Castaways Against Cancer and Sylvester Enter Year Four of Partnership to Raise Funds for Cancer Research

To date, the Ridiculous Stunt Tour – Somersaulting Towards Hope has raised $285,000.

The Castaways crew, supporting cast and partners pose for a group photo before the kayak launch.

To accelerate research at Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center, a part of UHealth – University of Miami Health System, the nonprofit group Castaways Against Cancer recently launched their annual fundraising event: a 160-mile kayak and cycling tour to Key West. This year’s voyage set out on June 10 following an early morning send-off on Key Biscayne.

“On launch day, we had raised more money than we had at the end of our tour last year – and typically the week we kayak and cycle is our strongest,” said Eric Pino, captain of the Castaways Against Cancer. “We have more than 1,800 donors, so this is not big bucks coming from a few people. This is a grassroots organization, doing grassroots things, with grassroots supporters.”

This year’s theme, The Ridiculous Stunt Tour, honors the very first voyage of the Castaways. In 2000, a small group of five
Kayakers paddled 160 miles from Miami to Key West in honor of founder Steve “OB” O’Brien’s mother, who passed away from cancer. Since then, the group has grown into a formidable fundraising organization that is helping Sylvester move the needle toward better cancer treatments and improved outcomes for patients.

**Millions Raised for Cancer Research**

Castaways Against Cancer has raised more than $1.5 million for cancer research. This is the third year of a five-year pledge to raise an additional $1.5 million for research at Sylvester, South Florida’s only NCI-designated and nationally ranked cancer center.

This year, the crew consists of 13 paddlers, 10 cyclists, 18 landlubbers who handle the work behind the scenes, and for the first time ever, two runners.

The honor of the First Stroke Ceremony was given to Paige Douglass, a two-time cancer survivor who is running 85 miles to Key West as part of the tour.

“Participating in the Castaways Against Cancer event as a runner meant the world to me,” Douglass said. “Not only was I able to contribute to an incredible cause by raising funds for cancer research, but as a cancer survivor myself, and having seen loved ones affected by this disease, every step I took held deep meaning.”

Stephen D. Nimer, M.D., director of Sylvester, expressed his appreciation for the Castaways’ work helping to fund cancer research.
“There are more than 2,000 people at Sylvester researching cancer, finding new treatments and taking care of cancer patients. There’s never been more hope,” said Dr. Nimer, who is also the Oscar de la Renta Endowed Chair in Cancer Research and executive dean for research at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine.

“It’s been an honor to partner with Castaways Against Cancer these past four years, and we’re all in this together, raising money for cancer research.”

Visit the Castaways Against Cancer website to learn more about the group’s work to support cancer research.