

One year later, Brand is still making a difference

By Gary Brown

Shortly after former NCAA President Myles Brand died of pancreatic cancer in September 2009, Indiana University President Michael McRobbie announced the establishment of the Myles Brand Chair in Cancer Research at the Indiana University School of Medicine.

In doing so, McRobbie honored the man who not only reshaped intercollegiate athletics during his seven years as president of the NCAA but also elevated higher education. His eight-year tenure as president of Indiana's eight campuses statewide, including the flagship institution in Bloomington, was the capstone of his educational career.

Less than a year after its creation, the Myles Brand Chair is valued at \$2.8 million in gifts and pledges, including a \$1 million gift from the university and another \$500,000 from the NCAA. The endowment is expected to generate about \$140,000 annually for pancreatic cancer research.

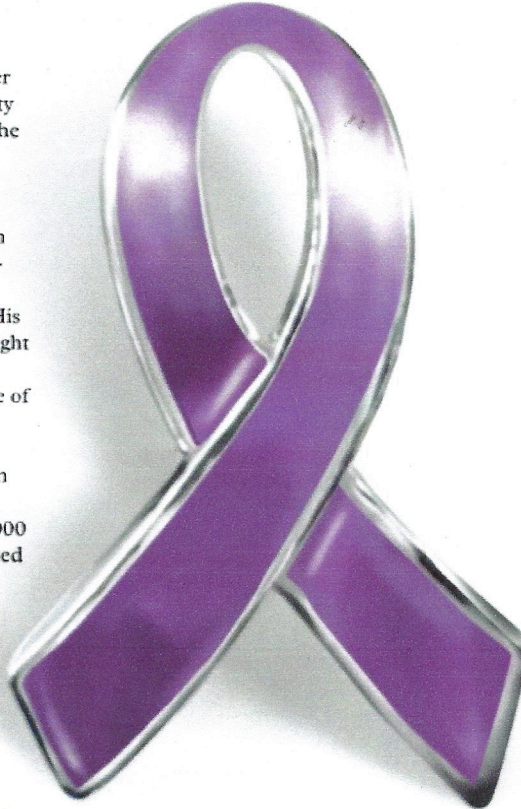
Officials at the Indiana University School of Medicine have assembled a search committee of faculty members who specialize in researching and treating gastrointestinal cancers to begin recruiting a new faculty member to hold the Myles Brand Chair. Patrick J. Loehrer, M.D., professor of oncology and director of the IU Simon Cancer Center, is heading the search. The committee began its initial screening of candidates earlier this fall.

"We already have amassed a number of candidates from many of the outstanding cancer facilities around the country," Loehrer said. "Quite frankly, I've never seen a collection of physicians and physician scientists like this group for any other job I've advertised here before."

The tribute to Brand might not have happened had it not been for the tenacity of a former colleague.

Angela Lieurance, now vice president for development and marketing at the University of Colorado Hospital, was devastated upon hearing of Brand's diagnosis and wanted to do something that would honor a man who has helped influence so many people's lives.

"I work at a great hospital and have contacts to the latest and greatest medical treatments both here and all over the world, and none of that would help him," Lieurance said.



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—Patrick J. Loehrer, M.D., professor of oncology and director of the IU Simon Cancer Center

Instead, she decided to pursue the endowed chair as the highest honor for a person who had spent so much of his life in academe. Even his work with the NCAA reflected Brand's commitment to academic excellence. "There's no better way to honor someone like that than by doing an endowed chair," Lieurance said.

The most difficult challenge was getting the idea past Brand himself.

"Raising the money paled in comparison to convincing him to let me do this," Lieurance said, noting Brand's concern about

asking people to donate during a spiraling economy, and that people were too busy to worry themselves over this initiative in the first place. "I respected Myles beyond belief, but I had to talk back to him like I'd never done. I had to tell him, 'This isn't about you. There is a whole group of people who want to do something for you.'"

"For all that he's done for literally thousands of people all over the world, he had a very hard time letting just a few of us do this for him."

The discussion of the idea of an endowed chair during the 2009 Men's Final Four in Detroit finally convinced Brand that he could affect future generations by lending his name to the initiative.

"Because there is neither an early detection mechanism nor any cure for pancreatic cancer, Myles felt that an initiative of this nature would allow family and friends to 'keep the banner high' in fighting such a vicious disease," said Brand's wife, Peg, who continues to teach as a professor at Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis. "For Myles, going public with his situation had one hopeful aspect — it would provide an opportunity to make a better situation out of a very grim one."

Loehrer said the impact of the endowed chair will be immense, not only to Indiana but to cancer research globally. Already considered one of the top programs for gastrointestinal cancer research, Indiana can now devote even more resources toward a disease that claims the lives of more than 90 percent of the people diagnosed with it.

"Myles and Peg really have put a face on this disease, which few people have done," Loehrer said. "While he knew he was dying from this disease, Myles wanted to be someone who made a difference. He made a difference not only for Indiana University and the NCAA during the time he served those organizations, but he also made a difference in ways that superseded higher education and college sports. He made a difference in the lives of people."

Donations for the Brand Chair are still being accepted and can be made online or by contacting the Office of Gift Development at the Indiana University School of Medicine, P.O. Box 660245, Indianapolis, IN 46266-0245, or 317/274-3270.