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Teams Making an Impact, One Obliteride at a Time

How Obliteride's designated funds help Fred Hutch teams power their own work

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Every summer, Fred Hutch **Obliteride** brings our community together in a united effort to help cure cancer faster. For many teams, it is also a way to directly support their work at Fred Hutch through Obliteride's designated funds option.

From meaningful rituals such as riding with patients' names and stories, to creative fundraising methods such as planning a wedding around Obliteride Weekend, teams are empowered by the ability to directly impact the research, programs and patient communities they care about most.

Read on to hear **Jen Crainic**, **Leslie Swanson**, **Corey Salas**, **Kathy Briant** and **Dr. Josh Hill** share why they are participating in this year's Obliteride, what motivates them and how Obliteride impacts their work.

Jen Crainic — Graduate Research Assistant in the Sullivan Lab

Obliteride team: Brain-y Bunch

Fundraising designation: Dr. Lucas Sullivan



Left: Sullivan Lab team members and family at the 2025 Obliteride finish line (from left): Lucas and Ever Sullivan, James Boyd, Jen Crainic and Max Kobiesa. Top: Jen shows off her 2024 jersey. Bottom: James and Jen cross the finish line after completing the 100-mile ride at Obliteride 2024.

Photos provided by Jen Crainic and Nate Burgher Photography

How did you first get involved with Obliteride?

My fiancé James and I initially started participating in Obliteride because I'm a PhD student in the [Sullivan Lab](#). Now we are obsessed with the event. Our lab's participation has grown and last year our team, The Cancer Derailleurs, had three lab members participate in Obliteride. Together we raised \$4,000.

How did the Brain-y Bunch initially form?

James and I formed [The Brain-y Bunch](#) this year because we decided to plan our wedding to coincide with Obliteride Weekend. We are encouraging friends and family to join us at the start line or donate in lieu of wedding gifts.

My fiancé and I formed the Brain-y Bunch this year because we decided to plan our wedding to coincide with Obliteride Weekend. — Jen Crainic

How does Obliteride impact your work at Fred Hutch?

Our fundraising efforts have supported unfunded, innovative research that I proposed as part of my PhD work. Through last year's Obliteride fundraising we were able to support the [screening of hundreds of drugs](#) and define a new mechanism of drug resistance. We hope that, once published, this work will improve patient outcomes by reducing instances of drug resistance. We also hope our work will help guide physicians toward more effective options, leading to better outcomes for their patients. We look forward to the new directions we will be able to explore with our 2026 fundraising.

What Obliteride events have you participated in over the years?

I am a cyclist and love doing the 100-mile route (and dragging anyone I can into training for it with me!).

What brings you back to participate each year?

During my first Obliteride I was truly overwhelmed by the number of people participating in the event. As I chatted with other cyclists on the century route, I was shocked by how excited they were to meet a current Fred Hutch employee. Now I return to Obliteride to see my Obliteride friends and to make new ones. Obliteride serves as a reminder for why the research I am doing matters.

**Obliteride serves as a reminder for why the research I am doing matters.
— Jen Crainic**

Does your team have any unique traditions or fundraising tactics?

This year we are committing to our biggest fundraising goal yet — \$20,000! To reach this goal we are hosting a restaurant night at Johnny Mo's and fundraising with Krispy Kreme nationwide all summer long. For each order of a dozen glazed donuts for \$15, [Krispy Kreme](#) will donate 50% of sales to our team.

Leslie Swanson — Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioner, High-Risk Immuno-Oncology team

Obliteride team: Matchmakers of Mayhem

Fundraising designation: Dr. Lawrence Fong



Clockwise from top left: Leslie Swanson and her family with Jenny and Greta Brooks at Obliteride 2024; Leslie and Drew Swanson with Jim Drechsler at Obliteride 2025; members of the 2025 GI Tract Stars Obliteride team; and Kat DeSimone with her boyfriend, Alex, at Obliteride 2025.

Photos courtesy of Leslie Swanson

How did Matchmakers of Mayhem initially form?

This year will be my ninth Obliteride. In the early years, I participated on a friend's team but quickly wanted to start my own team as a way of bringing our group together outside of the workplace. It started with [GI Tract Stars](#) when I worked in gastroenterology (GI) oncology. This year I am happy to captain a new team focusing on early research and using the immune system to fight cancer. We wanted to do something fun and have a team with a name that plays upon the work we do with engaging T cells. Thanks to a little help from AI to come up with the name [Matchmakers of Mayhem](#), our team was formed.

What brings you back to participate each year?

I love the environment and excitement Obliteride brings, but ultimately, it is the patients that bring us back year after year. It's become a summer staple event.

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How does Obliteride impact your work at Fred Hutch?

Obliteride helps bring hope to the bedside. With members of the multidisciplinary team joining together to walk, run or ride, we carry those we love, care for and have lost from cancer in the hopes of changing outcomes for others.

What Obliteride events have you participated in over the years?

In the past I've participated in the 50-mile bike ride and the 5K, and this year I'm returning for the 50-mile ride. I also volunteered at the Friday Night Party in 2024 and 2025.

Does your team have any unique traditions or fundraising tactics?

One Obliteride tradition is having my patients sign my bike jersey (or “I ride for” stickers) so that I can carry their names with me during the event. No fundraising traditions yet, but we have a lot of fun ideas for this year. Previously, I helped coordinate a cookie dough truck on campus and this year we are looking at doing a fundraising event with Flatstick Pub.

One Obliteride tradition is having my patients sign my bike jersey (or “I ride for” stickers) so that I can carry their names with me during the event. — Leslie Swanson

Corey Salas — Clinic Operations Manager for Fred Hutch at EvergreenHealth

Obliteride team: Team Evergreen

Fundraising designation: Cancer Research Greatest Need



The Evergreen team members before and after Obliteride 2025 showing up and getting it done, on and off the course.

Photos courtesy of Corey Salas

How did you first get involved with the Team Evergreen?

In 2024, a patient care coordinator introduced me to Obliteride after learning I enjoyed cycling. The idea of riding alongside others for a meaningful cause felt like something I wanted to be part of. Then last year, the captain's torch was passed on to me for [Team Evergreen](#) when our former team captain, Sandy John, asked if I would carry our team forward after her retirement.

How does Obliteride impact your work at Fred Hutch?

As the Operations Manager for Fred Hutch at EvergreenHealth, Obliteride connects my day-to-day work to the larger mission of bringing people together to support cancer research, patient care and better outcomes. It's a powerful reminder of why our work matters and of the impact we can have beyond the clinic.

Obliteride connects my day-to-day work to the larger mission of bringing people together to support cancer research, patient care and better outcomes — Corey Salas

What Obliteride events have you participated in over the years?

I've participated in the in-person Obliteride 5K run/walk events, which have been incredibly meaningful and energizing.

While I haven't completed the 100-mile ride yet, I fully intend to take on that challenge in the next few years. In the meantime, I've made it a personal annual tradition to ride 100 miles on my indoor cycling bike in honor of my dad, who is currently being treated for biliary duct cancer. That personal connection makes Obliteride even more meaningful to me and keeps me motivated to continue showing up and supporting the mission.

What brings you back each year?

As an individual from the beautiful Pacific Island of Guam, I carry my island community with me. Pacific Islander communities continue to face cancer disparities, including barriers to screening, access to care, early diagnosis and treatment, especially across the more remote U.S.-affiliated Pacific Islands. That reality makes my participation feel even more meaningful. I ride, walk and show up not only for my family, but also for the people of Guam and the Pacific Islander communities I represent.

I ride, walk and show up not only for my family, but also for the people of Guam and the Pacific Islander communities I represent. — Corey Salas

Does your team have any unique traditions?

Each year, we try to coordinate a piece of clothing or swag that helps bring us together and makes us feel like a more unified team. The first year I participated, we all wore matching baseball caps with "Team Evergreen" embroidered on the back. Last year we all wore orange bandanas in various ways.

We haven't decided what this year's swag will be just yet, but you can be sure we'll have fun wearing it and showing off our team spirit.



Members of Team Evergreen gather at the start of the 2024 Obliteride 5K walk/run.

Photo courtesy of Corey Salas

Kathy Briant — Director of Operations and Partnership, Office of Community Outreach and Engagement

Obliteride team: Stand Up for Equity

Fundraising designation: Office of Community Outreach & Engagement



Clockwise from top left: Members of the 2014 Closing the Gap team at Magnuson Park, including Dr. Beti Thompson, Elizabeth Carosso and Kathy Briant; Stand Up for Equity riders during the 2025 25-mile ride; Closing the Gap team members in 2015; and members of the Stand Up for Equity team in 2023.

Photos courtesy of Kathy Briant

How did Stand Up for Equity initially form?

Originally, our team started in 2013 as Closing the Gap, led by [Dr. Beti Thompson](#) whose work focused on addressing health disparities. Beti is Professor Emeritus now, but we have carried on the tradition, and in 2020 we formed a virtual team. In recognition of the racial protesting and the disparities in COVID-19 rates among BIPOC communities, we renamed the team to [Stand Up for Equity](#).

How did you first get involved?

My first Obliteride was in 2014 when I joined Beti's team and did the 25-mile ride. That summer Beti told everyone who was on the team to bring their bikes to work and we would take an afternoon ride a couple of days a week to get into shape. Those were some fun and memorable summer afternoons! Some other fond Obliteride memories include meeting Tom Douglas as he was cooking and serving food one year at the Friday Night Party and seeing Michael Franti up close at Gasworks Park.

How does Obliteride impact your work?

Now that we can fundraise for areas of interest at Fred Hutch, we've chosen to support our own program — the [Office of Community Outreach and Engagement](#). Our community health educators partner with communities across the state, building trusted relationships with local organizations and tribes. They attend community events, lead education workshops and work closely with partners to share clear, accessible information about cancer. Obliteride funds help sustain this important work by bridging gaps in our outreach funding.

Obliteride funds help sustain this important work by bridging gaps in our outreach funding. — Kathy Briant

What Obliteride events have you participated in over the years?

I have done the 25-and 50-mile rides, a mini duathlon (run and bike) during COVID and the walk/run.

What brings you back each year?

Obliteride helps me reconnect to the Fred Hutch mission each summer. There is a huge sense of community with so many different people coming together at the event — and all of them are coming together for Fred Hutch! Obliteride makes me feel hopeful and reminds me why the work the clinicians, researchers and staff at Fred Hutch do is so important. Plus, it's fun! I like bonding with work colleagues outside of the office at the Friday Night Party and during the event itself.

Obliteride makes me feel hopeful and reminds me why the work the clinicians, researchers and staff at Fred Hutch do is so important. Plus, it's fun! — Kathy Briant

Does your team have any unique traditions or fundraising tactics?

No specific traditions but in the past we've sold ice cream sundaes in the Arnold Building and hosted a silent auction at a wine bar. This year, team members will share a donation link for the team on their social media accounts.

Dr. Josh Hill — Associate Professor in the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Division and the Clinical Research Division

Obliteride team: ImmunOptimize for All!

Fundraising designation: Dr. Josh Hill

How did ImmunOptimize for All! initially form?

Our team [ImmunOptimize for All!](#) was created last year to support the launch of the [ImmunOptimize Network](#) and the broader mission behind it. We are developing a national initiative that builds foundational infrastructure to accelerate clinical trial activation and advance innovative strategies for preventing and treating infections in immunocompromised populations.

How did you first get involved with the team?

As a leader of the ImmunOptimize Network, I was honored to form our Obliteride team in 2025 and to add [Dr. Jim Boonyaratanakornkit](#) as a co-captain for this year. Fred Hutch has been an incredible partner in supporting our work, and we are excited to come together with the community in honor of the shared mission to help cure cancer faster.



Members of the 2025 ImmunOptimize for All! team gather the Obliteride Friday Night Party at Gasworks Park.

Photo by Nate Burgher Photography

How does Obliteride impact your work at Fred Hutch?

Participating in Obliteride reinforces the multidisciplinary spirit that defines Fred Hutch. It brings our community together outside of the clinical and research settings. There is a bond you feel in the shared purpose and commitment when you bike past another rider wearing an Obliteride jersey. I ride to help improve the lives of my patients, support the groundbreaking research led by my colleagues and strengthen the community united behind advancing cancer care and cures.

I ride to help improve the lives of my patients, support the groundbreaking research led by my colleagues and strengthen the community united behind advancing cancer care and cures. — Josh Hill

What route do you plan to do for your 100-mile virtual ride this year?

I am planning to cycle the North Cascades Highway over Washington Pass to the Methow Valley.

What brings you back to participate in Obliteride?

Last year's event was incredibly successful and inspiring, so there was never any question that our team would return. Participating in Obliteride helps generate essential donor support, raise awareness for this highly specialized patient population and fund innovative research studies. These efforts have the potential to improve the quality of life for impacted individuals and their loved ones.

Participating in Obliteride helps generate essential donor support, raise awareness for this highly specialized patient population and fund innovative research studies. — Josh Hill



Dr. Josh Hill crosses the Obliteride finish line after completing the 100-mile ride in 2025 with teammate Dr. Brett Hanscom.

Photo by Nate Burgher Photography

Does your team have any unique traditions or fundraising tactics?

Each year, our team looks for new and creative ways to raise funds and give back. This year, we are partnering with the Marketing & Communications team to develop memorabilia that community members can wear and share year-round to help spread awareness and support our mission.

Want to join Obliterate?

Visit the Obliterate website to [start a team](#) or [join an existing one](#) today as a rider, walker, runner or virtual participant. Volunteer opportunities are available, too! You can also learn [more about Obliterate](#) on CenterNet and read additional Center News stories from staff sharing what [inspires them to participate](#). Remember, 100% of participant-raised dollars fuels groundbreaking discovery at Fred Hutch, thanks to generous event sponsors and supporters.

Have a story idea or team you want us to highlight?

Learn more about our [Internal Communications channels](#) or contact Internal Communications at employeecomm@fredhutch.org with ideas we should consider.

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