

5th Annual Brett Lawrence Memorial Golf Tournament

The foundation's Lisa Manheim talks about what we're doing to fight pancreatic cancer in a recent radio interview on KKLZ.



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Event Spotlight – Dance for a Cure

By Abigail Houston, Colleen Perks, & Melinda Kolesar

Every year at the West Branch Area Senior High School in Morrisdale, PA, students are asked to design, plan, and implement a Senior Project. When it was our turn to propose a project, we knew that we wanted to do something to make a difference in the field of cancer, specifically because we all have been personally touched by cancer. After our initial meeting, it was clear to all three of us what type of cancer we wanted to focus on.

In the summer of 2010, Abigail's Uncle William "Wilbur" O'Neill was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Abigail was there while he struggled and valiantly tried to fight this horrible disease. At only 54 years old, Uncle Wilbur, a sweet, caring, loving man, always full of life, lost his battle with cancer six

weeks after his diagnosis. He fought until the very end. The twinkle in those Irish eyes will never be forgotten.

After going through such a devastating experience, all three of us, Colleen, Melinda and Abigail, made the decision to dedicate our senior project to raising money to help fight pancreatic cancer. We started our planning at the beginning of our senior year. We decided to put on a dance as a way of raising money for our project. The name we chose was "Dance For A Cure". We scheduled the dance for Saturday, November 18th, 2011 in the high school gym. We secured a DJ, booked our security, and started making posters.

We pre-sold tickets for the dance and, when selling the tickets, we also had bracelets for sale. We also mailed out letters to individuals and businesses. If a business or individual donated \$25 or more, their name would be written on our t-shirts which were to students, parents, teachers, and community members. The actual night of the dance, we sold drinks, pizza, baked goods, and snacks. Businesses and individuals also donated items to be chanced off the night of the event.

We decorated our high school gym with purple and white balloons. Most of the students who were present purchased a t-shirt and wore it in honor of all pancreatic cancer patients. The night was a huge success. Everyone that attended showed so much support and danced the night away for our amazing cause. We could certainly feel that Uncle Wilbur was there looking down on us, smiling upon us with those dimples. We felt blessed that we were able to raise \$2,485.65 for the Hirshberg Foundation for Pancreatic Cancer Research.

You Can H.E.L.P. Fund Spotlight – UNCONDITIONAL Fund: In Memory of Ken McCleary

By Lyndsey McCleary Schroeder

I found the Hirshberg Foundation website while searching for information about signs and symptoms of pancreatic cancer. I clicked on their link and began looking at their site. The information provided was so clear and easy to understand. I emailed their office with a question and heard back within hours. I felt like I had made a connection and in some way, my dad helped me find them. I created a You Can Help Fund on their website in honor of my dad. I knew that this was where I wanted donations to be sent. I have kept my promise to my dad to find some good out of his bad diagnosis and am currently working with my daughter on hosting three events this year – all benefiting the Hirshberg Foundation.

Ken McCleary, my dad, was twelve days from his 44th birthday on November 1, 2007. A happy, fun-loving, open armed, funny, healthy and hardworking man, he enjoyed his time mostly surrounded by family and good friends. After several days in the hospital with unexplained stomach and back pain, the doctors told us the news. This healthy, wonderful man that we all adored had pancreatic cancer, and so aggressively that it had already spread to his lungs, his liver, and his lymph nodes. Stage 4 and terminal. Inoperable and not likely to respond to any other methods of medications or treatment, the doctors gave him 3-4 weeks left of life.

Hearing that his time was now limited, the first thing Dad requested was to be taken home with his family (whom he made promise to try not to cry), friends (more than just the two at a time most hospitals let in), football (a diehard Lions Fan), good food (that he pretended to be hungry for), and most of all, his birthday on November 13th. With our now crunched time to have him close, we watched football, laughed, loved, and smiled in his presence. But with our backs turned, we all cried and ached for the man we all knew was each day looking worse than he had the day before. Any time Dad would catch us with tears in our eyes, he'd say "I don't know why everyone is crying, you all only have to miss one guy. I have to miss ALL of you." Of course, he said it with a smile. He always had a way of trying to make things easier by joking. And of course, frequently asking what we planned on doing for his upcoming birthday, because according to Dad...you don't have a birthDAY, you have a birthMONTH.

One afternoon, my mom reluctantly left the house for the grocery store. There were few things that my dad would actually eat or drink, so she made sure she had whatever he wanted available. The second he heard the garage door close, my dad looked me right in the eye and said "I need a favor". Of course I told him, "Anything." Big blue eyes staring directly into my watery green ones said "I need you to make something good happen from this thing. It can't be all bad. And don't be all sad all the time, I don't like that. Can you promise me that one favor?" Loving him even more than I thought possible, I could only nod. He couldn't have asked me for anything harder. But a promise is a promise.

Around 11 p.m. the first Friday night he was home, he awoke from sleep, not himself. Always within speaking distance, and mostly by his bedside, my mom and I knew something was wrong. This was the moment we had secretly been hoping would never come. For the

first time, he admitted he was in pain and let it show by the tears in his eyes. My mom and I were watching the strong, healthy, worryless man we idolized become weak, vulnerable, and critically ill. We finally got him calm enough to lie on the couch and looked at each other while we watched his breathing deteriorate and his face wince in pain. "It hurts. Can't breathe." was all he could get out. My mom told him how much he meant to her and how much she loved him, and I smiled at him and told him I loved him. And then I told him the biggest lie I've ever told. I told him that we would be okay without him if he was too tired and needed to stop fighting. I told him that we would all learn how to continue in our days, learning from all the things he had already taught us. I told him it was okay to let go, that we understood and didn't want him to hurt anymore. He listened while I lied, looked at my mom who tearfully nodded, and mumbled something quietly..."I love you both." At 11:15pm, he took his one last breath and my hand on his chest felt that one last heartbeat. Just eight days after his diagnosis, my dad lost his battle. It was November 9th, four days shy of the birthday he so badly wanted to celebrate one last time.

In place of a birthday party that November 13th, we held a funeral. At the wake, I made a promise to my dad and everyone there that loved him that we would never forget him, that we would always use November as Kenny's "BirthMONTH". So Unconditional was born. The name, because it just is the best one to describe him. An open armed, always forgiving, inviting man to everything and everyone. Family, friend, foe, child, adult, co-worker, or stranger – it never mattered to him who you were, he just wanted you to feel comfortable around him. "Unconditional" seemed the only fitting title for any event or idea that would be put on in his memory. So to start, every year we hold "UNCONDITIONAL Birthdays". November to honor Pancreatic Cancer Awareness Month, a never forgotten "Happy Birthday" to my

dad, and my own personal way of letting him know that I haven't forgotten my favor of trying to make something good come out of something so sad.

Event Spotlight – Peds of Purple

By Barbara Krippel

The first Peds for Purple Pancreatic Cancer Walk took place on the early morning of November 5, 2011 in Southern New Jersey. Thirty-two participants took a 5K stroll around Pennsauken's Cooper River Park amid crisp temperatures, fall foliage and sunny skies.

The goal of our fundraiser is to call attention to the need for funding research and treatment of pancreatic cancer and to honor the memory of my mother Margaret Davison, who succumbed to pancreatic cancer in 2003.

Our efforts were rewarded as the walkers and event organizers, Barbara Krippel, Marjorie Swingle and Elizabeth Johnson helped raise more than \$1,100 for the Hirshberg Foundation for Pancreatic Cancer Research. Fortified by donated beverages, snacks and a 50/50 drawing, the participants were well prepared to embark on their walk, all for a great cause. Some walked for the personal reason to honor the loved ones that they had lost to this disease, accompanied by supportive spouses or friends. To further emphasize the far reaching affects of pancreatic cancer, a somber moment at the beginning of the walk was taken to remember those relatives and friends whose lives have been

cut short by pancreatic cancer. Participants wore shirts printed with pictures of their departed loved ones, while others brought photos and other mementos to share. Everyone completed the walk, and no injuries occurred!

Bolstered by the encouraging turnout, the 2nd Annual Peds for Purple Pancreatic Cancer Walk has already been scheduled for Saturday, November 3, 2012 and we have already begun our organizing efforts to increase both awareness and donations.

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 whiplash" 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!!!