



We Start Them Young

Education Opportunities Abound at Moffitt Cancer Center

Julie Djeu, Ph.D., has seen more than her share of struggling freshman undergraduates in the honors discovery course she helps to teach at the University of South Florida. “They have no idea how to pursue their goals,” she says with a smile. “But once you head them in a direction, show them the way to go, they are unstoppable.”

The diminutive Dr. Djeu is quite an inspiration. A renowned immunology researcher who trained at the National Cancer Institute, she helped describe the role of NK (natural killer) cells in the battle against cancer before being hired as Moffitt’s first research scientist in 1992. She chaired Moffitt’s Immunology Department, which she built into a world-class research program focused on cancer immunotherapy. In 2013, she was named Moffitt’s first associate center director for Education and Training, overseeing all research education and training activities.

In that role, she’s focusing on a calling almost as deep as her scientific roots. “My research is always important to me,” she says. “But inspiring others is just as important.”

In fact, she says, tomorrow’s cancer breakthroughs rely upon it. “New diagnostics, new treatment protocols – all of that comes from research. To do research, you have to be trained. And to be trained, it’s better to start very young to go into this field.”

Moffitt’s involvement in this training comes as surprise to many, says Dr. Djeu. “They see Moffitt as a hospital. But we do so much education - you just don’t know about it.”

Moffitt provides more than 1,800 training experiences for biomedical researchers and health care professionals annually. For students and trainees, its varied offerings start as early as high school and continue throughout undergraduate, graduate, medical school and even Ph.D. training. The following pages highlight a handful of such programs that continue to be “hidden gems” among the Bay Area’s educational opportunities.