

# ATTACKING ALZHEIMER'S



## HOUSTON ALZHEIMER'S STUDY

During a lunch with five friends from work, Joe Bob Perkins learned that all but one person at the table was either dealing with a family member suffering from Alzheimer's disease or knew of a friend going through a similar situation.

Perkins saw firsthand the effect Alzheimer's has on a family while watching his mother-in-law battle the disease for about 10 years. His wife, Jeanne, and her sister were the main caregivers. This personal connection inspired Joe Bob and Jeanne to make a gift with matching opportunities to Houston Methodist that supports the Houston Alzheimer's Study.

"We run across so many families who are just barely getting by trying to manage this disease, but we want to generate hope for them," Joe Bob Perkins says. "We want to make a difference in preventing, treating and curing the disease."

Each year Alzheimer's disease affects nearly 6 million Americans ages 65 and older. That number is expected to nearly triple by 2050, according to the Alzheimer's Association. There is currently no cure or treatment for the disease, but reaching that goal begins with research, Joe Bob says.

The Perkins say they believe in the Houston Alzheimer's Study because of its principal investigator, Dr. Joseph C. Masdeu (the Graham Family Distinguished Chair in Neurological Sciences and director of the Nantz National Alzheimer Center), and the approach he is taking toward the research. The study aims to provide the in-depth knowledge needed to

help develop potential new personalized treatment options for Alzheimer's disease.

To get closer to realizing their goal, Masdeu and his colleagues will screen 350 patients with Alzheimer's disease and other dementia at varying stages of the diseases. They will look at patients' biological profiles and risk factors, while also screening family members who show no signs of the disease.

"Jeanne and I are data-driven people, so starting with research makes sense," says Joe Bob, a member of Houston Methodist's Board of Directors and the board's Policy Committee. "We're making an investment that will lead to other things. Research is the foundation for everything else, and we believe in it."

**"We hope this project kick-starts multifaceted, integrated big data research and insight into the disease,"** adds Jeanne.

Houston Methodist is partnering with investigators from Baylor College of Medicine, The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston and the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center on this multi-institutional project.

Masdeu says the goal of their research is simply to better understand Alzheimer's disease so they can unlock a way to treat it.

"We're finding out that Alzheimer's, like many diseases, is not a uniform disease. It appears in different forms and has various causes," Masdeu says. "When we approach it in a customized, tailored way, then we will start uncovering some options for preventing it, slowing it and ultimately stopping its progression."

JEANNE AND JOE BOB PERKINS (PICTURED WITH JOSEPH C. MASDEU, MD, PHD) ESTABLISHED A CHALLENGE INITIATIVE, THAT HAS HELPED ATTRACT SOME TWENTY GENEROUS BENEFACTORS TO DATE, SUPPORTING THE HOUSTON ALZHEIMER'S STUDY.