

LACC Team Spotlight – Team Queen Linda

By Kristin Snowden

I have been a LACC team captain for Team Queen Linda for the past three years after my mom lost a four-month-battle with pancreatic cancer on March 22, 2009. My mother, Linda Corwin, was a loving, beautiful, talented, and vivacious 55-year-old who seemed to be the picture of health when she went to the doctor to investigate an annoying and painful side-ache. After a few months of misdiagnoses, a random ER ultrasound tech found a tumor on her pancreas and she was soon diagnosed with stage four pancreatic cancer. No real treatment options. Three to six months to live. Determined to see her son graduate college and her grandchildren grow up, Linda opted for destructive chemotherapy treatments for three months but succumbed to the disease. Her family and friends are still devastated by her absence in their lives.

I formed Team Queen Linda after her horrific experience with pancreatic cancer because I realized how desperately the statistics needed to improve for this particular cancer. Pancreatic cancer has the absolute WORST survival rate of all cancers and it is in DESPERATE NEED of more funding and research. It lacks any kind of early detection and is often only found when it is too far advanced to treat. Pancreatic cancer tumors also tend to be difficult to penetrate and are often unaltered by current forms of chemo-therapy. As a consequence, chances of surviving the disease are still at 3-5%—one of the only cancers with survival odds still in the single digits.

Immediately after my mom's death the only "productive" and therapeutic thing I could think of doing was to continue my

mom's fight by raising funds to improve the pathetic odds of pancreatic cancer. I clung to this once-a-year fundraiser event like a lifeline. Through emailing my friends and family and posting my team website link regularly on my Facebook site, Team Queen Linda has proudly been in the top ten teams for fundraising and team size every year since its inception. I, along with many other family members and teammates, have grown to love those working for the Hirshberg Foundation. We are deeply appreciative of their efforts to end this frightening disease. I whole-heartedly believe in what this Foundation does, how they spend their money, and their ability to make a difference with the private donations they are given.

One of my ultimate goals with the LACC is to eventually have as many teams present that are created for survivors as there are teams created in one's memory. Right now the numbers are skewed too much on the "in memoriam" side. I want to see hundreds of survivors at that event proudly declaring that they've beat this horrible disease. Team Queen Linda is dedicated and passionate about turning the odds around.

LACC Team Spotlight – Allen's Army

By Kevin Powell

My stepdad was diagnosed with Stage IV pancreatic cancer in June 2010. There were no clear symptoms other than the fact that he was not feeling well and was experiencing weight loss. The doctors had initially thought it was pancreatitis, but after

living with these random symptoms for four to five months, he finally received his diagnosis—pancreatic cancer. And now he is fighting the fight of his life.

I grew up in California, but my parents divorced when I was in the 3rd grade. Fifteen years ago, my mom moved to Florida, where she eventually met my step-dad. They have been together ever since. I have so much joy knowing that my mom is so happy. I can also say that my step-dad and I have developed a father-son relationship over the past eleven years. He enjoys sharing stories with us about being a retired Master Sergeant where he served as a Paratrooper in the army. Now I find it funny that he has a fear of flying to LA to visit me! It is difficult knowing my step-dad is enduring his treatment in another state, but we make it a special occasion to talk on a regular basis.

Through my step-dad's diagnosis, our family has grown to understand that every moment and holiday we celebrate and share together is so special! My wedding date was in September 2010, only a few months after my step-dad's diagnosis. I remember how much it meant to my step-dad that he was able to be at my wedding. Even though he wasn't able to stand as my best man – he had started his exhaustive chemotherapy and radiation treatment at the Mayo Clinic in Florida, which caused him to lose 70-80 pounds – he was still present and that meant so much to all of us. My family was also able to come together to have a big party in a hall to celebrate my step-dad and mom's 60th birthdays...those are the times that create memories and remind me that life is so precious.

My step-dad is a great man—a man who inspires me.

I was introduced to the Hirshberg Foundation through JR286 and Agron, clients of my employer, Union Bank. Thanks to Jon Hirshberg, the son of Ron Hirshberg, I ran my first LA Cancer

Challenge (LACC) in 2004 with Union Bank, who was one of the event sponsors. I am proud to say that I have continued the commitment that Union Bank established with the LACC in 2004. Little did I know then that six years later I would be running the LA Cancer Challenge while truly understanding what it meant to raise money for a loved one touched by pancreatic cancer. In 2011 I decided to put a team together in honor of my step-dad. We named our team Allen's Army. Not only was my step-dad a fighter in the army, but he is currently in the toughest battle of his life against this disease. In only three weeks, I put a team together in Los Angeles and my mom and step-dad put a team together in Florida. Those two groups, made up of more than 40 supporters, were set to walk at the same time on the east coast and the west coast. We even had family friends set their clock on their cruise to Spain – they hopped on a treadmill at 9am LA time and ran a 5K. We were running together across the world for one cause – to honor a great man, Allen. This year Allen's Army raised close to \$4000.00 and I placed third in my age division!!!! The event really touches all those that participate, both near and far. It is an event that has heart! One aspect of the event that is so special is the fact that the shot-gun starters for each run share their own personal stories. What struck me most was the way that every person there has a commonality. Whether it was a poster, balloon, or a t-shirt, we were striving to achieve the same active goal in the battle against pancreatic cancer. As I said earlier, it is hard to have my step-dad fighting his battle across the country. I appreciate that the LA Cancer Challenge offers me the opportunity to participate as an active step in raising money and awareness so that research can be done for an early detection method and for the cure.

I will say it again: my step-dad inspires me. His will to press on while living with pancreatic cancer is amazing. I am proud to

call him my step-dad!

Event Spotlight – Kevin Miya Golf Classic

By Gary Silvanic

Since its inception in 2008, the Kevin Miya Golf Classic has raised over \$15,000 for the Hirshberg Foundation! I am honored, as Kevin's cousin and friend, to organize this event in his memory.

Kevin Miya was a Professional Civil Engineer for the City of Pittsburg who passed away on February 25, 2008 at the age of 37. Kevin, who began working for the City of Pittsburg in the spring of 2003, joined with others in transforming several areas of the city, including Old Town and the Marina. In doing so, he created a legacy of work that will benefit residents and visitors of Pittsburg for years to come. According to Kevin's colleagues, his work ethic, combined with his attentiveness and a positive "can do" attitude, contributed to the success of his projects and earned him much respect and admiration.

Kevin's approach to his personal life exhibited the same sense of care with which he approached his work, allowing him to balance his personal and working lives in a way that kept him involved with friends and family. What perhaps defines Kevin most is that he conducted himself in a way that let others know he was someone they could turn to when they needed to be supported, without being judged. Gina Haynes, a fellow co-worker of Kevin's, also shared that Kevin was quick to listen to public

issues and concerns, and that members of the community would show up to community council meetings just to thank him for his efforts on their behalf.

Kevin's family and friends keep his memory alive by having a golf tournament in his name each year. "The event is amazing to participate in and is a pleasure to host each year," says a co-worker of Kevin's. "It has been an honor for us to help spread awareness in Pittsburg."

For more information about the Kevin Miya Golf Classic, please contact: silvanic@pacbell.net

You Can H.E.L.P. Fund Spotlight – Whip the Whipple: Alcatraz Invitational Swim 2011

By Mark Allen Church

My Dad is "whipping the whipple". Yes, it is true.

An avid swimmer and rower in the San Francisco Bay area for most of his life, Dad was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in early September, 2009. He had a pretty regular schedule of doctor appointments related to heart trouble and those frequent visits

meant his overall health was monitored quite closely. His early diagnosis would prove to be key. They suggested the Whipple surgery and early on my Dad decided he was going to “whip the whipple”. He is a fighter and has plenty to live for. A little more than two weeks after being diagnosed he had the surgery.

When my Dad was in his late 40s, he started swimming and rowing in the San Francisco Bay area. He is a long time member of the South End Rowing Club at Aquatic Park and they sponsor an Alcatraz swim every year. As a young boy I was amazed and impressed watching him finish that Alcatraz swim, having grown up with the understanding that it wasn't possible to swim from Alcatraz to the shore. Sharks, cold water, tides, all that! He was not fast, but he did finish. And he did NOT wear a wetsuit.

After I learned my Dad had pancreatic cancer I started looking into the disease. I was horrified to learn how rare it is for someone to live years past a diagnosis. I found the Hirshberg Foundation quite by chance. I was just looking for a 10k to keep in general shape and came across the LA Cancer Challenge. When I learned it was an event focused on raising money for Pancreatic Cancer Research I had a “lightbulb” moment. Wow, I could run AND raise money for this important cause which suddenly was quite important to me personally.

I was very impressed with the Hirshberg Foundation. Any time I had a question, someone would contact me directly. This is a very accessible and warm organization. The event was amazing, inspiring and very well organized. When I posted a picture of my run on Facebook, Agi herself contacted me with words of encouragement and I knew then that I had found a cause that I could take pride in and raise money for.

A lifetime goal! I signed up for the Alcatraz Invitational Swim

taking place on September 17th, 2011. I soon realized it was a perfect opportunity to raise money for the Hirshberg Foundation.

When I talked to my Dad about the swim, his first question was, "Are you using a wetsuit"? I had to break the news to him that I was indeed going to be suited up, knowing that some light-hearted teasing would follow (and you can be sure it has!), but he was excited that I was planning on doing the swim. In fact, he plans on being in a pilot boat, helping support me during the actual swim!

Yes, my Dad is "whipping the whipple" and just received another all-clear report. He is still cancer-free more than one year after his surgery and is starting to put on some weight. I am so thankful to have more time with this man, my father, who has meant so much to me through the years. I am so thankful to be able to take on this swim and raise money for pancreatic cancer research at the same time. I am so thankful that he will be around to watch me take on this challenge and that his continued success can be an inspiration to others fighting this horrible disease. It can be beat! With your help and the help of the Hirshberg Foundation, I am not just hoping...I am helping.

Never give up...You can Hope, or you can Help...Help Us Whip The Whipple!!!

Event Spotlight – John V.

Taylor Poker Ride

By Linda Taylor

Born on March 31, 1959 in San Jose California, John Taylor was a lover of life. His charismatic soul made him a person to love. He wore cowboy boots, always, even in the hot Arizona summers. He was a Chef, loved to eat and would soak for hours in the pool. He created his own man cave – for himself, his Harley and his friends “to hang out in.” Alone or with friends, he said riding his Harley was the best – having the wind on his face, the time for his thoughts and the freedom it gave. I met John in 1994 and we married on July 4, 1997 in Tombstone AZ. It was, as I always told John, the happiest day of my life.

John was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer on April 17, 2008. There were no warning signs. You wake up one morning and you find a lump or your eyes are yellow and you don't know what is going on. When John first went to the doctor they thought he had hepatitis. They ran some more tests and did a CT scan, and found pancreatic cancer. I'll never forget that day. We were sitting on the couch and John took the call from our doctor. He knew when he took the call that it was not a good thing. That is strength.

That is how John continued to deal with the next 29 months—with strength, hope, perseverance and always a positive outlook. He ruled his disease up until the afternoon it won. He always kept his quality of life. John was an inspiration to anyone who was with him through his fight. Pancreatic cancer took John's life on September 19, 2010, but not before going out the night before and enjoying a wonderful Italian dinner with our dear friends.

In John's memory, I organized a Poker Ride to raise awareness and money for pancreatic cancer research. We had a beautiful day

in Arizona! More than sixty people participated – all so patient and willing to help. It was so special to see people that loved John come together and smile again—not because of the loss, but because of who he was. He always made people laugh, and at our event, even though it was hard not to have John physically with us, everyone was smiling and having a great time.

We had several people participate who didn't even know John. One that touched my heart the most was an older couple. She was diagnosed 13 months previously with pancreatic cancer. The day before our event he told me she wasn't having a good day, but she knew there was an event to support research that she didn't want to miss. She told her husband they were going to participate and even though I could tell she wasn't well, she showed up wearing all purple and had a smile on her face. You could see it was something she needed to do. I gave her a hug and a "Pancreatic Cancer Sucks Button." After they left to get on their bike I had to take a break. That was strength!

We had a few other riders show up that we didn't know, but they just wanted to ride because pancreatic cancer had touched their lives one way or another. They thanked us and told me an event like this was a first. The John V. Taylor Ride raised \$3600.25 (I believe the \$0.25 was from my grandson) for the Hirshberg Foundation.

I wanted to end this story with a note we received after our event and the lesson I learned from putting this together:

"To All: Yesterday when I woke I did not know John, but after attending your benefit and talking with some of John's friends, I wish I had. Your benefit has opened my eyes to the cause and it will be in my heart from this day forward. I want to thank you all for allowing me to be present and hope to be more involved with each passing year. Again, my thanks!!!!!"

What I learned overall was this: We started a message. Besides raising money, we opened people's eyes to pancreatic cancer and the need to put it in the spotlight. I have a small understanding of what the Hirshberg Foundation started and feel blessed that our event can be a part of the fight.

John, you are the love of my life, my forever soul mate. I miss you every second of every minute, of every hour of every day. Thank you for giving me the best time of my life.

Event Spotlight – The Richard Grana Gold Tournament

By Roseanne Grana

My husband Richard died of pancreatic cancer on September 22, 2009. We remember Richard best when he was playing golf...he LOVED golfing every chance he had. In his memory, we decided that a golf tournament was the best way we can remember him. Originally, the tournament was going to be an opportunity for friends and family to get together to remember Richard while contributing to a good cause. But it has become much more than that—it has become an annual fundraiser for pancreatic cancer research. It is also a setting where we are able to educate and spread awareness regarding the relentlessness of the disease and how ill prepared we are to treat it. Our event benefits the Hirshberg Foundation because they are focused on funding research specifically for pancreatic cancer. I want our participants to know that their donations will make a significant difference in our society's battle against this

disease.

The golf tournament is held at the Shadow Pines Golf Club in Rochester, NY since that was one of Richard's favorite courses. Last year we held a raffle and a silent auction as the guests enjoyed lunch and dinner. We were fortunate to also have children volunteer to sell raffle tickets and help out wherever possible. The event brought in very generous donations throughout the entire day.

My son David, my mom and I have planned the past two golf tournaments. I am the VP of marketing and finance, my mom helps secure donations and increase community support, and David organizes and directs the event. Putting this event together has been a meaningful experience for us and that is why it has become an annual event. It takes an ever-increasing amount of work to make the event grow year after year, but we continue to gain more and more volunteers and participants each year as well. The 3rd Annual Richard Grana Golf Tournament will be held on July 21, 2012. This year we have received our local senator's support, so we're hoping to draw in an even greater amount of participation.