

Mark Thomas:

Driving FORE Cancer Research

Mark Thomas is what his friends call a “doer.”

When his aunt died from ovarian cancer in 2006, immediately his thoughts turned to what he could do to promote cancer research. “Why not start a golf tournament?” he recalls thinking—an event in which he and his friends could get together and have fun while raising money for a good cause.

Now, just seven years later, Thomas, along with a dedicated team of family, colleagues and friends, manages FORE Cancer Research—a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that runs one of central Ohio’s most successful charity pro-am tournaments.

The FORE Cancer Research Charity Pro-Am, held the first Monday in August each year at The Lakes Golf and Country Club in Westerville, Ohio, draws professionals and amateurs alike. Says event co-chair Kevin Stiverson, “We want people to walk away from the tournament saying, ‘That’s the best event I’ve ever played in,’ and we have several people say that to us every year.”

The tournament is on track to raise \$1 million for cancer research by the conclusion of 2014—a milestone the organizers could not have imagined in 2006.

FORE Cancer Research has funded skin, colorectal, lung, ovarian, breast and, most recently, sarcoma cancer research projects at Ohio State’s Comprehensive Cancer Center –James Cancer Hospital and Solove Research Institute. The money raised goes directly into the hands of the researchers—from “donors right into the lab,” says Thomas.

Event organizers share an acute understanding of the importance of cancer research, each one having had a close family member or friend impacted by cancer. It is a sentiment imparted to the golfers following tournament play. When Michael A. Caligiuri, MD, chief executive officer of The James and director of the OSUCCC, and special guests such as Chris Spielman share their stories with guests, “That’s when it really hits home what the day is about,” says Stiverson.

FORE Cancer Research has expanded its fundraising efforts beyond the tournament as well, initiating Give 18 FORE Cancer Research, a program that encourages every golfer in the nation to donate \$18 to cancer research annually. With more than 26 million golfers in the United States alone (according to the National Golf Foundation), FORE Cancer Research organizers see a huge potential for fundraising and are working with partners to raise the stature of this effort nationally.

Thomas and the other organizers attribute FORE Cancer Research’s success to a team spirit that guides them in their work. Says FORE Cancer Research organizer Jim Zink, “When you put a bunch of people who are doers together, you can make a big difference.”



For more information on the Give 18 FORE Cancer Research Campaign, visit forecancerresearch.org.



Left: FORE Cancer Research Committee Members (back row) Eddie Klein, Kevin Stiverson, Bryan Bigelow, Mike Anderson, Jim Zink and (front) Mark Thomas

