Taking a Swing at Curing Colon Cancer

After a long fight against colon cancer, David Gale passed away from the disease in 2000. “It was horrible what my family witnessed with my dad,” says Brian Gale, David’s son. “After he passed, my family decided that ‘cancer stinks’ and we didn’t want others to have to live with seeing their loved ones succumb to such a painful disease. We knew we wanted to be part of the solution to finding a cure.”

To achieve this dream, Brian and his family created a lasting tribute to his father—the David L. Gale Memorial Golf Tournament. Proceeds from the annual tournament support colon cancer research at Washington University School of Medicine through a fund established at The Foundation for Barnes-Jewish Hospital.

Brian admits it’s ironic that they chose to honor his father with a golf tournament. “My father was actually an avid hunter and didn’t particularly care for golf. He preferred to drive the cart around and be social when he participated in charity golf fundraisers.”

But the idea of having a golf tournament gained traction with several family members. “Soon, my brother-in-law, my three uncles, and I had each committed to hosting a team to play golf one Saturday as a fundraiser,” Brian says.

Brian compares the first golf tournament to a “big family party.” However, with five teams, they raised $1,000. That was eight years ago.

As more friends and neighbors have heard about the tournament, participation has multiplied to more than 150 people. The Gale family had been directing the proceeds to a national colon cancer organization but eventually decided they wanted the funds to stay local. They also wanted to ensure it made a lasting impact to find better treatments for colorectal cancer.

Brian’s wife, Sarah, recognized the immeasurable benefits of leading-edge research through her work at Washington University School of Medicine. She pointed the family to the research being performed by Nicholas Davidson, MD, a Washington University gastroenterologist at Barnes-Jewish Hospital. “After speaking with Dr. Davidson, we knew we needed to help expand his innovative studies and clinical trials however we could,” Brian says.

As a result, the Gale family established the Family and Hereditary Colorectal Cancer Fund at The Foundation for Barnes-Jewish Hospital. This fund supports research to determine causes of familial, hereditary colorectal cancer. The family also created The David L. Gale Memorial Endowment Fund, which will grow to be a lasting legacy of David Gale and provide long-term support for research into inherited forms of colon cancer.

The eighth annual David L. Gale Memorial Golf Tournament was held in May with 39 teams and raised $20,000. Dr. Davidson also attended this year, which Brian says meant so much to his family. “We have all been continually impressed with what Dr. Davidson is doing in his lab. Soon he will integrate data from the disease progression of my dad’s tumors into an upcoming study.”

The Gale family support for colon cancer research continues to grow thanks to increasing tournament proceeds and through tribute gifts to the Foundation in honor of David Gale.

“We’re a big family doing small things to fund the search for a colon cancer cure,” Brian says. “But through our giving, someone else’s family may not have to suffer like we did. It really gives you a warm feeling knowing that.”

Sarah and Brian Gale and their children. The Gale’s extended family and friends support colon cancer research in honor of Brian’s father, David Gale.