

For Immediate Release



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AUBMC Cancer Support Fund benefit dinner for underprivileged cancer patients in Lebanon

The Cancer Support Fund (CSF) organized a benefit dinner on June 12, 2019 at La Residence des Pins to “celebrate HOPE” and raise funds to support financially disadvantaged adult cancer patients in Lebanon. A humanitarian initiative at the American University of Beirut Medical Center (AUBMC), CSF was launched in March 2018 to provide financial assistance and psychosocial support to adult cancer patients who are unable to take advantage of the potentially life-saving treatment that is available. It also works to raise awareness on cancer prevention and support research related to adult cancer patients.

The event was attended by a number of prominent dignitaries, including the representative of the President of the Republic of Lebanon General Michel Aoun, his advisor for Health Affairs, Dr. Walid El-Khoury; the representative of Prime Minister Saad Hariri MP Dr. Assem Araji; Minister of Health Jamil Jabak; former President Michel and Mrs. Wafaa Sleiman; former First Lady Mona Haraoui; former Prime Minister Najib and Mrs. May Mikati; deputy Prime Minister Ghassan Hasbani; Her Royal Highness Princess Ghida Talal; Ambassador of France Bernard Foucher; EU Ambassador Christina Lassen; Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Lebanon Walid Al Boukhari; Mrs. Hoda Siniora; Mrs. Lama Salam; and Her Excellency Leila El Solh Hamadeh. Also in attendance were AUB President Dr. Fadlo R. Khuri; Executive Vice President and Dean of the Faculty of Medicine Dr. Mohamed H. Sayegh; CSF president and founder Mrs. Hala Dahdah Abou Jaber; and CSF co-founder and director of the Naef K. Basile Cancer Institute Dr. Ali Taher.

After a short informative video about CSF, Hala Dahdah Abou Jaber spoke about the Fund and its mission. “What we need today is actionable solutions in the fight against cancer,” she said. “By supporting the treatment for underprivileged cancer adult patients, we are guaranteeing that no cancer patient will die because of lack of funds or will go bankrupt only because he had the misfortune of getting sick. We are here to address cancer, true, but also to celebrate life not death, courage not fear, hope not despair.”

Dr. Taher echoed the same sentiments in his speech. “Serving as the director of the Basile Cancer Institute at AUBMC and helping patients fight on and keep their lives meaningful despite the daily pain and challenges, I am never tired,” he said. “On the contrary, I am always driven by hope. Over the past few years, we have had several achievements at the center, including state-of-the-art expansions, innovative technologies, world-renowned accreditation and affiliations, multidisciplinary care, and positive quality of care indicators for over 4,000 patients per year.”

Dr. Sayegh’s message was also one of hope. “When I first joined AUB, I had a strong conviction that I can make a difference,” he said. “Bold transformations require bold decisions. In 2010, we launched the AUBMC 2020 vision, an ambitious and comprehensive initiative that aims to affirm AUBMC’s position as the leading medical center and healthcare institution in the region. Today, after almost ten years, I can proudly say that the difference can be clearly seen.”

The final speech of the evening was given by Dr. Fadlo Khuri who reflected on the incidence of cancer in the region and the urgent need for an initiative such as CSF. “Statistics about cancer incidence are increasing around the world and are relatively higher in the Middle East than other countries,” he said. “In Lebanon, cancer incidence has increased from 191 per 100,000 in 2003 to 270 per 100,000 in 2015. And the latest statistics are not encouraging. Compounding this tragedy, many of these patients face challenges in accessing advanced healthcare services. Here is where AUBMC and the Cancer Support Fund come in. Last year, this first-of-its-kind fund in Lebanon was launched as an initiative that aims to make cancer care, research, and prevention accessible to the largest possible number of financially disadvantaged adult cancer patients.”

The speakers thanked the attendees for being a part of CSF’s first benefit dinner and for their generous contributions.

A short documentary about the AUBMC 2020 vision was presented before the evening’s entertainment began with a live musical performance by Cuban singer Dayana Batista Divo of the Elefteriades Group. Following that was a live auction conducted by Hugh Edmeades, more live entertainment by Rock Herman AKPOVO of the Elefteriades Group, a tombola draw, and music of DJ Rhea Bouez.

The auction featured a number of stunning items including a Yamaha baby grand piano shipped to Beirut for the occasion by Sing for Hope, a New York-based nonprofit organization founded by opera singers Monica Yunus and Camille Zamora. Andrea Bocelli and Placido Domingo signed the baby grand piano, which was designed by the New York-based, internationally renowned Billy The Artist.

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For more information please contact:

Simon Kachar
Director of News and Media Relations
Mobile: (+961) 3-427-024
Office: (+961) 1-374-374 ext: 2676
Email: sk158@aub.edu.lb

Note to Editors

About AUB

Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. A teaching-centered research university, AUB has more than 900 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 9,100 students. AUB currently offers more than 120 programs leading to bachelor's, master's, MD, and PhD degrees. It provides medical education and training to students from throughout the region at its Medical Center that includes a full-service 420-bed hospital.

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