



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Debbie's Dream Foundation Hosts More Than 130 Advocates at the 11th Annual Stomach Cancer Capitol Hill Advocacy Day

The annual initiative returned to in-person meetings three years after the global pandemic.

Washington, DC – (March 29, 2023) – Debbie's Dream Foundation: Curing Stomach Cancer (DDF) successfully returned to Washington, DC, for the 11th Annual Stomach Cancer Capitol Hill Advocacy Day. The three-day event was held March 6 through 8, 2023, for the first time since the start of the 2020 global pandemic. It featured 149 registered patient and caregiver advocates, with 180 meetings scheduled with lawmakers to share their personal stories and to ask for an increase in the federal budget for stomach cancer research. DDF hosted its inaugural Advocate Retreat on the final day with presentations from the National Institutes of Health's Jeremy Davis, MD, Rachael Lopez, MPH, RD, CSO, and Amanda Rhodes, Psy.D., who covered genetics, nutrition, and mental health for stomach cancer patients. Art therapist Emily Lipson also helped guide the group through an art session and discussed the importance of alternative therapies for overall well-being.

During meetings with Congressional lawmakers, advocates ask lawmakers to support the continued inclusion of stomach cancer in the Department of Defense's Peer-Reviewed Cancer Research Program (PRCRP). As a result of DDF's advocacy, more than \$30.7 million has been allocated to stomach cancer research funding through the PRCRP since FY 2015, and in 2021, the NCI launched an *Ad Hoc Working Group on Gastric and Esophageal Cancer*. DDF continues to watch its efforts translate into increasing investments in stomach cancer research and improvements in treatment options.

"We are very aware that our advocacy efforts help make a tremendous impact in the allocation of funds for stomach cancer research through our federal government," said Andrea Eidelman, DDF's Chief Executive Officer. "That's why we will continue to make our voices heard so we can see significant shifts in treatment options and mortality rates and work toward a cure for this disease in our lifetime."

DDF held an award ceremony acknowledging supporters of its advocacy efforts. This year's Congressional Champion Award recipients include Senator Ben Cardin of Maryland and Senator Todd Young of Indiana, who have helped to draw public awareness to stomach cancer, as well as the need for more research. The Legacy Impact Award was given to Christy Leonard, DDF's North Carolina Chapter co-founder, PREP Mentor, and Board member, for her dedication, leadership, and commitment to ensuring DDF's legacy and making a profound difference in the lives of those affected by stomach cancer. Finally, DDF also acknowledged one of the winners of its [2022 Youth Art Contest](#), Gabrielle Pollack, of Hoboken, New Jersey, for her original artistic expression of a world free from stomach cancer.

This year's Advocacy Day supporters include Silver Sponsor Merck and Supporting Sponsor Stupid Strong; Advocate Retreat Platinum Sponsor Merck; Gold Sponsors Amgen and Astellas; and Bronze Sponsor Taiho Oncology. For more information about DDF's advocacy efforts and how to get involved, visit www.DebbiesDream.org/take-action.

About Debbie's Dream Foundation: Curing Stomach Cancer

DDF is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to raising awareness about gastric cancer, advancing funding for research, and providing education and support internationally to patients, families, and caregivers. DDF seeks as

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its ultimate goal to make the cure for stomach cancer a reality.

DDF was founded in 2009 by Debbie Zelman after she was diagnosed with stage IV incurable gastric cancer in 2008 and given only weeks to live. Debbie is considered a pioneer by many for bringing awareness to the plight of stomach cancer patients worldwide and the lack of federal funding for stomach cancer research. She did all this while receiving hundreds of rounds of chemo and daily oral treatments. Debbie passed away on December 23, 2017, almost a decade later, at 50. As a result of her leadership, DDF now has a Scientific and Medical Advisory Board of world-renowned doctors and chapters throughout the United States and Canada, and Germany. DDF strives to continue Debbie's mission and to make her dream a reality. To learn more about DDF, please visit us at www.DebbiesDream.org.



Photo One: Participants of the 11th Annual Stomach Cancer Capitol Hill Advocacy Day held from March 6-8, 2023.

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