

LACC Team Highlight – Team Trudy

By Peter Fischer

Our Mom, Gertrude Fischer, was one of 13 children born in Dickson City, PA to Polish immigrants who arrived on Ellis Island at the turn of the century. Living in a two bedroom house with a dirt kitchen floor as a child and adolescent, Trudy was the valedictorian of her high school class and went on to receive a Nursing Degree from the NYU School of Nursing in the mid-1950s. She was an RN (Registered Nurse) for approximately 45 years, providing care for patients in hospitals, clinics, nursing homes and psychiatric centers. During the latter years of her career she was a private duty nurse for anyone who needed her assistance. She was known for putting together top-notch, round-the-clock nursing care for people in their homes or brief stays in hospitals. Every day she worked she put on her all-white nursing uniform (white stockings and nursing shoes polished the night before) and lived and breathed her oath to bring comfort and care to the sick and dying.

After retiring from nursing (more the result of a changing world for an aging nurse and not because she wanted to retire) she focused her life even more on her children and grandchildren. She adored her many grandchildren from the very moment each one arrived until her last breath. She died with not a penny in her bank account and even left my Dad with a small department store balance – the result of her always showering her friends and family with gifts and adoration. She rarely, if ever, did anything for herself.

In July, 2003 my Mom was diagnosed with an unresectable malignant tumor of the pancreas. The decision was to pursue

medical management. She was offered palliative chemotherapy. I immediately flew out to NY to meet the rest of the family and assist with her care. I will never forget sitting with my Mom in her hospital room as we looked over the trees and well-manicured lawn outside of her room. My Mom had been a nurse for 45 years or so and had taken care of patients with her very same diagnosis more times than she would have cared to admit. As her youngest son and physician, and her as a nurse with years of experience with patients who had faced what she was now ultimately facing herself, our conversation was brief and to the point. Between myself and her other physician sons, we had teams awaiting her arrival for further intervention (at that time all palliative and relatively hopeless)—all she had to do is say the word. “Take me home Petee. I want quality over quantity. I want to enjoy my grandchildren,” she said to me as I held her hand and she looked straight into my eyes. We took her home, set up Hospice care, and with the help of hired round-the-clock assistance and many of her nursing colleagues, gave her as much comfort and dignity that such a process could possibly allow. She passed away 7 short weeks from her day of diagnosis.

My sister had known Lisa, the Executive Director of the Hirshberg Foundation through a mutual friend. At a wedding in 2005 they were chatting about kids and about our mom’s short battle with pancreatic cancer when Lisa told us all about the Hirshberg Foundation and about the LA Cancer Challenge. We were hooked from that moment and started spreading the word that TEAM TRUDY was going to be represented each year at the LA Cancer Challenge. Our family of course remembers my Mom on her birthday and we re-live her passing on the anniversary of her death each year. To be perfectly honest, our biggest day is the LACC each October. **It is at this event that we honor her life and put forth whatever effort we can in order to see that her struggle with pancreatic cancer was not in vain.**

Team Trudy at the LA Cancer Challenge is a collaborative effort by family and friends. My sister started things in motion with Lisa. A good friend who adored my Mom came up with the t-shirt design and then we registered for the event in 2005. The rest is history. To date Team Trudy has raised over \$40,000 for pancreatic cancer research. We are focused on doing whatever it is we can do to raise awareness.

What I have realized in re-visiting the life of this wonderful woman, is that her life and untimely death has changed me forever. My heart aches every day in knowing that I can't pick up the phone and call her like I did when she was alive. As trite and cliché as it sounds, a part of me died the day she left us. Anger, selfishness and frustration get the better of me on many a day. Even on my best day, I cannot even come close to exhibiting the elegance and dignity that this woman did every day until she passed away. But, I will keep trying. Our Mom was a truly remarkable woman. In reflecting on her life and in honoring her, we honor all who have been lost.

LACC Participant Spotlight – Maggie's First 5k

By Matt Skinner

The LA Cancer Challenge has been a part of my family's lives for the last 11 years. When our friend Mark was diagnosed in 2002 we raced in support. Since he succumbed to the disease, we've raced to remember. The race had become a proud yearly tradition. Slowly, we've become more involved and have gotten to know so

many people in the Hirshberg organization. The 2013 event will forever hold a special place in my heart. The day after the 2012 LA Cancer Challenge my daughter Maggie decided to get into the race that she had watched from the sideline for the first 7 years of her life. I'm a runner – it is one thing I can say I'm good at doing. Now I was going to get a chance to run with my daughter, what could be better? Obviously when thinking about an 8-year old, “running” is a little strong of a word. I expected her first 5k to involve running, walking and skipping. Before our first training session, I sat Maggie down and talked about her goals (and mine).

My rules were simple: 1) If anything hurts, stop! 2) Always have fun and 3) Go at your own pace.

That day we ran around the block ONCE. Over the next ten months, the mileage grew slightly (our longest run was 2.65 miles). We experimented with a few different motivational systems. We tried jelly beans, PEZ, mints... The memories from our training sessions are countless. The good, the bad and the ugly all blended together.

On race day I had no idea what would happen. Maggie never realized she would be running with thousands of other people, so she was a little intimidated. While I pushed her brother in the jog stroller on one side and she grabbed onto her mom's hand on the other, we started up the “big hill” from the starting line. Maggie kept it simple...left, right, left, right...inhale, exhale...repeat.

Mile 1 (still running): “you okay??” “Shhhh, Dad!”

Mile 2 (Still Running) : “want some water?” “It's too cold out for water!”

Mile 3 (STILL RUNNING!!): “I can see the finish!” “Me too, looks

likes I'm gonna beat you"

We ended with an official time 34:51. Good enough for 3rd Place in the 0-9 girls division!!! Four days later the medal has finally come off. However, the memory will last forever and October, 26th 2014 can't come soon enough.

LACC Team Spotlight – Mia's Angels

By Topiltzin Sanchez, Team Captain

When asked to write this brief explanation as to why I participate in the LA Cancer Challenge I was dumbfounded. Didn't know what to do or say; except yes, sure I'll do it. Then memories of my mother, Maria E. Sanchez, flooded my mind and tears instantaneously flooded my eyes falling down my face. My mother fought this battle from 2004-2010, beating pancreatic cancer with the help of Dr. Isacoff. She lived for her family and was ecstatic to have beaten this disease. She would later develop leukemia and succumbed to it on March 8, 2013. I participate in this great event for people like my mother, so that they can have the resources available to them that will ensure a better treatment to a disease that is unforgiving.

I participate in the LA Cancer Challenge because I have to give back to an organization that continues to help families and their loved ones deal with this disease. I do my small part to honor my mother by forming a team every year.

LACC Team Spotlight – Milstein Adelman

By Antherine Perkins, Team Captain

The law offices of Milstein Adelman began working with The Hirshberg Foundation to raise money and awareness for pancreatic cancer due to our common goals. Milstein Adelman pursues litigation against pharmaceutical products that increase the risk of pancreatic cancer. When informed of The Hirshberg Foundation's LA Cancer Challenge, the office leapt at the chance to be involved, with 42 employees signing up to run or walk to support survivors and patients with pancreatic cancer.

Our team had personal, as well as professional connections to the cause. One of our legal assistants lost his father in 2007 and our team coordinator lost her aunt to pancreatic cancer.

These experiences, as well as our drive to protect and support our clients, brought Milstein Adelman together to join the L.A. Cancer Challenge this year. Many of our participants were able to recruit donors and even family outside of the office to participate, creating a diverse team of attorneys, assistants, family and friends.

Milstein Adelman is grateful to have had the opportunity to participate in this year's challenge to help contribute to the fight against pancreatic cancer!

LACC Team Spotlight – Ohana Means Family

By Jayme Heyl, Team Captain

Participating in the LA Cancer Challenge has quickly become an annual tradition for our family. Ohana Means Family was formed in the fall of 2012 just before the passing of my grandmother, Kay Shimizu. She was active in the community throughout her life and was probably the most selfless person I know. She volunteered at the Senior Nutrition Program at the Venice Japanese Community Center for over 25 years. She also participated in ikebana (flower arrangement), craft class, and much more. Most of all she will always be remembered for her cooking. Whether it was a full spread of Japanese cuisine on New Year's Day or a quesadilla after school, grandma showed her love through her cooking.

When our team started out we weren't sure how many people would join or donate. But we were pleasantly surprised when we recruited 25 team members and raised over \$4600 in our first year. This year we had 27 members and raised over \$5800. We walk/run to remember our loved one, to show support for people who are currently struggling with this disease, and to raise pancreatic cancer awareness in our community. Most importantly the LA Cancer Challenge is a time each year that our family can get together, reconnect and remind ourselves the true meaning of ohana. Now we can also call the Hirshberg Foundation part of our ohana. I cannot say how appreciative we are of all of the encouragement we get from the staff and volunteers on the day of the event as well as throughout the year.

LACC Team Spotlight – Team LANA

By Christina Santoro, Team Captain

On August 18, 2010 at 7:34 am, our Mother Lana took her last breath after a short two-month battle with pancreatic cancer. She passed peacefully in her own home surrounded by her family and a mountain of love. It was the most profound experience of all of our lives and we all felt incredibly blessed to be a part of her passing, as we were her life. Her diagnosis was completely unexpected and as indescribably difficult as those two months were, we were so moved by the enormous outreach of love and support we all received from family, friends and even strangers. Our mother received countless cards, letters, emails and phone calls during that time from people whose lives she had touched and she was incredibly moved by each of them. We learned during this time that not only does it take a village to live and thrive; it takes a village of love and support to transition.

Upon her passing, we knew that we wanted to find a special way to keep her memory alive and at the same time support cancer research and the countless others riddled with the horrible disease. We were very happy to cross paths with the Hirshberg Foundation and we immediately signed up for the 2010 L.A. Cancer Challenge. The love and support we had felt during this dark, difficult time continued with an outpouring of support for this beautiful walk and it has now become an annual tradition that we all look forward to participating in. This Foundation and walk have been instrumental in helping our family grieve and give

back the love we received during this difficult time. We know that it is LOVE that got us through and it is love that will bring a cure to this epidemic. We thank the Hirshberg Foundation for all of their beautiful work and we feel blessed to be a part of something so important. Today, we are 60 members strong and when we walk, we honor our mother and her beautiful memory, her funny spirit and her love for all people.