

From the University of Mississippi Medical Center Division of Public Affairs

## \$1M DONATION LIFTS UMMC'S MIND CENTER ABOVE FUND-RAISING GOAL

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JACKSON, Miss. – Jackson businessman John N. Palmer has donated \$1 million to the MIND Center, a University of Mississippi Medical Center institution dedicated to fighting Alzheimer's disease.

Palmer, the chairman and founder of GulfSouth Capital Inc., a Jackson-based private investment firm, presented the gift to the Memory Impairment and Neurodegenerative Dementia Research Center, which is committed to finding treatments and a cure for dementia and Alzheimer's.

The gift from the telecommunications pioneer and former U.S. ambassador to Portugal pushed donations to the MIND Center above the \$10 million mark – a goal set in 2010, the year it opened at UMMC.

"I am convinced that continued support from the private sector will help our UMMC researchers find effective treatments for this disease," Palmer said.

Although his contribution is earmarked for the MIND Center, Palmer channeled it through the recently launched Manning Family Fund for a Healthier Mississippi, a fund-raising campaign committed to battling a variety of health issues in the state.

The donor-supported program is a partnership between the Medical Center and the state's First Family of Football, led by Ole Miss sports legend Archie and his wife Olivia Manning.

"I thought the Mannings' program was a fantastic idea when I first heard about it," said Palmer, 80, a Corinth native who attended Ole Miss on a basketball scholarship in the 1950s. "The Manning Family Fund will have a significant impact on the health of all Mississippians. I wanted to leverage my gift to the MIND Center and challenge others to support the Mannings' effort."

The fight against Alzheimer's is personal with Palmer, whose wife Clementine Palmer and her mother Clementine Brown of Jackson succumbed to it several years ago, he said.

It was while he was an ambassador to Portugal, 2001-2004, that he noticed his wife's memory problems. Because of the rapid progression of the disease, he ended his tenure in Lisbon and returned so she could be cared for at home.

A brain disease that shrinks memory and reasoning, Alzheimer's has struck more than five million Americans, including more than 50,000 Mississippians, reports the Mississippi Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association.

People over 80 years of age have a 50/50 chance of having this disease. As the population ages, the incidence of Alzheimer's grows exponentially.

"It is a huge problem that is arguably the biggest challenge facing medicine for the next 100 years," said Dr. Thomas Mosley, director of the MIND Center.

The MIND Center, working in partnership with some of the nation's most prestigious institutions, is able to pursue promising studies on dementia risk factors, genetics and the links between Alzheimer's and other diseases. With a variety of contributions from businesses and the community, the center has added top researchers and state-of-the-art equipment, Mosley said.

Palmer helped put together a board and has served as the chair since the MIND Center was created. He and Mosley "shared a vision" that produced the research institute, which now also offers clinical treatment for patients with dementia, Mosley said.

"Ambassador Palmer's most recent gift comes at a fantastic time," Mosley said, adding that it enables the center to "ramp up" the recently created partnership with UMMC's Telehealth program to offer dementia care to underserved parts of the state. These gifts will allow the Medical Center to recruit more top researchers to the MIND Center and motivate others to give, Mosley said.

"Seeing the kind of expertise we have at the MIND Center," Palmer said, "and the scope and potential of UMMC, I thought, 'This could make a difference.' "

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10/2/2014

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