

Event Spotlight – Family Ties

Carney Duntsch of Memphis, Tennessee contacted the Hirshberg Foundation a few months ago via email. She energetically wrote us about her father, who was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in May of 1999, and is living with the disease. Robert Skinner is a 53-year-old avid climber and whitewater canoe buff. One week he was climbing mountains, and the next he was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Finding out how deadly this cancer is was a devastating blow to Carney and her family. Yet, she knew she couldn't just sit around—she had to do something.

Carney explains, “I have watched my father undergo radical surgery, high dose chemotherapy, and radiation. Less than one year after his diagnosis, he has beaten the odds and is still alive, but his fight is not over. Watching him suffer through this has pushed me to organize a fundraising effort.”

This effort is called “Family Ties.” Carney is inviting celebrities, via a mail campaign, to donate a tie: necktie, bow tie, scarf, string bikini, anything that ties. These items will then be auctioned on Ebay, with all proceeds going to the Ronald S Hirshberg Pancreatic Cancer Research Center. Carney is excited about the prospects. “My hope is that other family members of pancreatic cancer victims will become aware of this effort, and take part in “Family Ties” in a nationwide fundraising campaign.” Donald Trump was the first to donate an item, a necktie, to the effort. Ted Turner has also contributed.

Carney is hoping to receive all items by July 16, 2000, her father's 54th birthday, but she needs all the assistance she can get.

Event Spotlight – Couple Raises Funds and Honors Mom at Wedding

When Aleen Zimmeroff Bayard, 40, began planning her wedding to Brent Greenberg, 52, she very much wanted the ceremony and whole event to be a reflection of who they were as a couple and as individuals, and to express their values and commitments in life. Aleen had just recently lost her mom, Dorothy Zimmeroff, 62, to pancreatic cancer, and wanted to honor her mother's memory during such an important benchmark in her life.

Since this was her second marriage and his third, Aleen and Brent decided to ask for charitable donations in lieu of gifts. The bride, who owns a marketing and public relations consulting firm, and the groom, a radiologist, chose three causes, and included an insert with the information in their wedding invitations. In addition to our Foundation, they also selected the Evans Scholars Fund, which gives college tuition to golf caddies (Brent sits on the Board of Directors of the Western Golf Association), and The Hunger Project, a global organization dedicated to ending world hunger.

The newlyweds feel very positive about their decision, for a variety of reasons. Aleen explains, "We didn't know how much people gave, so it kept a lot of privacy in each guest's 'purchase.' And, instead of getting linens and toasters, we're actually making a difference in the world." Aleen also found the idea to be educational. "People now know that very specific research projects, such as those funded by the Hirshberg

Foundation, exist for specific types of cancer. Rather than simply supporting agencies such as the American Cancer Society, we were able to directly support pancreatic cancer research.”

Aleen’s mom was “extremely healthy” prior to her disease, which was first incorrectly diagnosed as pancreatitis. Aleen reflects, “My mom had the most incredible attitude. She never complained.” Even when she had a permanent needle inserted into her clavicle and she underwent chemotherapy around the clock, Dorothy found a way to see the side of the positive side of things. “The pump system weighed about five pounds and she had to wear it constantly. She nicknamed the pump ‘Hymie’ after the Hebrew word ‘L’Chaim,’ which means ‘To Life.’”

In the end, the couple has no idea how much was raised for their charities, but they do know that Dorothy was “with them” on their wedding day. Aleen explains, “It really helped me bring my mom’s presence into the space in a very respectful and loving way. I felt the loss, definitely, but rather than dwelling on having her missing from my side, I was able to feel better knowing that we were helping others in her condition. Maybe other daughters in the future will not lose their parents to this disease.”

Editor’s note: To date, the Ronald S. Hirshberg Memorial Foundation has received over \$7,000 from guests of Aleen and Brent’s wedding, all of which has gone to support pancreatic cancer research at UCLA. Furthermore, Aleen, a public speaker, has also begun asking clients and associates to make a contribution to the Foundation in lieu of a speaker’s fee.

Event Spotlight – Family Marches in 4th of July Parade to Honor Terry Vawter

Glenn Vawter was able to combine fun with fundraising during an annual family vacation last summer. Vawter, whose wife Terry died of pancreatic cancer last year, took his daughter and grandchildren to Catalina Island for a short getaway from their home in Las Vegas.

As they do each year, the Vawter family marched in the Catalina Island Fourth of July Parade. This time, however, they decided to collect money for pancreatic cancer research. Terry's daughter and granddaughter pushed a stroller decorated with a homemade sign saying "Donations in Memory of Terry (Granny)–Pancreatic Cancer Research–Hirshberg Foundation." Vawter and his grandsons followed behind the stroller, each holding a corner of the flag. According to Glenn, "To our surprise, people threw money in the flag." That day the Vawters raised almost \$600 for the Hirshberg Pancreatic Cancer Research Center in memory of Terry Vawter.