New patient-centric transplant center opens at AU Health

Carlos and Marguerite Mason Solid Organ Transplant Center will provide multidisciplinary transplant care in one setting

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AUGUSTA, Ga. (April 27, 2017) – Marguerite Mason likely would have been pleased.

Officials cut the ribbon at the new 14,000-square-foot Carlos and Marguerite Mason Solid Organ Transplant Center on Thursday, doubling the capacity for evaluations and ongoing care which will essentially enable more patients to receive lifesaving organ transplants.

Following her death in 1991, Marguerite Mason left the bulk of the family estate to the Carlos and Marguerite Mason Trust to help ensure that needy Georgians requiring transplants have access to care. To that end, the Mason Trust awarded Augusta University $1.45 million to help fund the construction of the $4.1 million consolidated transplant center at AU Health.

“We are humbled and honored by the great opportunity the Carlos and Marguerite Mason Trust has provided for our patients and families,” said Dr. Todd Merchen, surgical director of the program and Mason Distinguished Chair in Transplant Surgery and Immunology.

“When you are a patient, you are at your most vulnerable, and when you are first learning about something as complex and daunting as a transplant because of kidney failure, that feeling can be overwhelming. The financial contributions from the Mason Trust have allowed us to design a comforting, family atmosphere for our patients that is truly unique among transplant centers,” Merchen said.

The new center, located on the third floor of Professional Building 1 adjacent to AU Medical Center, will be able to accommodate clinical needs, consultations, lab services, infusion, cardiac echocardiograms, a medication assistance program and an education library all in one patient-centric setting.

“The center is extremely patient-centered – it merges into one place the many services that our transplant patients require instead of having them navigate different appointments in multiples buildings across the health sciences campus,” explained Dr. Carlos Zayas, assistant program director and medical director of the transplant program. “This is a tremendous improvement.”
The Mason Trust also funded a $1 million research grant to Augusta University to investigate why the body sometimes rejects organs and how to reduce this improve this problem for transplant patients.

“We are extremely grateful for such generous and vital donations from the Mason Trust over the past several decades. The Mason family’s contribution that facilitated this new transplant center will help us continue our legacy of patient- and family-centered care for hundreds of patients,” said Lee Ann Liska, Chief Executive Officer of AU Medical Center and Executive Vice President for Clinical Affairs at Augusta University. “This is an extraordinary milestone, and we couldn’t have gotten here without the dedication of our transplant staff as well as the support of all our loyal supporters and donors.”

Nearly 2,500 life-saving kidney and pancreas transplants have been performed at the medical center since its origin in 1968. Augusta University offers novel approaches to kidney transplants, including paired, altruistic, and chain donations in order to help find matching donors for the more than 16,000 patients who are on the waiting list in the geographic region that includes Georgia. The center has twice been named a national Kidney Transplant Center of Excellence.

DOWNLOADS: Access b-roll of the new transplant center with the password "media" at go.augusta.edu/transplantdownloads.

Augusta University is Georgia’s innovation center for education and health care, training the next generation of innovators, leaders and healthcare providers in classrooms and clinics on three campuses in Augusta and satellite locations across the state. Groundbreaking research at Augusta is dedicated to improving and enriching the human experience as we seek to create a healthier, more prosperous Georgia. More than 8,000 students choose Augusta for experiential learning that blends arts and application, humanities and the health sciences. Augusta is home to Georgia’s only public academic health center, where world-class clinicians are bringing the medicine of tomorrow to patient care today.

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