

# Steadfast Support for Pediatric Cancer Research

An impact report prepared for the Ted Mullin Fund • Spring 2025



**UChicago Medicine**  
**Comer Children's**

For over 19 years, the Ted Mullin Fund has enabled innovative research and inspired the next generation of physicians and scientists.

Thank you to the Ted Mullin Fund and its generous donors for their leadership in driving pediatric cancer research, care, and education at the University of Chicago Medicine Comer Children's Hospital. We are proud of your long-standing partnership with us and honored by your steadfast support.

Additionally, through the Ted Mullin Scholars Program, the Fund has provided hands-on laboratory and clinical experience for the most promising students to pursue careers in medicine and oncology. Your commitment to developing mentorship opportunities for undergraduates is unparalleled to any other UCM program available to novice researchers.

Your support is vital to our efforts and makes a tremendous difference in the lives of so many. Please accept our sincere gratitude for your partnership and commitment to supporting pediatric cancer patients and their families.

# Investments in Pediatric Cancer Research

The Ted Mullin Fund has generously supported various research projects and endeavors in the Section of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology. We are pleased to share a snapshot of the exciting efforts underway this year.

“As illustrated by outcomes in patients with Li-Fraumeni syndrome and other well-described cancer risk syndromes associated with pediatric sarcoma, an understanding of how germline genetic variants increase cancer susceptibility and the full spectrum of their potential disease leads to measures that reduce morbidity and mortality.

There is a critical need for research to identify novel variants in candidate cancer predisposition genes and characterize their specific mechanisms of tumorigenesis, clinical implications, and therapeutic vulnerabilities.

My current work is grounded in research-level genetic sequencing of families with multi-generational cancers, paired with laboratory testing of isogenic cell models engineered to express the patient-derived variants through CRISPR/Cas9 gene-editing.

Taking a patient-centered research approach, pediatric patients at high-risk for an inherited cancer predisposition syndrome are first identified clinically. This includes patients with young-onset sarcoma (before age 20 years).”



**Lorraine Canham, M.D.**

Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, Section of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology & Stem Cell Transplantation  
University of Chicago Comer Children's Hospital

# Investments in Pediatric Cancer Research (continued)

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“When standard genetic testing fails to reveal changes in established cancer susceptibility genes, I have used whole exome sequencing to identify deleterious variants in candidate genes that I then test functionally by introducing them into appropriate cell lines.”

To date, I have focused on two separate families with striking patterns of pediatric- and adult-onset cancers including sarcoma for whom panel testing did not identify potentially causative deleterious germline variants in known cancer predisposition genes.

After sequencing members of both families, I have uncovered promising germline pathogenic/likely pathogenic variants in candidate cancer pre-disposition genes (e.g., CFBF, NOTCH1, and TSTD2) that segregate with affected individuals and warrant in vitro testing.”

**“Support from the Ted Mullin fund is vital to validate laboratory findings and expand the work to larger patient cohorts who will benefit from this bedside to bench back to bedside research.”**



# United Against Cancer: The 19th Ted Mullin Hour of Power



The 19th annual Ted Mullin Hour of Power was a powerful demonstration of people coming together to raise awareness of and fight sarcoma. More than 6,100 athletes across the country and the world joined together for this cause.



# United Against Cancer: The 19th Ted Mullin Hour of Power



New Trier High School  
Girls Swim Team (IL)



The Lovett  
School (GA)



Williams College (MA)

# Alumni Scholar Spotlight: Grace Marshall

MD University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry '24, Carleton College '20

Grace was a Ted Mullin Scholar the summer of 2018 while completing her undergraduate degree at Carleton College.

After graduating from Carleton College, Grace began medical school at the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry. During her first year of medical school she published her first undergraduate research on antidepressants and sexual dysfunction in female rats.

While in medical school she volunteered in the emergency department, the student clinic, and sports medicine group.

After graduating from medical school Grace matched into general surgery at Albany Medical Center and has published a case study on solid pseudopapillary neoplasm of the pancreas in a pediatric patient.

Grace is excited to spend the next four years in general surgery and continue to do research!





# Hear from one of the original scholars: Erik Klontz

Assistant Medical Director of the Clinical Microbiology Laboratory at Massachusetts General Hospital,  
MD/PhD University of Maryland '21, Carleton College '13

## Intro to the TMF Scholar program

I joined the Carleton College swim team in 2009, in the early days of the Hour of Power. Some of my teammates knew Ted, and his legacy was fresh on our team's mind. When I learned that the Ted Mullin Scholars program was launching my junior year, I applied to be in the first group and was fortunate to be selected.

## Summer scholar experience

The summer I spent in Chicago was a transformative experience. It was my first real foray into research, and it was particularly meaningful to work on a topic so personal. The Ted Mullin Scholars program solidified my interest in medical research and led me to where I am now.

## Passion for medicine

I grew up in a household where my dad was an infectious disease epidemiologist and my mom a marine biologist, so I've been interested in the sciences for as long as I can remember. I enjoy the challenges of making new discoveries, and the rewards of helping the sick and advancing medical science. I was torn between getting an MD and a PhD, so I opted to get both.

## Where is Erik now

I am an assistant medical director of the clinical microbiology laboratory at Massachusetts General Hospital and an instructor at Harvard Medical School.



## The 2024 Ted Mullin Scholars



Mary Burke, Erika Nguyen, Emily Xu, Katherine “Casey” MacVeagh

# The 2024 Ted Mullin Scholars

## Mary Burke, University of St. Thomas (MN) '24

This summer, I had the opportunity to study under Dr. Andrea Piunti and his lab members. His research focuses primarily on CATACOMB, a gene implicated in the emergence of rare, aggressive pediatric brain tumors known as PFA ependymomas. His work hopes to understand why CATACOMB is expressed and how it leads to these tumors in order to develop therapies to improve patient outcomes. Additionally, I had the privilege of meeting with and observing exceptional doctors leading pediatric cancer clinics and research labs. Being a Ted Mullin scholar was truly a blessing. The opportunity to learn in the lab and see that work translate into the clinic is invaluable. From meeting positive patients to being mentored by supportive doctors, I am so grateful to have had this unforgettable experience.

**Update from 2025:** Following the incredible experience with the Ted Mullin Program, I have been working, researching, volunteering, mentoring, observing, studying, and preparing materials to apply to medical school in the 2026 cycle. My research is investigating how various lifestyle factors affect the psychological well-beings of college students. We had the opportunity to present at the North Central College Health Association (NCCHA) Conference and are working towards publication. As a volunteer, I coach swim and wheelchair tennis. Additionally, I am a clinic coordinator for free clinics in the Twin Cities. I work with Athletes Better Together as a mentor to help high school athletes transitioning towards collegiate athletics, equipping them with the skills to overcome the obstacles they may face. I have had the privilege to observe physicians in the emergency room and NICU.

## Katherine "Casey" MacVeagh, Carleton College '24

This summer, I had the opportunity to work with Dr. Austin Wesevich, performing clinical research on sickle cell disease. I got to contribute to a project investigating patient-physician relationships in the care of patients with sickle cell disease. We looked at various potential proxy measures for good communication between a patient and physician, and examined the effect these proxies had on outcome variables.

I am grateful for the opportunity to be a Ted Mullin Scholar this summer and for the opportunities with which it provided me. I was able to shadow and gain clinical exposure and learn more about how research and clinical can be interwoven within a career. This experience has granted me clarity about my desire to attend medical school and sparked in me an interest in clinical research.

# The 2024 Ted Mullin Scholars

## Erika Nguyen, University of California, Los Angeles '24

I have participated in the Ted Mullin Hour of Power since my early days in club swimming. This foundation holds a special place in my heart, especially because I have helped lead the fundraising efforts for two years with UCLA Club Swimming. This summer, I had the wonderful opportunity to be a Ted Mullin Scholar in Dr. Eric Beyer's lab. It has been a pleasure to work with Dr. Eric Beyer, Dr. Joanna Gemel, Dr. Gabrielle Lapping-Carr, Dr. Oscar Jara, Peter Minogue, and Lily Yu.

During the program, I conducted research in Dr. Beyer's lab, focusing on how miRNAs inside extracellular vesicles impact the endothelium concerning sickle cell disease. Thanks to the collaborative nature of UChicago Medicine, I have come to appreciate that research is a team effort. This internship was my first experience working in a wet lab, and everyone inside and outside the lab was incredibly supportive, guiding me through each experiment protocol. The passion that everyone in the department has for science is evident in the respect, humility, and compassion they bring to the Knapp Center every day.

**Update from 2025:** Since the Ted Mullin Program in the Summer of 2024, I graduated early from UCLA with a Bachelor's in Human Biology in December 2024. In the fall of 2024, I started the Patient Family Advisory Council for sepsis patients at UCLA Health. This initiative brings together sepsis survivors, caregivers, and healthcare professionals to improve the quality of care, communication, and recovery outcomes for future patients. I will also be working in a medical assisting job at UCLA Health.

## Emily Xu, University of Chicago, '26

This summer, I had the incredible opportunity to work in Dr. Mark Applebaum's lab as a Ted Mullin Scholar. My project focused on how hypoxia conditions affected proliferation of neuroblastoma cell line SK-N-BE2 with TET 2-3 knockouts. I further enhanced my wet lab research skills such as Western and dot blots, MTT assay, and QPCR. Lab research had its ups and downs, but the Applebaum research team were incredible resources to help me when I had any questions.

Additionally, I had the opportunity to shadow Dr. Applebaum in the pediatric hospital to gain firsthand experience with doctor-patient relationships. I am fortunate to have been able to stay in Chicago for the summer and work with such incredible colleagues that together are working to improve neuroblastoma research one step at a time. I'm grateful for my time studying epigenetics, and I will take this experience with me as I pursue a career in medicine.



# A Coach's Perspective: Tom Hodgson

Head Swim Coach at the University of St. Thomas (MN) for 35 Years

In 2006 Tom became involved with the TMF HoP through Coach Andy Clark's (Carleton College) event invitation to all the Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC) schools. **The St. Thomas team had 100% participation.** Many St. Thomas swimmers had competed against Ted, so the chance to honor one of their own resonated across the team.

Tom's team at St. Thomas participated every year through his retirement in 2014. **They continue to participate today making them one of the schools with the longest continuous participation.**

Tom, even after his retirement, continues to swim on the Hour of Power Day and support the Ted Mullin Fund annually. Tom is an incredibly passionate supporter of cancer research. He unfortunately has dozens friends, family, and former athletes whose lives have been challenged by cancer. **So, it's personal. Inspired by the Hour of Power, over the last five years, he has also participated in three Facebook fundraisers sponsored by the American Cancer Society.**

**"There's no question that the Hour of Power has been a tremendous source of inspiration.** Swimmers and divers tend to be very generous people, and pouring their hearts into the Hour of Power connects them to other teams around the country--but more importantly, to Ted's memory, family, and legacy.

The Hour of Power also gives swimmers (of all ages) a moment to reflect on how we can be both grateful and generous. **We can all use a reminder now and then that there is a larger world out there of which we are a part."**



**Sr. Katherine Mullin (Ted's aunt) and Coach Hodgson  
at St. Thomas' first Hour of Power**

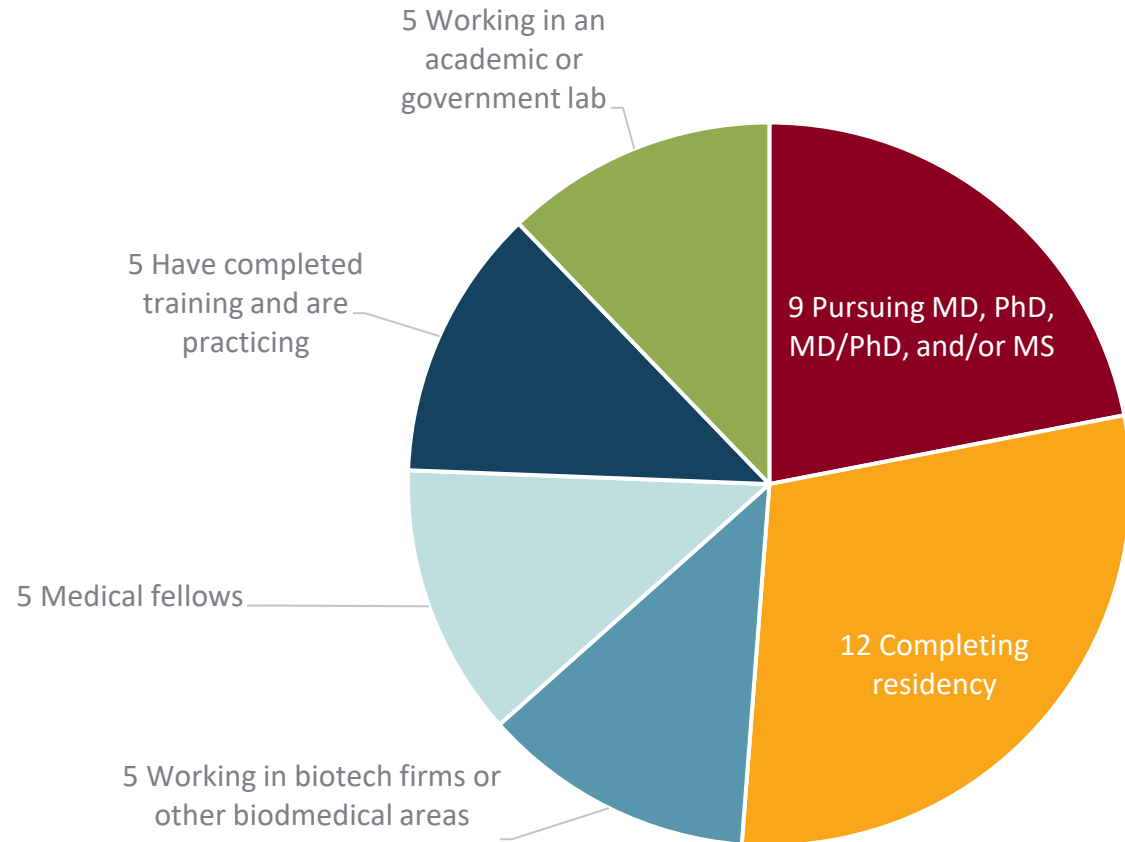
# Ted Mullin Fund Investment by the Numbers

Over \$1.7 million raised

since 2006 by the Ted Mullin Fund to support the pediatric cancer research and scholar program at the University of Chicago Medicine Comer Children's Section of Hematology/Oncology.

This success is built on the generosity of the donors and participants of the Ted Mullin Fund Hour of Power Fundraisers held across the country. This total is the result of 10s of thousands of donors from 48 different states and the District of Colombia.

The University of Chicago Medicine Comer Children's Hospital has selected 51 undergraduate student-athletes as Ted Mullin Scholars from across the country. So far, 47 scholars have completed their undergraduate degree and 41 scholars work in or study biosciences. Scholars hail from 23 different universities across 9 different states and the District of Colombia.



Mapping Mullin Scholars



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