



In his off time from working on his Research Is The Answer (RITA) Foundation, a nonprofit volunteer organization to raise money for cancer research, Charles Jantz is an avid tennis player.

**JOHN PEMBERTON/**  
The Times-Union

## Fundraising helps court a cure

Retired businessman's foundation raises funds for cancer research.

By **URVAKSH KARKARIA**  
The Times-Union

Charles Jantz wants to knock out cancer. For the 67-year-old, it's personal.

Jantz's wife, Nancy, has a family history of cancer: Her mother, sister and aunt have each successfully battled breast cancer — a disease that kills about 40,000 American women each year.

The retired business executive doesn't know how to find a cure. So, Jantz does the next best thing — he raises money to help get it done.

In a second career of sorts, Jantz launched the Research Is The Answer (RITA) Foundation, a nonprofit that raises money for local cancer research.

"I want to help ... make Jacksonville the southeastern United States' center for cancer research, diagnostics and treatment," he said. "That is going to happen. I want RITA ... to be a part of helping to make that happen."

Through golf and tennis tour-

naments, 5K runs and walks, and black-tie dinner and dance events, the foundation has raised more than \$2 million during the past eight years — all of it for area research centers like Shands Jacksonville, Baptist Cancer Institute and Mayo Clinic Jacksonville.

"We are the largest contributor to the Baptist Cancer Institute," Jantz said.

Research and technology drive the cure for cancer, which is an expensive and lengthy endeavor, Jantz said.

"We donate money to [research] programs, and in some cases they buy software upgrades [and] equipment," he said.

Last month, RITA made its single largest donation: a \$400,000 digital mammography machine to Mayo Clinic Jacksonville. The machine is used to screen for cancerous tumors in the breast.

RITA helps Jacksonville institutions improve patient care with updated technology, said Jerald Pietan, a radiologist at Mayo Jacksonville.

The recent donation, Pietan said, "helped us move forward with an expensive technology that would have been difficult

to move forward with, without [RITA's] support."

Jantz, who spent 35 years peddling food products like french fries and cakes to distributors, restaurants and supermarkets in the Cleveland area, said running the foundation plays to his skills.

"I [have] the time to give back, with an opportunity to give back," he said. "I felt that I had enough business background and sales and marketing background to be effective."

Unlike some nonprofits that employ dozens of salaried employees, Jantz does not draw a salary while operating RITA with his wife from their Southside home. All the money raised, minus expenses in hosting the events, goes to cancer research.

While Jantz — who spends 30 hours a week on foundation work — is focused on raising dollars today, he's also looking to the future, and plotting a succession plan.

"I think RITA has made enough progress, and made enough impact," Jantz said, "that it would be sad if it did not continue."

urvaksh.karkaria@jacksonville.com,  
(904) 359-4367

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