Dr. Peyton Taylor holds a special place in the minds and hearts of his patients and their families. The former UVA Cancer Center physician—who also served as medical director of UVA Cancer Center—retired from practice this past December after 30 years of dedicated service. In addition to treating patients in Charlottesville and teaching medical students, he also cared for patients in Southwest Virginia and East Africa. In fact, Taylor will continue working with the telemedicine program at UVA during his retirement.

To many, Taylor became the public face of the Emily Couric Clinical Cancer Center. “It was Peyton who led our efforts to design this facility,” explains Michael Weber, PhD, director of UVA Cancer Center. “Peyton became an advocate for future cancer patients and their families. He helped us build a facility that is equal to the people who work here every day.”

Now, thanks to the generosity of the family of a grateful patient, the women’s oncology clinic on the third floor of the Couric Center bears Taylor’s name—a lasting tribute to the quality of the man as much as his skill as a physician.

Honoring a Community Hero

Uncommon Friendship

Bringing Art and Compassion to Cancer Patients

The Emily Couric Clinical Cancer Center opened its doors to patients a year ago in April. The building is a testament to the dedication of a caring community—made up not only of doctors, nurses, and architects, but patients, family members, volunteers, and benefactors who want to improve the lives of cancer patients.

Benefactors like Ginny Semmes and Connie Massey Dulaney, for example, friends of more than 40 years whose lives have been deeply affected by the disease. Their vision of the new center is more than bricks and mortar; it’s filled with the amenities that promote comfort, peace, and healing.

A Personal Connection

A member of the UVA Cancer Center Advisory Board, Connie Dulaney’s three-year brush with leukemia is an experience that drives her loyalty and compassion toward other cancer patients.

Dulaney understands firsthand that cancer patients often face discomfort and fatigue, as well as worry and stress, during their treatment. A potentially
On an unseasonably crisp evening last fall, a private concert was held in a renovated barn at Veralum Farm in Ivy, VA. Attendees were excited to hear the music of country-and-blues-great Delbert McClinton and happy to be supporting a worthy cause—the Becky Silver Fund at UVA Cancer Center. The concert raised more than $100,000, thanks to an anonymous matching gift.

Established in 2011, the Becky Silver Fund honors the life of a devoted friend, wife, and mother who lost her battle to acute lymphocytic leukemia last spring. The fund supports innovative clinical trials, patient amenities, and an endowment for groundbreaking research.

The Art of Healing

“It’s so amazing to think about how much power color has,” says Tamra Harrison Kirschnick, a local artist and oil painter whose vivid, richly pigmented paintings of flowers and other natural elements quickly engage viewers in her work. Research, in fact, shows that being surrounded by art — particularly images of nature — can lower stress and improve the morale of people undergoing treatment for illness in hospitals.

Charlottesville resident Carolyn Brandt fully understands this concept. When Brandt walked into Kirschnick’s studio, she was struck by the beauty in her work — so much so that she bought two paintings. One for her house; the other—“Sumac”—Brandt donated to the Emily Couric Clinical Cancer Center in honor of her mother, Janet Weary, a painter herself who was treated at UVA before she died from lung cancer in 2010.

“It was something I felt I could do to give back, to help other people and families coping with cancer,” says Brandt of the painting. She likewise donated one of her mother’s landscape paintings to the Cancer Center.

“There’s so much depth in Tamra’s paintings,” says Brandt. “They’re quite stunning. I thought ‘Sumac,’ in particular, was a painting that deserved to be seen by a lot of people.”

DESIGN IN HEALING

“Sumac” was rendered by artist Tamra Harrison Kirschnick from a photograph and lushly translated into seven interrelated canvases. The piece is on display in the Emily Couric Clinical Cancer Center.
More than 2,700 runners took to the streets of Charlottesville for the 37th annual Charlottesville Ten Miler. Hosted by the Charlottesville Track Club, the Ten Miler course is widely considered to be one of the most challenging urban courses in the country. The race raised more than $60,000 to support Dr. David Jones’ lung cancer research, and these funds will be matched 1:1 by an anonymous donor.

Running Toward a Cure

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trials for leukemia, as well as amenities for patients receiving infusions at UVA Cancer Center.

“Throughout Becky’s treatment, we were blessed with an incredible community of support, from our friends and neighbors to our top-notch team at UVA, which included Dr. John Densmore and nurse Devon Bloxsom, among so many others,” says Lee Silver, Becky’s husband.

“My wife believed in ‘paying forward,’” says Silver, “and through this fund, I believe that’s just what we are doing—offering the same hope and comfort to others in their time of need that we received in ours.”

When Marty Whitlow enters a room, she brings her vitality with her. It’s her own particular brand of inborn energy that served Whitlow well during her 34 years as a kindergarten and elementary school teacher in Albemarle County.

Whitlow was forced into retirement, however, when a pain in her upper abdomen led to a full CT scan that showed a large mass on one of her ovaries—the result of aggressively moving ovarian cancer that spread throughout her abdomen.

Referred immediately to UVA Cancer Center and Dr. Amir Jazaeri, a recognized expert in ovarian cancer treatment, Whitlow underwent extensive surgery. Afterward, she agreed to an intensive protocol of six successive and full-potency rounds of chemotherapy “to knock out more cancer cells,” she remembers.

Inspired by Jazaeri’s compassion and expertise, Whitlow founded a grassroots effort to raise money for research. The Marty Whitlow Ovarian Cancer Research Fund is a testament to the collective impact of hundreds of donors joining together. Whitlow’s “Team Teal” (teal is the color associated with ovarian cancer awareness) has raised more than $35,000 through a number of efforts, including a “Dance for Life” concert in November.

“Marty is a caring, resolute patient and an important advocate for ovarian cancer research,” Jazaeri says. “She is committed to helping us focus our efforts on all-important early detection methods for the disease.”

Referred to as the “silent killer,” ovarian cancer can devastate lives, given that mild, early symptoms often go unnoticed. Whitlow believes strongly in routine gynecologic exams that include a blood test and ultrasound. With early diagnosis, ovarian cancer is highly treatable, but only 19% of cases are caught before the disease spreads.

“Every day I celebrate life,” says Whitlow, a wife, mother, and grandmother. “Through the fund I can tell my story and help Dr. Jazaeri and others at UVA Cancer Center find a cure.”
powerful force in the healing process, however, can be a soothing and peaceful clinical setting.

to that end, she recently donated 24 oil and watercolor paintings, as well as a grand piano, to “create atmosphere and cut through tension and anxiety” for the patients who visit the Couric Center.

“To look at a beautiful landscape or peaceful-looking farm house in a bucolic setting can be calming and help to elevate someone’s mood,” Dulaney believes.

Also a member of the UVA Cancer Center Advisory Board and a dedicated volunteer in the Infusion Center, Ginny Semmes lost both her daughter and brother to cancer; her daughter-in-law is currently fighting breast cancer. “To look at a beautiful landscape or peaceful-looking farm house in a bucolic setting can be calming and help to elevate someone’s mood,” Dulaney believes.

Also a member of the UVA Cancer Center Advisory Board and a dedicated volunteer in the Infusion Center, Ginny Semmes lost both her daughter and brother to cancer; her daughter-in-law is currently fighting breast cancer. Semmes’ personal experience with the disease, however, doesn’t end there.

Semmes’ deep interest in the Cancer Center started more than 15 years ago when her sister-in-law, Mary Semmes Scripps, died from esophageal cancer. “I was amazed and inspired by the level of care Mary received from UVA,” Semmes shares.

To honor Mary, Semmes, along with her late husband Premitt Semmes, initiated the Mary Semmes Scripps Fund for Integrative Medicine. The fund supports cancer research, education, and clinical services focused on complementary therapies, including massage, acupuncture, nutrition counseling and more—treatments aimed at “healing the soul,” as she puts it—that were not available when her sister-in-law was ill.

Semmes has also donated a substantial collection of iPads and other digital and traditional media for patients who spend hours at the Infusion Center. These devices, Semmes says, “can help to keep people’s minds engaged, which can relieve stress while they undergo extensive treatments.”

The two friends are happy to be working together, and proud to advance the UVA Cancer Center’s mission on behalf of its patients and their families.

“Ginny and I want to help create an environment that gives people a sense of hope,” Dulaney says.