



ALIA RDISSI

Celebration of Survivorship Award

On August 27, 2015, Alia Rdissi was preparing to have some friends over for her son Xavier's 2nd birthday. The 39-year old Belle of the Ball event planner

was having so much pain in her right leg, she thought perhaps she had pulled or even torn something while running. Unfortunately, the pain kept increasing. A visit to urgent care, she was told that she had a hematoma & to wait a week to see if it improved. She gave it two. During that time, Alia started her own online research, it was there that she learned that while sarcomas may be rare, a misdiagnosis is not. Rdissi knew something was not right.

A MRI would reveal a mass in her hamstring and she would be encouraged to seek more specialized care at MD Anderson. In tears, Alia couldn't understand how she could have cancer after years of exercise, clean eating & living a healthy lifestyle.

It WAS cancer. In fact, it was high-grade pleomorphic spindle cell sarcoma. Six rounds of chemotherapy would ensue followed by radiation & eventually surgery. Alia was aware that in the past, treatments for sarcoma in an extremity usually included amputation. Even now, enduring chemotherapy & radiation was no guarantee that she would keep her limb or life.

After a long battle with many "ups and downs", Alia was declared "cancer free" in May 2016. It hasn't been an easy recovery but she recognizes so many positives. Rdissi will tell you that "the outpouring of support was tremendous. Colleagues, friends & family all rallied behind me & reminded me how much faith they had that I could make it..that support & wanting to be there for my son is what helped keep me going during the dark days."

These days, Alia has a new-found appreciation for the little, seemingly mundane things in life but most of all, being sick has taught her about resilience – her own & her son's. As her wise sister reminded her, "I've been given a second chance & I don't intend to waste it. I know so many patients would have given anything for their second chance."

It is an honor to celebrate Ms. Alia Rdissi as the Am-schwand Sarcoma Cancer Foundation's 2016 Celebration of Survivorship Honoree.



VINOD RAVI, MD

Commitment to Care Award

After a close family member was diagnosed with sarcoma while he was in medical school, Dr. Vinod Ravi pledged his life's work to find a cure for the disease that claimed the life of his loved one.

Now an Associate Professor in the Department of Sarcoma Medical Oncology & the Clinical Director of the Translational Research Accelerator Program at the largest cancer center in the world MD Anderson Cancer Center, Dr. Ravi is making a difference every day in the lives of his patients.

While his clinical practice focuses on vascular sarcomas such as angiosarcoma & epithelioid hemangioendothelioma, he is also an integral part of the angiosarcoma and leiomyosarcoma working groups at Anderson working to improve patient outcomes in these rare diseases. Over the course of the last 8 years, Ravi has conducted many clinical trials with sarcoma. His research focuses on the integration of molecular & clinical data in the development of novel therapies. Dr. Ravi is interested in correlating responses to specific targeted therapies with molecular predictors to improve clinical trial efficiency & success rates. As the clinical director of TRA (Translational Research Accelerator) program and a Principal Investigator funded by the Amschwand Sarcoma Cancer Foundation, Dr. Ravi is involved in the implementation of a data initiative that connects molecular data on patient samples with clinical & radiological information from electronic records. More than anything, Dr. Ravi cares for his patients and goes the extra mile to ensure that ALL his patients needs are met, not just the clinical ones. It is a privilege to recognize Dr. Vinod Ravi with the Amschwand Sarcoma Cancer Foundation's 2016 Commitment to Care Award.



LISA L. WANG

Commitment to the Cause Award

Dr. Lisa Wang always knew that she wanted to be a medical doctor in order to help other people. Her love of children led her to choose residency in pediatrics

after completing medical school at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. During residency training at Children's Hospital Los Angeles, she soon realized that she wanted to become a pediatric oncologist after her oncology rotation where she was influenced by a little boy named Juan. She spent many more months on the oncology floor getting to know patients & families. After residency, she worked on the pediatric cancer ward at the City of Hope National Medical Center. It was there that Dr. Wang developed her interest in sarcoma cancer after taking care of several patients with bone sarcomas with whom she developed close relationships. In 1997, Houston was blessed to have Dr. Wang join Texas Children's & Baylor College of Medicine where she is now an Associate Professor of Pediatrics & Director of the Bone Tumors Program & Musculoskeletal Tumor Clinic at Texas Children's Cancer Center. She is a member of the Children's Oncology Group & serves as institutional primary investigator for several national sarcoma clinical trials as well as co-investigator on a novel phase 1 T cell immunotherapy trial for relapsed sarcomas.

Along her sarcoma journey, Dr. Wang encountered a patient with a rare genetic disorder, Rothmund-Thomson syndrome (RTS) which is associated with a very high rate of osteosarcoma. Realizing this would be an opportunity to study osteosarcoma, she took the initiative to begin an international registry of RTS patients. The rest is history, not only has Dr. Wang become a champion for patients & families affected by RTS but she is the world expert on the condition. Studying the gene defect underlying RTS, members of her lab are working to uncover the molecular underpinnings of osteosarcoma which may lead to more effective & targeted treatments in the future.

Dr. Wang has received grants from numerous entities supporting her work including the Amschwand Sarcoma Cancer Foundation. She has also received several prestigious awards & sits on the board of directors for a number of well-respected organizations but it is her passion for her patients & the manner in which she advocates

for her patients for which she is being recognized as the first physician ever to receive the Amschwand Sarcoma Cancer Foundation's highest honor – the Commitment to the Cause award.

Dr. Lisa Wang has dedicated her life to improving the lives of those affected by sarcomas & her patients can tell you how grateful they are. When not working to cure sarcoma, Dr. Wang cherishes family time with her husband Jeff, her son Henry & her mother, Veronica.



BRANDON MAXWELL

Catwalk for a Cure
Designer 2016

Brandon Maxwell is a luxury women's ready-to-wear label launched in New York in 2015. The brand was born out of the desire to make women feel beautiful, sophisticated and powerful, with timeless garments that are impeccably tailored. With a focus on craftsmanship, the entire collection is designed and produced in New York City.

Surrounded by immaculately dressed women from a young age, Maxwell was captivated by the women who passed through the boutique where his grandmother worked in Longview, Texas. He went on to study photography at St. Edward's University in Austin, and began assisting stylist Deborah Afshani in 2009, followed by Edward Enninful, and then Nicola Formichetti in 2010. Maxwell has acted as the fashion director to Lady Gaga since 2012.

Inspired by the strong women Brandon surrounds himself with, his hallmark style of sharp tailoring and sculptural details are apparent in his namesake collection. The brand has been worn by many influential women, including Jennifer Lawrence, Reese Witherspoon, Kate Hudson, Lady Gaga, Gwyneth Paltrow and Uma Thurman, among many others.

Brandon Maxwell was awarded the Fashion Group International Rising Star award for Womenswear in January 2016. In June 2016, he was awarded the CFDA Swarovski award for Womenswear.