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Crystal Charity Ball pledges \$1.4 million for autism research, clinical care programs at UT Southwestern, UT Dallas

DALLAS – April 22, 2008 – Organizers of the Crystal Charity Ball have selected a \$1.4 million collaborative project for autism research and treatment based at UT Southwestern Medical Center and UT Dallas as one of its seven projects for 2008.

Funds from the 2008 Ball will help support diagnosis, treatment and referral programs that assist those afflicted by autism, as well as underwrite research aimed at discovering the causes of the disease. Autism is a neurological disorder that affects development in areas of social interaction and communication skills. It typically manifests in childhood, and four times as many males as females are affected. Recent data from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention estimate about one in 150 U.S. children have autism.

The 2008 Crystal Charity Ball is scheduled for Dec. 6. Aileen Pratt, underwriting chairwoman for the event, is working with ball chairwoman Gloria Eulich Martindale and other members of the committee to meet the fundraising goal.

“It is very gratifying that so many have pledged to support the Crystal Charity Ball’s commitment to help UT Southwestern and UT Dallas develop a comprehensive world-class program for children with autism here in Dallas,” said Dr. Kern Wildenthal, president of UT Southwestern. “We deeply appreciate the hard work and dedication of Gloria Eulich Martindale and her Crystal Charity Ball colleagues, and the generosity of their supporters.”

Researchers at UT Southwestern hope that breakthroughs in genetics and neurobiology will one day lead to dramatic improvements in the diagnosis and treatment of autism. Many scientists are working to identify the genes linked to autism, while others are exploring how autistic brains differ from those unaffected by the condition.

On the clinical side, UT Southwestern physicians will combine with UT Dallas Callier Center clinicians to provide diagnostic and treatment services to patients at the autism clinic at Children’s Medical Center Dallas. Potential patients typically are examined by a psychologist, psychiatrist and speech therapist. Following a comprehensive evaluation, families are counseled by staff on what

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treatment options are available. Many of the children are treated on an ongoing basis at the clinic, while others are referred to other community sites.

“Our goal is for families with autistic children to be able to get the most appropriate care and information about the disorder here in Dallas, without having to seek help in other cities or states, as often occurs now,” said Dr. Graham Emslie, professor of psychiatry and pediatrics at UT Southwestern and chief of child and adolescent psychiatry at Children’s. “The Crystal Charity Ball’s support will make that dream a reality.”

At UT Dallas’ Center for Brain*Health*, adolescents with autism will participate in new brain therapy programs to develop social coping skills. The facility’s research programs are also aimed at studying the underlying mechanisms associated with autism. Additionally, the UT Dallas Callier Center will expand its highly regarded treatment program for autistic children aged 2 to 5 years, and will provide extensive educational experiences for Dallas County healthcare and social service workers who care for youngsters with autism.

“We are honored to have been selected by the Crystal Charity Ball for support of our autism program,” said Dr. Bert Moore, dean of the UT Dallas School of Behavioral and Brain Sciences, which includes both the Callier Center and the Center for Brain*Health*. “I believe that we will be able to develop one of the best resource programs in the country and conduct innovative research on the causes and the cure of this disorder.”

The 2008 Crystal Charity Ball campaign began in February. In addition to UT Southwestern and UT Dallas, the organizations selected for support include Dallas Services, Genesis Women’s Shelter, Hunger Busters, Martin Luther King Jr. Family Clinic, St. Philips School and Community Center, and Texas Scottish Rite Hospital. Since 1952, the Crystal Charity Ball has benefitted more than 100 charities by raising more than \$82 million for children’s causes.

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