



YEAR IN REVIEW

20
25



POWERING RESEARCH. **CURING CANCER.**





MISSION

BADGER CHALLENGE ADVANCES STATE OF THE ART CANCER RESEARCH AND TREATMENT TO SERVE PATIENTS AND FAMILIES IN WISCONSIN BY FUNDING THE BRIGHTEST CANCER MINDS, IDEAS, AND TECHNOLOGIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN.





THANK YOU FROM THE BADGER CHALLENGE TEAM



ON BEHALF OF THE BADGER CHALLENGE TEAM, WE EXTEND OUR DEEPEST GRATITUDE FOR ANOTHER EXTRAORDINARY YEAR OF SUPPORT, PARTICIPATION, AND GENEROSITY. EACH SEPTEMBER, WE ARE REMINDED OF THE INCREDIBLE STRENGTH, COMPASSION, AND UNITY THAT DEFINE THIS COMMUNITY. SEEING THOUSANDS COME TOGETHER TO WALK, RUN, AND RIDE IN HONOR OF CANCER SURVIVORS—AND IN MEMORY OF THOSE WE’VE LOST—IS PROFOUNDLY MOVING AND CONTINUES TO INSPIRE EVERYTHING WE DO.

THE 2025 BADGER CHALLENGE WAS TRULY AN INSPIRING MILESTONE. THANKS TO YOU—OUR DEDICATED PARTICIPANTS, DONORS, SPONSORS, AND VOLUNTEERS—IT WAS A YEAR FILLED WITH INCREDIBLE ENERGY, GENEROSITY, AND DETERMINATION. YOUR COLLECTIVE EFFORTS HAVE ONCE AGAIN FUELED MEANINGFUL PROGRESS IN CANCER RESEARCH RIGHT HERE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN, DRIVING DISCOVERIES THAT BRING HOPE TO PATIENTS AND FAMILIES ACROSS OUR COMMUNITY AND BEYOND.

WE ARE TRULY HONORED TO HAVE YOU BY OUR SIDE IN THIS MISSION.
THANK YOU FOR BEING A PART OF SOMETHING BIGGER—SOMETHING THAT CHANGES LIVES.

WITH HEARTFELT APPRECIATION,
THE BADGER CHALLENGE TEAM

2025 BADGER CHALLENGE COMMUNITY & IMPACT

2025 TOTAL AMOUNT RAISED:
\$881,521

\$5.5 MILLION RAISED SINCE 2016



**2,781 TOTAL
PARTICIPANTS**



**109
TEAMS**



**350+ SURVIVORS &
CURRENT PATIENTS**



**3,258
UNIQUE DONORS**



**300+
VOLUNTEERS**



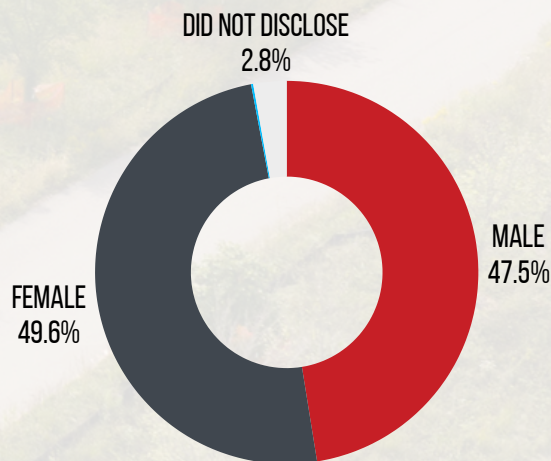
850 WALKERS



1,113 RIDERS



818 RUNNERS

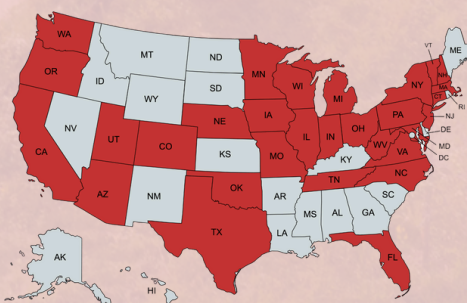


6 COUNTRIES REPRESENTED

- UNITED STATES
- JAPAN
- GERMANY
- FRANCE
- CHINA
- COLOMBIA



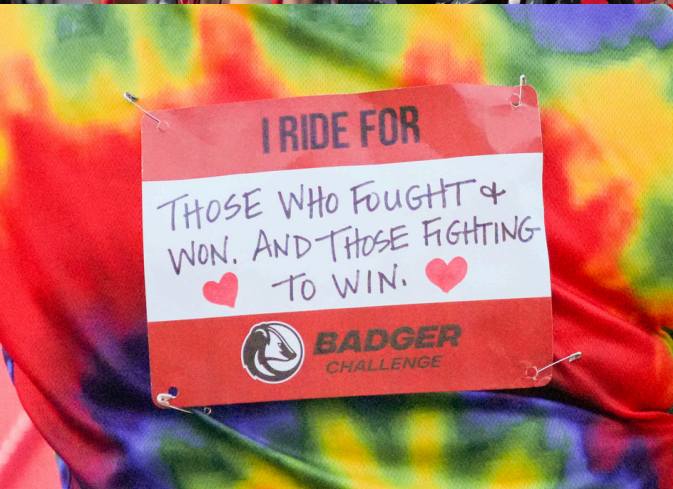
31 STATES REPRESENTED



\$1K CHALLENGE RESULTS

**147
PARTICIPANTS
RAISED \$1,000
OR MORE**





TOP 2025 FUNDRAISERS

INDIVIDUAL FUNDRAISERS

Melissa Carr (\$7,600)

Ann Lee (\$4,642)

Colleen Freitag (\$4,275)

Lori Wendlandt (\$4,000)

Kierin Barnett (\$3,370)

James Kingsley (\$3,360)

Celia Dressler (\$3,189)

Adam Derringer (\$3,105)

Walter Dressler (\$2,714)

Lisa Ross (\$2,500)

TEAM FUNDRAISERS

Team Wildflowers (\$13,661)

Team Dressler (\$9,908)

Team Triple E + Steve (\$9,500)

Jim's Tumor Raiders (\$8,800)

Yes We Anne! (\$6,175)

Dunn Walkin' (\$5,081)

Team Lola (\$5,050)

Shane's Fight Against Cancer (\$4,110)

Judi's Hummingbirds (\$3,880)

The Morris Family and Friends (\$3,800)

CORPORATE TEAMS

Accuray (\$10,150)

Aldevron (\$7,150)

Ayres Associates (\$5,998)

Batterman (\$5,550)

DHOPhysics (\$4,096)

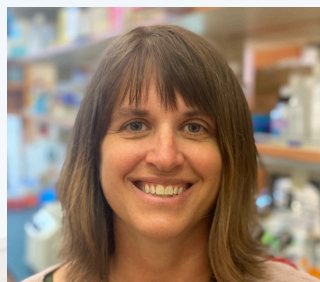
2025 SCHOLARS

Each year, the Badger Challenge selects UW–Madison researchers to receive funding for innovative cancer research. We are proud to announce this year's class of eight scholars whose work is improving patient care and outcomes. This is where participant-raised dollars make a direct impact—supporting local research and advancing better treatments and cures.



Dr. Muhammed Murtaza
Breast, Ovarian
& Pancreatic Cancer

Dr. Murtaza's research is focused on developing a new way of detecting trace amounts of cancer DNA shed into blood. Specifically, as cancers develop, their DNA becomes disorganized and scarred. Murtaza's lab is developing a method to enrich these scarred DNA fragments and detect them using DNA sequencing.



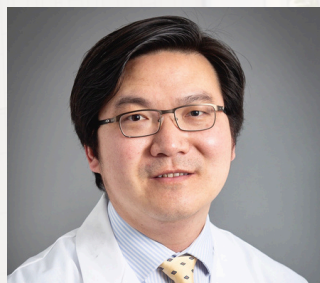
Dr. Amy Erbe-Gurel
Neuroblastoma

Dr. Erbe-Gurel's project aims to develop a safer and more effective immunotherapy for children with high-risk neuroblastoma by combining two powerful antibody treatments into one targeted therapy to improve cancer killing while avoiding the severe side effects that limit current treatments.



Dr. Kristin Litzelman
Stem Cell Transplant

Stem cell transplant is a powerful cancer treatment, but it places intense demands on both patients and their family caregivers. Dr. Litzelman's research will impact patients and their families by helping develop and offer practical, family-centered programs that improve their cancer care and quality of life.



Dr. Minglei Kang
Multiple Cancers

FLASH radiotherapy is an emerging way to deliver radiation extremely quickly, in milliseconds rather than minutes. Dr. Kang's method focuses FLASH-rate delivery at the tumor edges. This work could directly improve cancer patient care by reducing side effects and complications while allowing higher radiation doses for better tumor control.



Dr. Amy Trentham-Dietz
Breast Cancer

Very small plastic particles called micro- and nanoplastics (MNPs) are an emerging threat to human health. The Trentham-Dietz lab is developing a new faster and cheaper method to measure MNPs in human blood, so microplastics can be more available for other researchers to use in their studies.



Dr. Mari Iida
Head & Neck Cancer

Many patients with head and neck cancer don't benefit from immunotherapy because immune cells are unable to reach the tumor. Dr. Iida studies how cancer cells reshape to block immune attacks. By identifying how these barriers form, this research aims to open new paths making resistant cancers more responsive to immunotherapy, improving patient outcomes.



Dr. Vatsan Raman
Therapeutics

Dr. Raman's research targets a diverse set of highly prevalent cancers caused by abnormal protein-protein interactions. Peptide drugs offer a promising solution. They can be designed to fit protein surfaces precisely, and new technologies are improving their stability and formulation as medicines.



Dr. Jordan Slagowski
Cervical Cancer

Brachytherapy is a key component of an effective treatment where radiation is placed directly within the tumor. Dr. Slagowski's lab applies artificial intelligence (AI) to make brachytherapy safer, faster, and more precise by developing AI tools that will help doctors plan catheter placement and limit side effects.



MEET OUR 2025 CHAMPIONS

New this year, we introduced our Badger Challenge Patient Champions—remarkable individuals who shared their courageous stories and the profound impact of the Badger Challenge. Their strength and spirit were a true highlight of this year's events, inspiring all of us to keep pushing for new discoveries and cures.



HOLLY KALLESTAD

Holly Kallestad's (right) cancer story began in 1994 when she was just 19 years old attending UW-Madison, and she was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Lymphoma. As one of the last patients of Dr. Paul Carbone himself, Holly went through an aggressive treatment plan that led to her being cancer-free. Years later at 42, Holly developed a tumor on her L5 nerve sheath that was a result of her prior radiation. Holly came back to the Carbone Cancer Center for treatment. Holly's second experience and treatment plan was so different from 20 years ago due to the advances in research and therapies that would not be possible without the vital funding from resources like the Badger Challenge.



SHANE KIELER

Shane Kieler (right) started experiencing new migraines in March of 2025. After a few weeks, Shane experienced a frightening episode that led to an emergency room visit and a transfer to another hospital. There, doctors discovered a 6-centimeter tumor in the left lobe of his brain. Surgery successfully removed part of the tumor, though not all could be taken out. Shane is now receiving care at the Carbone Cancer Center, where his radiation oncologist, Dr. Brett Morris, and neuro-oncologist, Dr. Ankush Bhatia, are working tirelessly to help him continue doing what he loves most.



OLIVIA DIAZ

At just 20 months old, Olivia (front middle) was diagnosed with an inoperable malignant rhabdoid tumor on her spine in 2012. She began treatment immediately, enduring nearly 40 sessions of chemotherapy and radiation before receiving a stem cell transplant at age three. Now 15, Olivia is thriving and continues regular checkups with her radiation oncologist, Dr. Kristen Bradley. She has shown no evidence of disease since 2017—a true testament to her strength and the power of advanced cancer care.

THANK YOU TO OUR 2025 SPONSORS

UWHealth



**Carbone
Cancer Center**

FLORICITY



**BALANCE & BELIEVE™
FOUNDATION**



SHINE UNITED



ACCURAY



Catalent®



abbvie



HITACHI
Inspire the Next



2026 EVENTS



NEW! BADGER CHALLENGE BALL

APRIL 11 • THE EDGEWATER

THE BADGER CHALLENGE IS TAKING ON A NEW KIND OF ELEGANCE. JOIN US FOR THE INAUGURAL BADGER CHALLENGE BALL—AN UNFORGETTABLE EVENING OF INSPIRATION AND HOPE IN SUPPORT OF CANCER RESEARCH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN.



UW NEURO- ONCOLOGY: TEEING OFF AGAINST BRAIN TUMORS GOLF TOURNAMENT JUNE 8 • THE OAKS GOLF COURSE

HELP US CONTINUE TO FUND GROUNDBREAKING RESEARCH TO HELP END BRAIN CANCER WHILE SUPPORTING PATIENTS AND SURVIVORS DURING THEIR JOURNEY.



20TH ANNUAL HEADS UP! GOLF OUTING

JULY 27 • UNIVERSITY RIDGE GOLF COURSE

PLEASE JOIN US TO HONOR THE COURAGE OF THOSE AFFECTED BY HEAD AND NECK CANCER AND IN SUPPORT OF HEAD AND NECK CANCER RESEARCH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN.



CHAMPIONS RECEPTION & BADGER CHALLENGE

SEPTEMBER 26 & 27 • UW HEALTH EASTPARK MEDICAL CENTER

WE LOOK FORWARD TO WELCOMING YOU BACK FOR THE 11TH ANNUAL BADGER CHALLENGE! RUN, WALK, OR RIDE FOR CANCER RESEARCH & INNOVATIVE PATIENT TREATMENT.



BADGER
CHALLENGE

POWERING RESEARCH. CURING CANCER.

SAVE THE DATE:
SEPTEMBER 27, 2026



BADGERCHALLENGE.ORG