “I get a bit overwhelmed when I see how many people are touched by cancer.”

Near the end of the ceremony, the hundreds of people sitting in the quad turned to face the windows at the Norris Hospital a few hundred feet away. They knew that there were people on the other side of those windows who were going through what they had experienced, and they wanted to send a sign of encouragement. They waved and cheered to the unseen patients as a way to know that, despite their fears, there is, in fact, a good life after cancer.