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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**LOCAL FOUNDATION EXPANDS MISSION AND EMBRACES  
NEW NAME – A SHELTER FOR CANCER FAMILIES**

**HOUSTON, TX – October 5, 2017\*** - The Amschwand Sarcoma Cancer Foundation (ASCF) has worn its name proudly for almost 17 years as it has served families affected by cancer. This year marks a milestone as the organization expands its commitment to providing navigation services to Houston families affected by cancer as well providing ‘a home away from home’ to families who travel to Houston for cancer care. To reflect this expanded pledge, a new moniker naturally evolved which more accurately reflects the growing commitment to serving and providing – **A Shelter for Cancer Families.**

In 2001, Missy Bellinger tragically lost her husband Tom to sarcoma cancer. Shortly before his passing, she co-founded the Houston-based Amschwand Sarcoma Cancer Foundation with Tom in order to provide hope and tangible support to the hundreds of thousands of families affected by cancer each year. Tom saw a need for better awareness and research funding for rare cancers and improved tangible support for families receiving cancer care in Houston. Home to both the largest cancer center and the largest pediatric hospital in the world, Tom felt Houston’s programs for cancer families should reflect that.

“I could not be prouder to stand behind our 17 years of success as the Amschwand Sarcoma Cancer Foundation and eagerly look forward to our next moment as A Shelter for Cancer Families,” said Bellinger. “While Amschwand might be missing from our new name, it will never be far from our hearts as we continue to pursue the vision set forth by Tom.”

ASCF was created to address the needs of families affected by cancer that were not already being met elsewhere. The need for appropriate housing for out-of-towners seeking cancer treatment in Houston has not kept pace with the need. Many of the housing options available are insufficient to meet the needs of families. Even more, families affected by cancer often find it difficult to traverse the cancer landscape. Whether native or new to the Houston area, patients and their families need guidance for the cancer journey that is both accessible and uncomplicated.

“We know when someone gets cancer, the entire family is affected,” said Board member and Sarcoma surgeon Dr. Keila Torres. “Therefore, it is imperative that our housing, navigation and other programs meet the needs of families. Accommodations should allow for patients to be surrounded by their support networks as much as possible to maximize both healing and quality of life.”

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In 2017 after a needs assessment, ASCF's board of directors voted unanimously to focus future efforts on providing support to families affected by cancer. Housing for out of town families seeking cancer care in Houston remains the single biggest need in the area closely followed by the need for better cancer navigation services. As a result, ASCF made the decision to offer such programs to all cancer families receiving care in the Texas Medical Center, regardless of age, cancer type, treatment status or income. The level of support devoted to sarcoma research funding and awareness has greatly increased since ASCF was created in 2001 allowing ASCF to focus on providing resources that are not otherwise available such as:

- **Tangible support** to families, not just patients affected by cancer. The housing support ASCF offers is based on what out-of-town families affected by cancer need.
- **Cancer navigation services** to both families from Houston and those from out-of-town seeking cancer care here. Volunteers help families navigate the cancer landscape. For those unfamiliar with the cancer terrain; the use of medical terminology, technical jargon and healthcare acronyms only add to the stress of a family already under pressure. ASCF's team of volunteer patient navigators helps to provide peace of mind to families under duress. Whether it is taking notes at a clinic appointment, holding a family member's hand during a loved one's surgical procedure or helping to facilitate the communication between the family and the healthcare team, ASCF's navigators serve as a valuable resource.
- **Creating and commemorating the special moments** during the cancer journey to make cherished moments along the way possible and special. Volunteers help families celebrate what is important to them, whether it is a birthday, anniversary, wedding, holiday, first-day-of-school or "ringing the bell" to signify the end of treatment.

“ASCF provides tangible support to families affected by cancer because we’ve ‘been there’ and we know the value of such services.” said Bellinger. “This is where ASCF can make the biggest impact going forward and we are committed to serving as a catalyst for creating partnerships which will allow us to expand our city’s capacity to provide such tangible support to those seeking cancer care in Houston.”

#### **About ASCF\***

The loss of his mother, Kathryn, to sarcoma, in addition to his own eighteen-month battle with the rare disease, led Tom Amschwand to create the vision of the Amschwand Sarcoma Cancer Foundation shortly before his death at age 30. For 17 years, the Amschwand Sarcoma Cancer Foundation provided sarcoma-specific tangible support, research and awareness. A hallmark of the foundation was the organization’s housing program which provided free-housing to sarcoma patients receiving treatment in the medical community. A Shelter For Cancer Families was born out of the success of this housing program. Today, the program serves families affected by all types of cancer including those affected by sarcoma.

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