



## 'Thinking Ahead' - Ben and Ellen's adventure into estate planning to benefit the Lung Cancer Colorado Fund

*Ben and Ellen Smith*

Ellen was first diagnosed with stage III lung cancer in April 2008. But after chemotherapy, radiation and giving up one lung to surgery, the cancer returned the next year, this time as stage IV disease. Yet, amazingly, here we are more than seven years later and Ellen is still doing well. It hasn't all been smooth sailing, of course, but Ellen has now turned into something of a professional medical pioneer – leading the charge at CU in one clinical trial or out-of-the box approach after another.



*Ben and Ellen Smith*

Beyond the medical care, the level of concern and interest shown to us by so many members of the Cancer Center team has been incredible over this time. You can feel it. Its good - it really helps - when a patient knows that they are more than just the content of their medical file. While we have always shown our gratitude by telling everyone we can about the cancer program at CU, one day we asked our doctor if we could do more. Both of us are retired and not what you would call wealthy – Ben was an elementary school teacher and Ellen was a kindergarten teacher – but, together, we discussed whether there was something we could do that wouldn't impact our ability to have vacations, spoil ourselves as we see fit, or enjoy special times with our families – and that's how our estate planning adventure began.

“Would you consider being pioneers in finding out what it would take to leave a modest amount to the

Lung Cancer Colorado Fund in your will?” our favorite doctor asked. “The materials are all there, but we haven't really exploited this avenue yet. I think it could be a major way people could help us out and stay within their means. We just need someone to draw up a users' guide for others to follow.”

We agreed but, in reality, we were both worried

that the amount we were considering giving to the University wouldn't

be of interest because it might not make a large impact by itself. Specifically, we were imagining maybe a \$2500 amount and definitely not enough to set up the 'Smith Cancer Pavilion.' Our worries were, fortunately, unfounded. After a quick email introduction we met with Amanda Brodie and Angela DellaSalle from the CU Advancement Office for coffee and a chat. When we mentioned our planned amount they didn't lose interest. In fact, they couldn't have been more gracious and emphasized that they were excited to work with donations of any amount. They had lots of written material we could go over but the simplest version of what to do might look like this:

- Meet with a lawyer (CU doesn't provide one, but the Advancement Office suggests you check in with them to advise on this) and insert this language into your will:
- “I give, devise and bequeath to the University of Colorado Foundation, a Colorado non-profit

corporation, (enter a specific dollar amount or percentage of your estate) for the benefit of the Lung Cancer Colorado Fund at the University of Colorado Foundation.”

And that is almost all you need to know. However, Amanda also pointed out an important document in their packet. It was the “Letter of Intent” which she strongly recommended be sent to the Advancement Office in the event a bequest is made in your will. This letter then gives their team the heads up to look out for a gift in the future (hopefully not too soon!).

Beyond the basics, we were also impressed by the very flexible and comprehensive options for supporting the lung cancer program at the University that can be tailored to the needs/desires of different individuals. These range from making use of financial assets in all their various forms including stocks and real estate to describing how best to get tax breaks on the gifts. They even allow you to create your own named funds that can be set up for specific purposes with the entry level for these being about \$25,000. Although a fund named after us sounded good it was beyond our means. However, if this was something



Amanda Brodie and  
Angela DellaSalle

that someone was considering, we would seriously recommend discussing such ideas with either your doctor or someone on the LCCF in advance to make sure your plans achieve what you really want them to achieve and how they can result in the most good to the lung cancer program. For ourselves, we ended up very comfortable with the idea of just contributing to the general Lung Cancer Colorado Fund and knowing that lots of smaller donations will add up to something of significance when they are combined.

A lot of the details of how the Advancement Office can work with donors, plus all the forms, including the “Letter of Intent,” are covered on their website (<http://cu.planmygift.org/>). Or you can phone them at 303-724-8227.

For us, the adventure was completed without any drama at all and we now have our game plan ready for when we next meet with our lawyer to update our wills.

Although we didn’t discuss it with Amanda and Angela, the only other thing we’d mention is to cut out the wording below and have your loved ones make use of it when the time comes. Because every little bit helps and that’s the truth!

