

Published: 04.02.2004

ALS research lab at UA to carry late judge's name

By Joseph Barrios

*ARIZONA DAILY STAR*

A University of Arizona laboratory looking for a way to treat or cure Lou Gehrig's disease will be named after former Pima County Judge Jim Himelic, who died of the disease.

The research laboratory at the UA's Health Sciences Center focuses solely on finding a treatment or cure for amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or ALS, more commonly known as Lou Gehrig's disease. The neurodegenerative disease attacks nerve cells and pathways in the brain and spinal cord, gradually causing loss of muscle control.

Ana Himelic, a UA law student, saw the disease's devastation firsthand. Her father served as a judge pro tempore at Pima County Juvenile Court until shortly before he died on Feb. 12, 2000. He was diagnosed with ALS in 1996.

"There's no cure and there's not even a treatment that delays the progression," said Ana Himelic. "I saw the effect of the disease on my father and how horrific that progression is. To see somebody suffer like that makes you want to find a cure or treatment for this disease. You feel like you're hopeless."

The ALS lab, headed by Dr. Timothy Miller, will be dedicated as the Jim Himelic Neuromuscular Research Laboratory.

The dedication will be held the day before a golf tournament in Himelic's memory.

Ana Himelic is one of the organizers of the Fourth Annual Jim Himelic Foundation Memorial Golf Tournament, scheduled to be held at the Omni Tucson Golf Resort & Spa, 2727 W. Club Drive, on May 21. Last year's tournament raised about \$80,000.

All proceeds go to fund the UA lab. "In the last three years, we've raised over \$215,000," Ana Himelic said.

The Jim Himelic Foundation's fund-raising goal is \$1 million. But the ultimate goal is to find a treatment or cure, Ana Himelic said.

She said her family is proud of the fact that funds raised by the tournament will go directly to research at the UA, where she, her father and her siblings have gone to school.

"It's not being sent to a lab someplace else. It's being done here in Tucson. We really like to take pride in that," she said.

For information about the tournament, call Robin Martin at 327-8444.