Arthritis Center of Excellence Funding

Last year, donors like you helped to launch the Arthritis Center of Excellence, a collaboration between more than 20 investigators from Stanford University and the University of California, San Francisco. The purpose of the Center of Excellence is to study the genetics and biological mechanisms of arthritis to support advances in the diagnosis, treatment, and possible prevention of the disease. These researchers are also currently working to develop targeted therapies to treat arthritis without the adverse side effects that are so often associated with medications.

Arthritis Foundation funding of $2 million will be matched by Stanford University and the University of California, San Francisco for a total of $4 million over a four-year period. This is a new and exciting funding model that we hope to continue long into the future.


Lead Investigators:
- William Robinson, MD
- Mary C. Nakamura, MD

University of California, San Francisco

The Arthritis Foundation’s Research Focus

As the world’s largest nonprofit contributor to arthritis research since 1948, the Arthritis Foundation provides innovative grants that empower both young and established scientists to study enterprising new ideas that could lead to the miracle drugs of the future. Our grant program draws proposals from the most talented scientists across the country. A vigorous peer review process with top, well-established medical experts ensures that the proposals we accept are of the highest quality.

Our leadership in arthritis research does not stop at grant funding. We drive the world’s arthritis research agenda by developing and supporting specialized, targeted research initiatives that we believe will push us toward a cure. To accomplish these large initiatives, we forge and lead partnerships with other health agencies, foundations, and private industry partners.

SPRING 2014

Touching Lives for Thirty Years

Over 1,000 children, teens, young adults and families living with juvenile arthritis will gather in Colorado for a life-changing experience.

For many years, your generosity has touched the lives of the 300,000 children and their families living with juvenile arthritis (JA). Children battling JA today have more options than at any other time in history, with the advent of new medications and treatments. But, we recognize that there is still a lengthy fight ahead of us before we find a cure.

The Arthritis Foundation, Great West Region is honored to have been selected to host the multi-day 2014 National JA Conference in Keystone, Colorado. Families living with JA, young adults who grew up with the disease and dedicated volunteers will be traveling to Colorado from across the Great West Region, from across the country, and some from around the world, for this one-of-a-kind opportunity. They will connect with others who understand their struggles and come together for up-to-date medical information from the top experts in the field. From this event advocates are born, ideas are generated, volunteers are re-energized, and hope is renewed. The Conference includes activities for the whole family.

- The Children and Teen Program helps children develop new skills to manage arthritis and connect with peers who understand their pain.
- The Young Adult Program provides insights into transitioning to college and career, telling loved ones about their arthritis, and long-term considerations for health and wellness.
- The Parent Program presents information about caring for a child with arthritis and the effects the disease can have on the whole family.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the JA Conference, and the Conference will be returning to its original 1984 site in Keystone, Colorado. It’s amazing how far we’ve come in 30 years. Back then, we had 180 participants. Last year, registrations reached 1,250 participants.

We are so excited for this opportunity, and know that amazing ideas and connections will come from the Conference. If you are interested in making an additional gift or learning other ways to help, contact Brent Hornett at bhornett@arthritis.org or 720.644.4401.

Most individuals with rheumatoid arthritis are between the ages of 20 and 40.

Almost half of people in their 60s and 70s have arthritis that affects their foot or ankle.

Many forms of arthritis are systemic, i.e., they are not limited to the joints. In such diseases, practically any organ of the body may be affected, including the heart, lungs, kidneys and skin.

Though we hear much in the news about the rising rates of arthritis, it is by no means a new or solely "modern" condition. Arthritis is actually one of the oldest diseases known to human kind. It has even been discovered in the remains of people living more than 500,000 years ago.

Why is the JA Conference so important?

The Arthritis Foundation, Great West Region is proud to host the 30th Anniversary of the Juvenile Arthritis Conference in the gorgeous mountains of Keystone, Colorado. We are returning to the site of the very first JA Conference to mark this special occasion and to honor the kids, teens, and young adults who live with the pain of arthritis every day. We’ll stand together over the fourth of July weekend…United for a Cure!

What is something unique that children and families receive from the JA Conference experience that they couldn’t receive anywhere else?

Each year, the “magic” of JA Conference happens when families who feel completely isolated experience the outpouring of support from the Arthritis Foundation’s nationwide community of JA families. It can truly be a life-changing moment for JA families when they realize they are not alone in this fight.
Charged to Make a Change

Hundreds of individuals affected by arthritis recently traveled to Washington D.C. to tell their legislators about the needs of the over 52 million Americans affected by arthritis.

The Arthritis Foundation’s 16th annual Advocacy Summit was held March 24-26 in Washington, D.C. The Summit brought together nearly 300 key arthritis advocates from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Advocates met with members of Congress to drive home the pressing needs of people with arthritis.

The Arthritis Foundation, Great West Region was honored to have a delegation of 32 advocates attend this year’s Summit (pictured, at right), with representation from all Great West Region areas including, Alaska, Northern California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming.

“The Arthritis Foundation is committed to educating our lawmakers on the devastating toll arthritis takes on our nation’s health and economy,” says Scott Weaver, CEO of the Arthritis Foundation, Great West Region.

“The support of the U.S. Congress in improving access to care for the millions of adults and children living with arthritis is critical to alleviating the burden of arthritis in our country.

The Arthritis Foundation’s advocacy priorities for 2014 include: supporting legislation that will make medications more affordable for patients with arthritis; reauthorizing a pediatric subspecialty loan repayment program to address the critical shortage of pediatric rheumatologists in the U.S.; and including post traumatic osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis research at the Congressionally Directed Medical Research at the Department of Defense.

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For more information on the Advocacy Summit or to learn how you can get involved, visit www.arthritis.org/advocacy/advocate-news/advocacy-summit, email jlindsay@arthritis.org or call the Arthritis Foundation at 888.391.9389.

Hear Around the Halls...

As arthritis advocates from across the country walked the halls of Congress to meet with their legislators, many powerful stories were overheard. Some examples:

“Because there are no pediatric rheumatologists in the state of Idaho, we drive 600 miles twice a month to see the closest specialist.” ~ M.K.

“Insurance is supposed to spread the risk in an equitable fashion among everyone who is insured. However, my medication falls under more expensive, specialty tiers, which make it harder for me to afford the drugs I need to manage my arthritis.” ~ I.G.

“I had to retire early because of the osteoarthritis I developed while serving in the military. It’s made life hard, and keeping a job even harder. ~ D.W.

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Friends of the Foundation

Mark & Julie Butscher
Highlands Ranch, CO

Giving their time, talent, love and support to the Arthritis Foundation seems to be in the very fabric of Mark and Julie Butscher’s DNA.

For nearly ten years, the Butscher family Mark, Julie, Andy (age 13) and Katie (age 10) - have committed themselves wholeheartedly to the cause. Andy and Katie were both diagnosed with pauciarticular juvenile rheumatoid arthritis (JRA) at 18 months old. Pauciarticular JRA is an uncompromising form of arthritis that affects both of their knees and ankles. Joint pain, stiffness, swelling, fatigue, and activity limitations are just a few of the effects of the disease. It can affect a child’s ability to walk, play and even their ability to eat.

Driven to take action, the Butschers became involved with the Arthritis Foundation in an effort to increase awareness and raise funds for arthritis research.

How did you get connected to the Arthritis Foundation?

[Julie] - When our son Andy was diagnosed with JRA in 2002 we called the office to find out how we could get involved. We heard about the Jingle Bell Run/Walk and we started a team. We were the top fundraisers that year. The next year, Katie was diagnosed with JRA, just like her brother. We changed the name of our Jingle Bell Run/Walk team to Andy & Katie’s Team. There was a wonderful staff person who actually called us about the Arthritis Walk and asked if we wanted to be involved… that call changed our lives.

[Mark] - April and I joined the 2005 Highlands Ranch Arthritis Walk Committee. We had each other at our backs and together began recruiting new teams and committee members. Andy, Katie, Mark and I are still on the committee - now called the Denver Walk to Cure Arthritis. In 2006, I was asked to join the National Walk Committee. I served as team recruitment chair and then national chair and now I’m the immediate past chair. I am the current chair of this year’s National JA Committee, which will be held in Keystone, Colorado this summer. In 2006, Mark just joined our local Arthritis Foundation Board, which is now the Colorado Advisory Board. He is the current chair.

Why do you feel it is important to invest/donate to the Arthritis Foundation?

[Julie] - We feel that our kids are doing as well as they are because of the efforts of the Arthritis Foundation. We have made many friends, both locally and nationally, who have helped us through our hardest moments of dealing with this disease.

We believe that there will be a cure for arthritis in our kids’ lifetime. We realize this is before they start having kids of their own. Until there is a cure, we will fight to raise awareness and necessary funds for research and care.

[Mark] - With the generous donations we’ve received, we believe we are on our way to finding a cure. Together we hope to stop the suffering that affects millions of people.

Julie, will you tell us about your past experience with the JA Conference and the importance of this year’s Conference?

[Julie] - The first year that the kids and I attended JA Conference was very hard for me. I was experiencing all the anxiety about their future. I knew that I had to do something to find a cure for my kids. My kids are lucky in the sense that I have each other and are not the only kids they know with arthritis. I see kids at the JA Conference talking about meds and bad side effects and they realize that another kid “gets it” - that makes every hour spent planning the Conference worth it.

[Mark] - What has it meant for you to lead the Colorado Advisory Board?

[Mark] - Serving on the Colorado Advisory Board (CAB) has been very rewarding, exciting and challenging. Regardless of their connection to the Foundation, the CAB has many talented and dedicated members whose work is inspiring. This has motivated me to work harder to make the group better and more efficient. The CAB serves a very important role in helping the staff to shape the mission and fundraising activities in the communities we serve.

What would you tell a potential volunteer or donor about getting involved?

[Mark] - Arthritis is a very isolating disease. The disease can be invisible to outside eyes and for many people, just getting up and out of the house everyday can be a huge burden. Being involved with the Foundation is a way to help people who are isolated and alone.

We see how the Foundation is spending their money and we know that they are doing the right things to make a difference in this disease.

What impact has the Arthritis Foundation had on your family?

[Mark] - The Foundation gives us hope when we are feeling low. When we are trying to manage our kids’ disease, we find hope in knowing through our efforts that one day it will be better. We hope that everyone out there, whether you have arthritis or not - to know someone being affected by this disease and the pain and limitations and we can all make a difference. Consider making a donation, joining your local Walk to Cure Arthritis, or volunteering. All of these are excellent ways to help the one in five people out there with arthritis. Be the one who helps. Join us today to make a difference.
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Major strides were made in 2013 through the work of the Arthritis Foundation’s Public Policy department and its army of grassroots advocates across the country. For example, advocates successfully fought to maintain $557 million in research funding at the National Institutes of Health, Centers for Disease Control and Department of Defense. Advocates also took on Medicare to address the critical shortage of pediatric rheumatologists and rheumatoid arthritis research at the Congresionally Directed Medical Research at the Department of Defense.

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What impact has the Arthritis Foundation had on your family?

[Mark] - The Foundation gives us hope when we are feeling low. When we are trying to manage our kids’ diseases, we find hope in knowing through our efforts that one day it will be better. We hope that every one out there, whether you have arthritis or you know someone who does, can take hope from what we realize that another kid “gets it” - that makes every hour spent planning the Conference worthwhile.

What has it meant for you to lead the Colorado Advisory Board?

[Mark] - Joining the 2005 Highlands Ranch Arthritis Walk Committee. We had each of the meetings at our house and began recruiting new teams and committee members. Andy, Katie, Mark and I are still on the committee - now called the Denver Walk to Cure Arthritis. In 2006, I was asked to join the National Walk Committee. I served as team recruitment chair and then national chair and now I’m the immediate past chair. I am the current chair of this year’s National JA Conference Committee, which will be held in Keystone, Colorado this summer. In 2006, Mark just joined our local Arthritis Foundation Board, which is now the Colorado Advisory Board. He is the current chair.

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There will be a cure, yes. It is a long road, but, yes.

Julie, will you tell us about your past experience with the JA Conference and the importance of this year’s Conference?

[Julie] - The first year that the kids and I attended JA Conference was very hard for me. I came from a family who never had a disease or illness to deal with. The JA Conference was very hard for me. I cried each night and was so scared about the future. I knew that I had to do something to find a cure for my kids. My kids are lucky in the sense that they have each other and are not the only kids they know with arthritis. I see kids at the JA Conference talking about meds and bad days. I feel for the ones who do not realize that another kid “gets it” - that makes every hour spent planning the Conference worthwhile.

What do you think has meant for you to lead the Colorado Advisory Board?

[Mark] - The Arthritis Foundation is one of the most important things we have had on your family?

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Arthritis Foundation Arthritis Center Of Excellence: Sponsoring Multiple Research Projects for Rheumatoid Arthritis / Osteoarthritis / Juvenile Arthritis

1/1/2013 - 12/31/2016

Sponsoring Multiple Research Projects for Arthritis Foundation Arthritis Center Of Excellence:

Rheumatoid Arthritis / Osteoarthritis / Juvenile Arthritis

Mary C. Nakamura, MD;
William Robinson, MD;
Lead Investigators:
1/1/2013 - 12/31/2016

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