

Celebrating a 13-Year Pancreatic Cancer Survivor for Father's Day

Steven, a husband, father and medical professor, shares his story as a patient and a long-term pancreatic cancer survivor. At the time of diagnosis, his son and daughter were in their mid- to late 20s and both were deeply affected. As a special Father's Day tribute they've shared their unique perspectives.

By Steven Lewis

I am a 13+ year survivor of pancreatic adenocarcinoma, Whipple surgery and liver surgery for metastasis. I was first diagnosed with pancreatic adenocarcinoma in mid-August 2007 after turning yellow from jaundice. A week later I underwent Whipple surgery at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston, where I had virtually all major treatments. The pathology report revealed that more than 99 percent of the tumor was removed from the head of my pancreas but that a few pancreatic cancer cells remained at the surgical margin.

In early October, I underwent CyberKnife radiation which killed the remaining cells and in early November 2007 I began 6 weeks of conventional abdominal radiation. In January 2008, I began 12 weeks of chemotherapy with gemcitabine. The cancer never returned to my pancreas and there was no evidence of disease until April 2010 when a liver metastasis of the PC was noted on a routine surveillance scan and confirmed by liver biopsy. I was then told to expect only palliative care which was unacceptable to me. I told my doctors I wanted treatment that was bold, aggressive, decisive and rapid.

I proposed a treatment in the form of a PET scan to see if there was pancreatic cancer metastasis beyond my liver and, if not, liver surgery to remove the tumor. My doctors first resisted this proposal but later agreed to bring my case to the hospital tumor board. The board evaluated my case – which included a negative PET scan – and finally agreed to the liver surgery.

There are many additional details but, remarkably, I've been cancer free since the liver surgery and have regained excellent robust health. Today, at 72 years old, I enjoy all life has to offer, including no dietary restrictions or regular medications, regular strenuous aerobic and resistance exercise, and a vigorous full-time career as a medical school professor. This year, my wife and I celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary.

Steven's daughter shares...

After my father became ill, I would call my parents and they both had such strength in their voices as if nothing was wrong. The option of "if he doesn't make it" did not exist. Rather, "when he beats this cancer" prefaced all of their sentences. "When he beats this cancer, your father is going back to work". "When he beats this cancer, your father will one day walk you down the aisle at your wedding". The more I listened to my parents, the more I began believing that there was only one option – he would beat the cancer. Now my father is healthy. I am relieved but in my mind that was the only possible outcome. My father is a survivor. And for that matter, my mother brother and I also are survivors. We are survivors for never once believing that the cancer would beat my father and that the only option was my father would beat the cancer.

Steven's son shares...

As the initial months passed, I felt vulnerable and scared. Dad

always protected me from things I did not fully understand. Now he needed my help. I felt scared because he never needed this kind of love before to face a problem. I would have to be his rock and my mom's too. My dad's illness taught me some very important emotional lessons. He helped me learn to never doubt myself in what I can achieve. I think he taught everyone that by surviving with such grace. My dad is a very special person to me and I know he will overcome whatever obstacles are in his path.

A Second Chance at Life after a Whipple

Pancreatic cancer survivor of nearly 4 years, Jennifer Keller, shares her journey of an unimaginable new reality and how she's found happiness and gratitude in living a longer life post-Whipple.

Finding Your Voice to Inspire, Motivate and Never Give Up

My name is James, I live in Los Angeles and my affiliation with the Hirshberg Foundation goes back 10 years now. In 2010, my son Christopher and a few friends participated in our first LA Cancer Challenge 5k Run.

How to Host a Virtual Fundraising Event

Give friends and family a fun night in, alleviate that cooped up feeling and serve a greater purpose – raising awareness for pancreatic cancer. All of these goals can be accomplished by hosting a virtual fundraising event online and we guarantee it will be an exciting and fulfilling experience. The big difference between an in-person event and a virtual event is moving everything to a video conferencing platform and selecting an activity everyone can participate in – we've plenty of ideas and resources for you!

5 Steps to Get Started

1. Choose a Virtual Event Idea
2. Ask a Friend to Help Plan & Co-host
3. Create a Fundraising Page
4. Choose a Video Conferencing Platform
5. Follow our Virtual Event Checklist

Step 1: Choose a Virtual Event Idea You'll Enjoy

Make your virtual event interesting and memorable with a few fresh ideas. Here are some suggestions to get your imagination going! Give your event some purple pizzazz when you [order a Purple Spirit Box](#) and send them to attendees to share amongst their households.

- Scavenger hunt at home
 - Game night (virtual card & board games)
 - Wine & Cheese Tasting
 - Pajama Brunch
 - Holiday Trivia Party
 - Simultaneous crafting projects
 - Teach a yoga class
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- Amateur Music concert
 - Amateur a cupcake wars baking class
 - Netflix Watch Party
 - Costume party
 - Pre-Thanksgiving Family Reunion
 - Do crafts or a DIY project
 - Video Game Competition

Example: A Virtual Scavenger Hunt is a game anyone can participate in right from home. Each household team can scour their home and the web for funny items or mysterious clues. Split your event attendees into teams and turn the hunt into a race, or you can award points based on the originality and absurdity of the answers. Prompts or theme ideas: Family photo gone wrong, terrible present, elaborate decoration, getting a stocking full of coal, pet dressed up in Christmas clothes, Drunken Santa and more!

Step 2: Ask a Friend to Help Plan & Co-Host

This is an optional step, but really, everything is more fun when you do it with friends. Brainstorm ideas, divide up tasks and spread the word together. And if you want to go it alone, that's fine too!

Step 3: Create a Fundraising Page

A fun event idea combined with a cause you care about will inspire people to not only attend your virtual event but also make a donation. Your online gathering will serve a greater purpose – raising awareness and funds for pancreatic cancer research and patients services. So, don't hold back, present a strong call to action to drive donations and attendance.

Fundraising is key but it can be kept simple. Two easy ways to collect donations are:

Event Fundraising Page

When you set up a fundraising page you'll have a link to direct donors and event attendees to give. Follow up each donor by sending them a link to access your event!

[Create an Event Fundraising Page »](#)

Facebook Fundraiser

When you start a Facebook Fundraiser, you can direct people to your Facebook Fundraising Page to give. Follow up each donor by sending them a link to access your event!

[Create Facebook Fundraiser »](#)

Step 4: Select a Video Conferencing Platform

Video conferencing tools have become a popular way for people to communicate with family, friends, and the organizations they

care about. Around the world, people are getting creative in how they are using livestreaming thanks to inexpensive technology. New to hosting online events? Check out this collection of resources.

- **Zoom** – Allows free video meetings for three or more people for up to 40 minutes with their free plan. The next tier lets you set up video calls for up to 100 participants long.
- **Skype** – Up to 10 people can join a Skype group video call. Skype is free to download and works on phones, tablets and computers with webcams.
- **Google Hangouts** – If you have Gmail, that means you already have a Google account you can use to set up Hangouts for free. Up to 25 people can join a video Hangout and up to 150 people can join a voice-only Hangout.
- **Houseparty App** – This app was made for up to eight participants can participate on a FaceTime-like call. It also features third-party games that can be played simultaneously throughout the call.
- **FaceTime** – You can set it up as a Group FaceTime with up to 32 people (requires newer devices and updated iOS).

Step 5: Follow our Virtual Event Planning Tips

This [virtual event checklist](#) will help guide you as you dig into the details of your virtual fundraising event. From start-to-finish, we're helping you set up your fundraising page, select an event idea, plan an event agenda, thank your attendees and more!

*Resources and articles

LA Times: [How to have Zoom parties that are actually fun](#)

LA Times: [Ultimate guide to hanging out with your friends online](#)

Style Caster: [How to Throw an Epic Zoom Party Your Friends Will Never Forget](#)

Team Building Blog: [32 Fun Virtual Holiday Party Ideas in 2020](#)

Your Virtual Fundraising Event Checklist

We've officially entered the age of the social video call for remote work, social events and family/friend gatherings. This virtual event checklist will help guide you as you dig into the details of your virtual fundraising event. From start-to-finish, we're helping you set up your fundraising page, select an event idea, plan an event agenda, thank your attendees and more! If hosting a virtual event online is new to you, make sure you read our 'How to Host a Virtual Event' instruction sheet first. We share 5 steps to get started, video platforms, resources available and more.

Select a Virtual Event Idea!

Before selecting an activity, check out the section below about partnering with a small business for an easy additional way to fundraise. Select an activity that you'll enjoy planning and isn't too complicated. Here are a few ideas to consider:

- Scavenger hunt at home
 - Game night (virtual card & board games)
 - Wine & Cheese tasting
 - Holiday Trivia Party
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- Amateur cupcake wars baking class
 - Pre-Thanksgiving Family Reunion
 - Do crafts or a DIY project
 - Video Game Competition

□ **Ask a Friend or Family Member to Co-host**

Co-hosts can support each other through the planning process, learn how to set up the video call together and guide attendees through the online event.

□ **Create a Fundraising Page & Set a Goal**

A fun event idea combined with a cause you care about will inspire people to not only attend your virtual event but also donate! Don't hold back, present a strong call to action to drive donations and attendance. Fundraising is key but it can be kept simple. We suggest two easy ways to collection donations:

- Create an [Event Fundraising Page](#) to collection funds and follow up with each donation with a link to access your event.
- Create a Hirshberg Foundation [Facebook Fundraiser](#) to collect funds and follow up each donation with a link to access your event.

Collect Donations or a Suggested Donation Entry Fee

It's a fundraising event! In addition to collecting donations, if you partner with a business there may be a fee to purchase a product or service. If not, ask for a 'suggested donation admission fee' for an appropriate amount. Attendees donate to your fundraising page to cover the fee.

Create your guestlist

Virtual fundraising events can range from small to large-scale depending on the activity. Set a limit of attendees based on what you're comfortable with and the activity you choose.

Plan an Agenda

Set an agenda so people know what to expect and how long you'll dedicate to each part. For example: "We'll chat from 6 to 6:30ish, then at 6:35 we'll share the instructions for the activity, we begin the activity and at 8pm we wrap up by thanking everyone for participating and donating.

Provide a Virtual Background

Zoom video conferencing allows you to upload your own photos, so you can really go wild with this one or allow everyone to spice up their own lives by adding backgrounds to their screens.

Purple Décor

For pancreatic cancer awareness, add some purple accessories and decorations. The Hirshberg Foundation provides a [Purple Spirit](#)

[Box](#) in our e-store that you can suggest or send to attendee households!

Keep it short

One-hour-to-90-minute range tends to be the sweet spot for most online gatherings. Give them too much and their brains will shut off, give them too little and they will get bored. Give attendees a chance to get up, walk around, and grab drink.

Keep it interactive but monitor noise

Even if your audience is not outspoken enough to ask questions, they typically will be willing to participate. Make sure you can mute everyone when the host needs to speak or if someone has to step away and there's background noise.

Play games

Tap into your attendees competitive side. Puzzles or riddles, crosswords, memory games, ordering tasks are all great ways to keep your attendees engaged and on-task. For added drama, impose a time limit. Try introducing a quick quiz and offer a small prize for the winner.

Offer reward or prizes

Attendees will be more motivated to participate You should also consider extra incentives such as a competition or small prizes. [Ask the Hirshberg Foundation](#) if we can provide a few fun items to offer!

□ **Thank your donors and attendees!**

As you finish your event, remember to thank your attendees for participating and giving. Let them know how they're making a difference and send a thank you email or note to people who donated but didn't attend.

Partner with a Local or Online Small Business

Before you decide on an event idea, consider whether a local small business would be interested in partnering with you. Do a little local research and you may find a business that provides a service or product to be the theme of your event. Many businesses are taking their in-person services and transitioning them to online while mailing products. Ask if they'll donate 20% of their sales towards your fundraising. Examples include: a yoga studio teaching a virtual class if you sell the tickets, they'll donate a portion of the proceeds; a wine bar that provides a cocktails/mocktails recipes or wine & cheese package and then offers an online tasting class; or a local baker willing to teach a pie making class online, provides a list of ingredients and offers a discounted pie for attendees for Thanksgiving. Get creative and simply ask. Small businesses are looking for exposure and community support and they recognize the value of supporting something their customers believe in and partnering with a charity!

Hirshberg Training Team – Let's do it again!

Sarah Ballog-Smith, a loving daughter, mother and wife honors the memory of her dad Al year-round by raising money for research and participating in Hirshberg events. Her dad has been her inspiration to run the LA Marathon with the Hirshberg Training Team (HTT) for five consecutive years 2019-2023, to fundraise on Facebook and form a teams for the LACC and Tour de Pier. Since 2019, she has raised over \$25,500.00 as part of HTT and has raised thousands more with the support of family and friends.

Below is the story she shared prior to her second marathon in 2020. Sarah remains an active HTT alumna to this day.

By: Sarah Ballog-Smith

I am so excited to announce that I will once again be running the Los Angeles Marathon as a member of the Hirshberg Training Team in 2020! As many of you know from my Facebook posts, I LOVE the Hirshberg Foundation for Pancreatic Cancer Research and everything they do in the fight against pancreatic cancer.

I joined the HTT last year, and it has truly changed my life. Prior to joining the team, the most I'd ever run was a 5k (really!). Since October of 2018, I've completed 5 half marathons, 1 full marathon, logged over 700 training miles, and am gearing up to complete another 26.2 miles on March 8, 2020... but I need all the support I can get to help me cross that finish line.

In addition to completing the iconic Stadium to the Sea run, I have given myself another huge challenge... to BEAT my fundraising

total from last year... which was EPIC thanks to all my generous friends and family out there. I am determined to raise at least \$5,500 this season, but I can't do it without your help.

As many of you know, my amazing father Al was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer back in 2014. He was treated at the Hirshberg Center at UCLA and fought the fight every step of the way. Due to the grim nature of pancreatic cancer, he passed away in May of 2016. I miss him so much and not a day goes by that I not reminded of him in some way – his warm smile, his huge hugs, his great laugh, his love of sports, and so many more things. Running has helped connect me to him and remind me what an amazing runner and athlete he was, having completed numerous marathons himself back in the day. I know he would be so proud of what I have accomplished thus far and the new goals I have set for myself. I feel him there with me on every training run cheering me, saying just keep moving, one foot in front of the other.

Although my dad is my main motivation, I am doing this for more than just him. Since his passing, I have lost 2 of my fellow Los Angeles County District Attorney colleagues, as well as the brother of a colleague, to pancreatic cancer. And one of my dear friends from high school has also been affected, as her wonderful mother was also diagnosed and is fighting the fight. I am running this marathon for them and for their family members who have dealt with/are dealing with this horrible disease. Please help me show them the love!

Thank you SO MUCH for your help – every dollar makes a difference!