

# Patient Spotlight – Connecting with Ljubica Stankovic

Since our inception in 1997, The Hirshberg Foundation has been dedicated to providing information, resources and financial aid to patients and families. It is always a pleasure for us to stay in touch with the families and patients that we have supported. We enjoy having them as part of our 'foundation family' and love to see them at our local events.

We were fortunate to have met Ljubica Stankovic this past February as she joined over 20 other patient/survivors at our 10th Annual Symposium held at UCLA. Her surgeon, Dr. Anand Annamalai was also in attendance. In March 2013, Ljubica was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, had a Whipple procedure in April, and by June was starting 6 months of treatment. Her postoperative regimen consisted of 6 rounds of chemotherapy (Gemzar and 5FU), 6 weeks of radiation as well as a biweekly pancreatic cancer vaccine which was part of a phase III clinical trial. She completed her last treatment on Christmas Eve 2013, but still continues to receive monthly vaccine "boosters".

Jelena Trifunovic, Ljubica's daughter, contacted me for our Patient and Family Support Program while her mom was in the hospital. I helped provide Jelena with local resources for when her mom was discharged. Jelena and I have shared emails from time to time through this journey and she has been so wonderful at keeping us updated on how her mom is doing and participating in Hirshberg sponsored events. Jelena says, "We are very grateful for each day. Within our family, my mom has earned the nickname 'Jaka Baka', which in Serbian means 'brave grandma.' We have gained an incredible, invaluable network of friends through the Hirshberg Foundation and Cancer Support Community."

Since completing her treatment, Ljubica has been focusing on her diet, trying out new healthy recipes and drinking plenty of tea. In addition to acknowledging the exceptional doctors that provide her with top-notch care, she adds, "Most importantly, Filip Trifunovic, my two-and-a-half year old grandson, is my natural healer!" Ljubica is looking forward to vacation, spending time with family and friends, and more grandkids! "It's not easy...but every morning my motto is 'Life is beautiful!'"

To find out more about the Patient and Family Services we offer, please contact me at (310) 473-5121.

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## **Event Spotlight – Purple Palooza at Mickie Finnz**

By Brittany Knott

In June of 2012 I lost my mother Linda Knott from pancreatic cancer. She was diagnosed only 3 months before that, it all happened so quickly and we didn't see it coming. My mom was the most loving, giving, humble person I've ever known and she has passed on those qualities to me. She was a great mother and I hope to do her justice in trying to make a difference.

I've always been motivated to help my community and make a difference, but losing my mom to this disease has motivated me to focus my philanthropic efforts with the Hirshberg Foundation. With the support of friends and family I've helped raise awareness for pancreatic cancer and we've raised thousands of dollars through Team Mudslide at the LA Cancer Challenge!

On Friday, April 11<sup>th</sup> we held Purple Palooza, a night of live music, great food, and a fun auction & raffle! I teamed up with Mickie Finnz Fish House in Redondo Beach to host since they've been so great helping us raise money before and they truly care about their community. I'm also a proud member of philanthropic organization Chive On South Bay who helped me rally support. It was a great collaboration since we share a passion for philanthropy and just being good people overall.

Seeing just how many people came out to the event, and seeing the outpouring support from the Hirshberg Foundation are a few of my favorite moments. Being able to play live music and share the stage with one of our favorite bands, Tres Hombres, all night was fun too!

The most important part of the experience was making sure that people understood what the Hirshberg Foundation was about and how important it is that we continue to fight to find a cure for this terrible disease. Hosting an event for the Hirshberg Foundation would have made my mother proud.

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## **You Can H.E.L.P. Fund Spotlight – My Sister's Caramel Crunch**

By Jeff Morse

For my Aunt Lisa, love was always a pantry staple in her kitchen- it was the magical addition that gave a certain flavor

and aroma to her recipes. She happily shared her delicious creations with others, but her caramel crunch was a recipe she carefully protected. Upon her passing our family wanted to honor her memory by dedicating funds from sales to shine a light on a cause that has personally impacted our lives. Lisa's dream of bringing her famous Caramel Crunch to the public was a positive, joyful way we could celebrate her life and continue her legacy.

The experience of partnering with the Hirshberg Foundation has been a blessing all around. It opened a door that's allowed us to connect on a more personal level with members of the community who support this cause as well. *To have a conversation with a complete stranger, have them open up about their stories, both personal and inspiring, has really been humbling. It gives you the reinsurance you need to keep fighting, keep moving forward, and never give up.* This experience interacting with pancreatic cancer survivors and people who have lost loved ones has had a positive impact on my life forever.

Our company remains committed to do everything we can to help share awareness. Contributing funds that will benefit pancreatic cancer research and provide support for patients & families has inspired me to not only become a better person, but it has giving me the knowledge I need to help bring awareness to the fight against this disease.

If Lisa were here she would say, My Sister's Caramel Crunch is a collective effort by many people whom are making sure we do our part in helping those in need. Cancer is a growing disease and has impacted many families. It must be stopped and the only way is for all to join together. She would be proud to represent such a great cause. This is a part of her legacy.

We will continue to speak positive and encouraging words to those who need it; remembering that life is not guaranteed so

cherish every moment. The Hirshberg Foundation is definitely an organization and cause that we're proud and thankful to be associated with!

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## **You Can H.E.L.P. Fund Spotlight – A Tribute to a HERO**

Curt Sandoval, an ABC 7 Eyewitness News anchor in the Los Angeles area, is an active supporter of the Hirshberg Foundation. He met Lori, the wife of a fire department captain who had just lost his battle with pancreatic cancer, and put her and her family in touch with us. As a tribute to John, Lori's family created a **You Can Help Fund** to spread awareness and to raise funds for pancreatic cancer research. The Hirshberg Foundation is honored to share John's story and look forward to involving Lori, the kids and the Santa Clarita firefighting community into our family at future events.

John was a hero in more than one way. He put his life on the line every day to help protect the city of Santa Clarita as well as Los Angeles County over the years as a firefighter, paramedic, engineer and as Captain at Fire Stations 111 and 73. He was a dad to two beautiful boys and the loving husband to Lori. September 2013 through December 2013, John was not only fighting fires, he was also fighting pancreatic cancer.

As a family they enjoyed traveling to many locations where John taught the boys a love for different experiences, cultures,

history and above all, to have compassion for their fellow man. Appreciating what the world has to offer and not living in a bubble were lessons regularly passed down. Whether good or bad experiences, there were many “Mazzocco Adventures.”

To read more about Captain John Mazzocco, please view his Fund Page at <https://pancreatic.org/fund/captainjohnmazzocco>

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## **Event Spotlight – Team Ravishing Rose Luncheon & Jewelry Trunk Show**

By Jennifer Grohs

My amazing mother, Rose Ratcliff, was 54 when she developed back pain and was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. We never gave up hope that she could beat it and we even talked about her going to my children’s weddings. Unfortunately, she passed away from this disease. She continues to inspire me every day in the way I choose to raise my kids and conduct myself. It was so painful to lose her and I never want anyone to have to go through something like that again. That is why I continue to do everything I can to fight pancreatic cancer. She can no longer fight but I can.

My wonderful friend Corina Madilian inspired me to host the luncheon and jewelry trunk show at my home. Hosting at my home gave me the chance to have a nice meal with my friends and do some good for a great cause. I loved doing this event with our Single Stone On Mission Street, a fine jewelry boutique. The team there is a wonderful group of girls who I consider friends

with fabulous taste! The designers for the jewelry line Jemma Wynne are very creative and make beautiful pieces of jewelry. Having the jewelry there just brought in a fun element to the day.

Some of my favorite moments from the event included seeing my friends adorned with beautiful jewelry and smiling. I felt so blessed and fortunate to have friends come together to support a cause that is so close to my heart. There were a lot of smiles. The most important part of the experience was listening to Agi and learning new information. I feel that I know a lot of information because I watched my mother suffer through pancreatic cancer, but those who have not had that experience do not have as much knowledge about pancreatic cancer. Power is knowledge and I was so happy to see my friends learning more about the disease.

We at Single Stone had such a great time hosting the jewelry trunk show to support Jennifer Grohs and a cause that has impacted her life. Our motivation for hosting these types of events stems from wanting to build relationships with the people in our community; the best way to do this, we have found, is to support organizations that are close to their hearts.

Jennifer has been a great friend to us for several years, and it meant so much for us to give back to her in some way. Most importantly, it was rewarding for us to honor Jennifer's mother, who lost her battle with pancreatic cancer.

One of the most poignant moments of the afternoon was when Agi spoke to the group about pancreatic cancer, sharing both her personal story and the research that her organization is behind. I think for many of the guests, this was the first time they had been to a fundraiser about pancreatic cancer research, which highlights what Agi meant when she said that this cause is

hugely underfunded. Knowing that The Hirshberg Foundation is pushing for cancer detection in new and innovative ways showed us all that this is a cause worth taking the time to volunteer for and to donate money to.

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# **Hirshberg Training Team Participant Spotlight – Running with a Purpose. Racing towards a Cure**

By Adam Pollack

On March 9, I was joined by thousands of fellow runners at the LA Marathon to do something big: run a marathon. We were all there with different goals in mind: to win, to complete the distance, and others to raise funds and awareness for a charity of choice. If we spoke a few years ago, I would have told you that I run marathons to beat my best time. This time was different.

This past November, my father was diagnosed with Stage 3 pancreatic cancer. Living across the country meant that there wasn't much I could do on a daily basis, and I desperately wanted to be able to do something. I felt scared and hopeless.

I turned to a personal passion, marathon running. I quickly signed up for the Hirshberg Training Team (HTT), they registered me for the LA Marathon, and I hopped into training. I knew at that point my goal was different. *"I wasn't going to try to be*



*the fastest or the strongest, but rather to increase awareness of pancreatic cancer and to fund research to find better treatment options and an eventual cure."* I felt proud every time I walked out the door for a training run wearing my purple HTT shirt. I felt a real sense of purpose.

Of course, training had its challenges. You have to make sacrifices: run when you don't feel like it, go to bed early because you're just exhausted from that long run, and go out in bad weather. My most memorable long training run took place during a terrible rain storm, which was not forecast to happen for another day. It started out as a drizzle and 5 miles into the run, it was pouring. The wind was blowing at my face, the rain was stinging my skin, and I was cold. I went back and forth on whether or not I would continue the run or just take the bus home and call it a day.

I thought about my goal: to raise awareness and funds for the Hirshberg Foundation. I knew personally that days are like this for cancer patients and their families. Some days are sunny and warm, while others are dark and gloomy. In either case, I knew that so many people still had to continue on with their lives, even on those difficult days and I could too. I didn't know how much further I could run, but all I needed to do was put one foot in front of the other.

The rain persisted; it even got worse. But my attitude had changed. Things were in the right perspective. The wind was pushing me back but I had a huge smile on my face. It could be worse. Not all days are easy when fighting this disease. However, the knowledge that I was out there to fund the research necessary to discover a cure, was enough. The dream that someday others won't have the same fight, makes those difficult days more bearable. It gives me hope, which is exactly what I needed.