

The 2020 LA Cancer Challenge Honorary Medical Chair is Dr. Hines of UCLA

While the 23rd Annual LACC Walk/Run will be virtual, supporting our medical and research community is more important than ever. The Hirshberg Foundation is thrilled to announce our [2020 LA Cancer Challenge Honorary Medical Chair](#) is Dr. O. Joe Hines! Dr. Hines is nationally renowned in the field of pancreatic surgery. He is the esteemed [Chief of General Surgery at UCLA's](#) David Geffen School of Medicine and Director of the General Surgery residency Program. Dr. Hines is on the team of the UCLA Agi Hirshberg Center for Pancreatic Diseases and a member of the Hirshberg Foundation's Scientific Advisory Board.

Dr. Hines is more than a doctor to his patients and countless families touched by pancreatic cancer. He is a part of our Foundation family, committed to our mission and dedicated to this community. He continues to be a guest speaker at our Annual Symposium on Pancreatic Cancer, speaking on topics from [personalized medicine and tumor testing](#) to [advances in pancreatic surgery](#) and a [team approach for pancreatic cancer](#). He attends Agi Hirshberg's intimate backyard BBQ event for patients and caregivers, spending time with people one-on-one to answer questions and listen to their stories. He has also attended the LACC as a member of the UCLA Surgery and Health Sciences Team, setting an example of how important it is to answer a call-to-action as both a doctor and a member of the LACC family.

We thank Dr. Hines for filling this important role as LACC Honorary Medical Chair and thank him for participating in our Virtual LACC Walk/Run on Sunday, October 25, 2020!

More about Dr. O. Joe Hines

Dr. Hines is the Chief of the Division of General Surgery at UCLA where he has served as a professor of surgery since 1997. Dr. Hines is a nationally renowned scholar in the areas of pancreatic surgery, complex abdominal surgery, and advanced laparoscopic surgery. As the Director of the General Surgery residency program at UCLA, Dr. Hines has overseen the training of a generation of young surgeons. A true master surgeon who has also authored over 200 scientific manuscripts and book chapters and whose research has been consistently funded by NIH.

22nd LA Cancer Challenge Honorary Medical Chair to be Dr. Timothy Donahue of UCLA

We are excited to announce that Dr. Timothy Donahue will serve as the Honorary Medical Chair for the 22nd Annual LA Cancer Challenge. Dr. Donahue has been a valued member of the surgical team at the [UCLA Agi Hirshberg Center for Pancreatic Diseases](#) and a beloved speaker at our annual [Symposium](#).

Both a researcher and a surgeon, Dr. Donahue will be recognized for his focus on [personalized medicine](#) and his collaborative efforts to provide the best treatment option for pancreatic cancer patients. Dr. Donahue's advocacy for treating patients with chemo or radiation therapy prior to surgery, has led to some of the best survival rates. In addition, Dr. Donahue is dedicated to training the next generation of surgeons.

Beyond his accolades, Dr. Donahue embodies the Hirshberg Foundation spirit with his emphasis on the genuine care of patients. His optimism that pancreatic cancer survival rates will markedly improve during his career makes him the ideal candidate for our LACC Honorary Medical Chair.

Join Dr. Donahue & the pancreatic cancer community as we walk for research and race towards a cure at the [LA Cancer Challenge](#) on October 20th 2019 at UCLA!

More about Dr. Donahue:

Dr. Donahue was appointed to the UCLA faculty in 2009 and has made great strides in pancreatic cancer ever since. He is a Professor of Surgery at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, the Chief of the Division of Surgical Oncology and has a joint appointment in the Department of Molecular and Medical Pharmacology to facilitate his research program. His scientific research also focuses on developing improved treatment strategies and earlier diagnostic markers for patients with pancreatic cancer. Dr. Donahue is a valuable part of the surgical team at the UCLA Agi Hirshberg Center for Pancreatic Diseases, performing up to three pancreatic surgeries per week. In this role, he oversees all of cancer surgery including the pancreatic cancer program, which is one of the largest in the nation.

Dr. Jonathan King & Dr. Mark

Girgis to serve as Honorary Medical Chairs for the 21st LA Cancer Challenge at UCLA

The LA Cancer Challenge (LACC) is pleased to announce that Drs. King & Girgis have been named as the Honorary Medical Chairs for this year's event. Chosen for their groundbreaking advancement of robotic-assisted, minimally invasive surgery, Dr. Mark Girgis and Dr. Jonathan King will participate in the LACC on Sunday, October 21 in Wilson Plaza at UCLA. Both surgeons are part of the [Agi Hirshberg Center for Pancreatic Diseases at UCLA](#), the only integrated practice units of its kind where patients can get extensive evaluation and a personalized treatment plan in just one visit.

[The LACC](#), held on the UCLA campus, is the Hirshberg Foundation for Pancreatic Cancer Research's signature fundraising event. Now in its 21st year, the funds raised through the LACC directly benefit groundbreaking research via the [Seed Grant Program](#).

"We are excited to have Dr. King and Dr. Girgis not only joining us on October 21st but helping convey our message of hope to the thousands of runners and walkers. Both doctors are past [Seed Grant Awardees](#) and know how important our program is for advancing the research landscape. Each Seed Grant awarded is a stepping stone to saving lives," said Agi Hirshberg, Founder and President of the Hirshberg Foundation. "Their participation shows our supporters that significant progress is being made, but will also help emphasize that more work is still needed."

This year the Hirshberg Foundation received 51 Seed Grant proposals from across the country. These projects range in focus from treatment to targeted therapies, immunotherapy to

metabolic regulation to the medical benefits of cannabidiol. The fundraising done by the LA Cancer Challenge community is key to funding as many of these projects as possible.

In Dr. Mark Girgis's words, "The importance of the Hirshberg Foundation cannot be overstated. These dedicated philanthropists have tipped the balance towards finding a definitive cure."

Pancreatic cancer is one of the most lethal cancers, on track to be the [2nd leading cause](#) of cancer-related death in the US by the year 2020. One of the difficulties in diagnosing the disease is the vague symptoms it presents, meaning that many cases are diagnosed once they have metastasized and surgery is no longer an option. The work that Drs. Girgis & King are doing with [robotic-assisted minimally invasive](#) surgery are helping to improve pancreatic cancer outcomes.

"With so much optimism on the horizon, I count myself lucky to be a part of the Hirshberg Foundation, leaders in the field of pancreatic cancer," said [Dr. Mark Girgis](#), co-captain of the [UCLA Surgical Bruins](#) team.

His co-captain, [Dr. Jonathan King](#) says, "The Hirshberg Foundation is a beacon of strength, hope – and most importantly – progress in the quest to cure pancreatic cancer. As a pancreatic cancer researcher and surgeon I am honored to be participating in the LA Cancer Challenge!"

We're Fighters!

By Leslie N.

This year our family learned the devastating news that my father had pancreatic cancer. Having watched a very close friend pass one year earlier from this horrific disease, I was in disbelief. The thought of having to go through the experience of watching my father suffer at this time in his life was more than I could handle. But we're fighters, and we circled our wagons and prepared ourselves for what we knew lie ahead.

My father is a retired doctor and very strong man but he was up against an opponent that was bigger and tougher than him. As I watched both he and my stepmom struggle I reached out to the Hirshberg Foundation for guidance on how I could help them help themselves. That one phone call literally changed my life and the path of our experience through this struggle.

First I learned that there were resources offering support to both the patient as well as family members in need. Second I learned how I could get involved in an organization that one day will help save the lives of my family members and friends. And third, but most important, I learned that there was a small group of people who had walked the walk, just a phone call away, available to comfort me at a moments' notice. I immediately became part of a family who understood and sincerely cared.

While my father was going through chemotherapy and preparing for surgery my sister and I volunteered on the L.A. Cancer Challenge planning committee. And when my father had his surgery Agi, Amy and the Hirshberg Foundation team were by our side, offering support. Two weeks post-op our team Carabet's Crew walked proudly in honor of our father who was recovering from the Whipple Procedure performed by the best of the best, Dr. Hines.

The LACC may not be the biggest 5k/10k around but in all my years of participating in similar events I have never felt the

love, support and determination I experienced that morning. To be surrounded by so many people who care, understand and are working toward a common goal of curing pancreatic cancer gave us hope that one day we'll be able to prevent other families from having to watch their loved ones suffer.

LACC Volunteer Spotlight – A Thrilling Adventure for Volunteers!

By Sarah Banks

In the months leading up to this year's LA Cancer Challenge a group of amazing volunteers began making plans behind the scenes! The committee included nearly a dozen volunteers who had been introduced to the Hirshberg Foundation while participating in one of our past events. What began as brainstorming sessions quickly became a concise plan of how each person wanted to contribute to entertainment, raffle, sponsorship and community outreach. Everyone had a part to play and the contribution was astounding.

Thinking outside the box was exciting and challenging as the group explored new ideas to help make this year's experience unique. Whether they attended every meeting or made calls and sent emails from home, everyone participated and brought their A-game! The end result was fun entertainment on the course, a raffle with higher ticket sales, new sponsorship, and outreach to more schools and community and business organizations.

For good friends Rosheen Erangey & Gina DeRosa the loss of Gina's mom, Gayle Reed motivated them to join the raffle committee. Rosheen said, "Because we worked on the raffle it was great to see it in action. We were thrilled to actually see the winners so excited when their numbers were called"!

Volunteer Carol Poletti had never even attended the LACC before getting involved with the entertainment committee. "After seeing the event this year, I now have a clearer understanding of how everyone's contributions came together. And based on the participants' enthusiastic reaction, I've started thinking about what we could do for next year's event!"

The Hirshberg Foundation wants to thank our LACC Volunteer Committee for joining us on this thrilling adventure!

LACC Team Highlight – Dumbledore's Army

By Ernest Park

My first LACC was special because it was shortly after my father passed away. It was me, my brother, mom and girlfriend Robyn. This was my mom's first race and I was excited to be running with my family. At the starting line I turned my back for a second and as I did, the race started and my mom took off. She just started sprinting without the rest of the family; she had run off without us! I had never seen my mom run like that. It was fantastic and all we could do was chase after her. It was, without a doubt, the most amazing start to our first LACC.

The LACC showed us that we are not alone in this relentless fight against pancreatic cancer. It is so uplifting to see the tremendous amount of passion and support for finding a cure. The fact that such a community exists and is marching forward to do the amazing work they have been doing is so encouraging. I lost my dad to pancreatic cancer November 1, 2009. It is especially fitting that we honor his memory and life around the darkest time of the year for our family. The LACC has been a remarkable outlet to honor my dad's life while supporting the pancreatic cancer community.

I'm usually apprehensive to ask friends and family to donate or get involved in anything. That fear has faded since seeing the outpouring of support the LACC gathers each year. My wonderful network of friends and family love getting together every year for the race, they get excited and ask how we're going to top the last year. They were *the* most amazing group of minions (from *Despicable Me*) last year and soldiers in Dumbledore's army (from the Harry Potter series) this year. They are what drive me and fuel me to organize a team each year. Their willingness to support this amazing organization each year truly means the world to me and I can't wait for the many years to come.

Running for a cause and having that focus motivates me to think beyond myself. The organization has boosted my confidence and brought light to the subject of pancreatic cancer. Instead of all the negative experiences I've had with the disease I can now add every great memory I have had with the Hirshberg Foundation to the list. Pancreatic cancer will always be a part of my life since it took someone so dear to me. I want to be able to support others that are fighting cancer as well as those friends and family members that are battling right alongside them. I love the race and everything it stands for and will continue to support and participate every year!