

A portrait of Valerie Goddard, a woman with short dark hair and glasses, wearing a patterned blazer over a blue top. She is smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is a light-colored, slightly textured wall.

# A Passion to Transform Lives

COMMUNITY LEADER MOVES  
MOFFITT VISION FORWARD

*By Ann Miller Baker*

Valerie Goddard didn't have to search for role models and direction in her life.

Growing up in a military family that traveled the world gave her an appreciation for the richness of diversity – and an extended family and friends that she jokes is like “a little United Nations.”

VALERIE GODDARD  
BOARD MEMBER + ADVOCATE

*Photography: Ray Reyes*

HERAUNT HAD A CAREER STRAIGHT OUT OF “HIDDEN FIGURES,” except that this math genius was exploring oceans as one of the Navy’s first nautical cartographers for submarines.

And her grandmother Altamese Brodie, “the love of my life,” says Goddard, was a transformational influence in the lives of children and families in the Tampa Bay area for over 55 years as the administrator at Helping Hand Day Nursery, Inc.

Great strength, compassion and desire to serve others shaped Goddard’s life as a wife, mother of two and now as CEO and Chief Strategist of The Goddard Group.

No wonder, then, when she hosted a Moffitt Cancer Center health disparities summit in 2010 as chair of the Children’s Board of Hillsborough County, she became intrigued by a new opportunity to serve. Moffitt’s vice president of Diversity, Public Relations and Strategic Communications B. Lee Green, PhD,

invited Goddard to tour the hospital and learn more, in hopes that she might join the Moffitt Hospital Board.

Goddard recalls being moved by the cancer center’s history and excited about its clinical pathways work. “I value data and utilize data-driven decision-making while assisting my clients in achieving their organizational goals” she explains, “and here were personalized care models with strategy, data and outcomes tracked for each patient.” But what really sold her was the tour – “such a jewel! Even with all my community involvement, I had never been to Moffitt before that day.” Shortly after joining Moffitt’s Hospital Board in 2011, that passion became even more personal for Goddard when her mother was diagnosed with colon cancer. Though her parents initially planned to simply rely on a local physician for care, Goddard insisted they seek a second opinion at Moffitt – an option they’d never realized was open to them.



*“It became my passion to share the message about Moffitt’s work in our community so that everyone from every walk of life knows that Moffitt is here to serve them.”*

Photography: Ray Reyes

“My mom is here today because she came to Moffitt for care,” says Goddard, who this year joined the Moffitt Institute Board of Directors. “If my parents didn’t think Moffitt was an option, how many other families in our community face cancer not knowing that Moffitt is here to help? It’s my duty to share with others that they, too, can experience Moffitt’s expertise and compassion like we have.”

*“My mom is here today because she came to Moffitt for care.”*

Misperceptions may be part of the reason why some community members don’t think of Moffitt as their hospital, says Goddard.

Even something as simple as its valet parking “might be interpreted that Moffitt is just for the wealthy,” Goddard explains, “when it’s really for the comfort and convenience of all patients going through the rigors of treatment.”

But far larger issues can interfere with access to care for underserved communities - and result in cancer health disparities with grave consequences. Those issues led Goddard to accept another role, chairing the George Edgecomb Society

which raises funds for Moffitt research into cancer health disparities within the black/African-American community.

Goddard says the commitment to grow the Edgecomb Society is one she takes personally. “We can transform lives through this initiative,” she says, “because through this research and with the doctors focusing on these issues, we’re going to help develop a new generation of health care professionals who gained their expertise and experience at Moffitt Cancer Center. It’s important to have health care leaders who can relate to our community and culture.”

The Society was named in memory of Hillsborough County’s first African-American judge, a close friend of then-state representative H. Lee Moffitt. Judge Edgecomb’s death from leukemia spurred Moffitt’s vision to create Florida’s only National Cancer Institute-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center. It’s a story that still inspires Goddard.

“Mr. Moffitt faced great odds in fulfilling his vision, but nevertheless he was courageous,” adds Goddard. “Because of his courage, we can have courage, too. If one man can build his vision, my team and I can move it forward.”