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Alpha Phi Foundation funds cutting-edge research study that could tailor treatments for women living with heart disease.

Officially surpasses \$1 million invested in heart projects since 1993.

Evanston, IL – February 28, 2017 – Alpha Phi Foundation proudly announces **Texas Heart Institute** as the recipient of the 2017 Heart to Heart Grant. Established in 1993, the grant funds research and educational programs that advance the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of heart disease in women.

With the awarding of the 2017 grant the Foundation officially surpasses \$1 million invested in women’s heart health initiatives.

Texas Heart Institute will use this \$100,000 grant to fund Dr. Doris Taylor’s cutting-edge research study evaluating the proteins cells make and release that affect the heart’s daily function. With a specific focus on cardiac repair, this study aims to make strides in the study of heart disease and the cellular differences between men and women. The institute previously received a \$50,000 Heart to Heart Grant in 2013 to help fund their Houston Heart Reach for Women, designed to investigate the roles biology, psychology and lifestyle play in putting a woman at risk for heart disease.

Cardiovascular disease is largely underestimated in women and the need to understand their difference from men has motivated scientists like Taylor to explore new therapeutic strategies. Traditional risk factors like high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes do not explain why younger women continue to have greater odds of early death due to heart conditions. With this grant, Taylor seeks to identify new biological mechanisms that may contribute to this phenomenon and could ultimately result in more tailored treatments for women living with heart disease.

Taylor proposes that her regenerative medicine study to evaluate the proteins present and active in the cardiac repair setting will yield critical information that could solve many unanswered questions in cell therapy. Her hope is to reveal underlying differences in the mechanisms of disease progression based on gender and potential for repairing the heart.

“Bone marrow cell therapy has been used to treat men and women with cardiovascular diseases worldwide. However, few clinical trials have explored the sex-based differences in the composition and potency of bone marrow cells to better understand the outcome of the trial. A proteomic profiling of the cell product from men and women may reveal important sex- and disease-specific differences that could improve the design of future human bone marrow stem cell therapy trials,” said Taylor.

“We’re thrilled to partner with Texas Heart Institute for a second time,” said Michelle Hektor, executive director of Alpha Phi Foundation. “Its pioneering efforts and continued dedication to the advancement of women’s heart health is inspiring. We’re excited to see how Dr. Taylor’s innovative research study progresses and the potential it has to increase the quality of treatments for women living with heart disease.”

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Texas Heart Institute will also use this grant to establish a summer internship that will be offered to an Alpha Phi alumna or collegian interested in pursuing a career in biomedical sciences and/or medicine.

The Heart to Heart Grant is made possible by individual donors, corporations and a portion of proceeds from collegiate and alumnae chapter Red Dress Events. Since its inception in 1993, the grant has funded 29 heart projects to 26 prestigious organizations.

Alpha Phi Foundation

Founded in 1956, Alpha Phi Foundation is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to advance women's lives through the power of philanthropy. The Foundation is the philanthropic and educational partner of Alpha Phi International Fraternity. Through contributions from chapters and individuals, the Foundation funds programming focused on five vital areas: scholarship, leadership, heritage, assistance grants to support sisters and collegiate chapters facing crisis situations, and women's heart health.

Texas Heart Institute

The Texas Heart Institute (THI), founded by world-renowned cardiovascular surgeon Dr. Denton A. Cooley in 1962, is a nonprofit organization dedicated to reducing the devastating toll of cardiovascular disease through innovative and progressive programs in research, education and improved patient care. Together with its clinical partner, CHI St. Luke's Health – Baylor St. Luke's Medical Center, it has been ranked among the top cardiovascular centers in the United States by U.S. News & World Report's annual guide to "America's Best Hospitals" for the past 25 years. More information about THI (@Texas_Heart) is available at www.texasheart.org.

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