

You Can H.E.L.P. Fund Spotlight – My Sister's Caramel Crunch

By Jeff Morse

For my Aunt Lisa, love was always a pantry staple in her kitchen- it was the magical addition that gave a certain flavor and aroma to her recipes. She happily shared her delicious creations with others, but her caramel crunch was a recipe she carefully protected. Upon her passing our family wanted to honor her memory by dedicating funds from sales to shine a light on a cause that has personally impacted our lives. Lisa's dream of bringing her famous Caramel Crunch to the public was a positive, joyful way we could celebrate her life and continue her legacy.

The experience of partnering with the Hirshberg Foundation has been a blessing all around. It opened a door that's allowed us to connect on a more personal level with members of the community who support this cause as well. *To have a conversation with a complete stranger, have them open up about their stories, both personal and inspiring, has really been humbling. It gives you the reinsurance you need to keep fighting, keep moving forward, and never give up.* This experience interacting with pancreatic cancer survivors and people who have lost loved ones has had a positive impact on my life forever.

Our company remains committed to do everything we can to help share awareness. Contributing funds that will benefit pancreatic cancer research and provide support for patients & families has inspired me to not only become a better person, but it has giving me the knowledge I need to help bring awareness to the fight against this disease.

If Lisa were here she would say, My Sister's Caramel Crunch is a collective effort by many people whom are making sure we do our part in helping those in need. Cancer is a growing disease and has impacted many families. It must be stopped and the only way is for all to join together. She would be proud to represent such a great cause. This is a part of her legacy.

We will continue to speak positive and encouraging words to those who need it; remembering that life is not guaranteed so cherish every moment. The Hirshberg Foundation is definitely an organization and cause that we're proud and thankful to be associated with!

Teen Scientist Shares our Message of Hope

You Can H.E.L.P Spotlight – Pants Off Racing, Inc. Adopt-A-Family Program

By D.R. Amato

My mom was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in 2006. In 2009 she travelled to Los Angeles from Ohio to participant in the

Hirshberg Foundation's annual LA Cancer Challenge with 30 team members in tow. Comprised of friends and family from all over the US, Team Nancy Pants was named after our mother Nancy "Pants" Amato, because we all know who wears the pants in the Amato family! No one could have imagined the impact that day created with my family.

Soon after my mother's diagnosis in 2006 we all realized that this hardship was not just about us –there were a whole lot of people out there who cared about our family. It took some time, but we finally got to the point where we looked outside of ourselves and saw that there were many other families just like us, facing the exact same things we dealt with. We were lucky that those around us and, unexpectedly, the local support from the community, were there for us no matter what. And, truly, that is what made the biggest impact on us as a family and our moms' fight with this disease.

Eventually my brother Pat and I created the non-profit Pants Off Racing, Inc, "POR" as a way to show our appreciation and give back all the love and support we have received as a family since our mothers' diagnosis. Combining our love for endurance sports, (ie. triathlons, marathons, 10k's, 5k's, etc) and our love for our mother, we have formed a powerful group of supporters throughout the country who are passionate about making a difference in someone else's life. Our greatest efforts revolve around the holiday season when POR – or the Meerkats as we like to be called – "adopts" local families that are dealing with the same hardships that we once experienced as a family.

We worked with the Hirshberg Foundation to get in touch with pancreatic cancer families that might be in need of holiday help. Knowing that it can be extremely difficult for parents to get into the holidays spirit, we decided we wanted to help. From trimming the tree, providing gifts, delivering holiday dinners

and even lending a friendly “ear” for someone to talk to, POR is there so that families can just focus on spending time with each other. This past year, we “adopted” three local families coping with a recent pancreatic cancer diagnosis. We obtained a gift list from the families and distributed the lists to our POR Meerkats near and far. The amount of gifts contributed by those across the country was overwhelming.

Each holiday season we are reminded of the impact we are able to make in the local community by the families that we have adopted. The relationships formed through this program extend beyond the holiday season and it has been our goal to not only help and assist these families during the most difficult of times, but to also be there for them when the initial shock and reality of this disease begins to dwindle. The POR Adopt-A-Family program only scratches the surface of the impact we are able to make on the lives of others to make a lasting connection with the pancreatic cancer community.

The Hirshberg Foundation motto, “You Can Hope or You Can HELP,” is something we take to heart and it is our goal to live and act within our means to help as many patients and families that are dealing with the same hardships we have seen in our own family. And that is the reason we have created the POR Adopt-a-Family program – to help and assist those families that we know we can help make a difference.

You Can H.E.L.P. Spotlight –

Going the Extra Mile for Families Impacted by Pancreatic Cancer

Editor's Note: Matt Dimmer is the founder and CEO of The Extra Mile, a nonprofit which collects donations of air miles and gives them to people who wouldn't have otherwise had the means to visit loved ones diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. The Hirshberg Foundation refers families in need to his organization. Here is his story.

By Matt Dimmer

Pete Dimmer was an amazing man. He was my father. My coach. A tinkerer. A fisherman. A hunter. A kind soul. He was known as the go-to guy for stuff to do around the house and in the community.

Until November of 2011, my dad was a pretty healthy 65 year old. He began having some serious stomach pains, so he went to get it checked out. Initial diagnosis was a gall bladder issue, so he scheduled surgery. But while scoping him, they determined the gall bladder was actually fine; it was his pancreas causing the problems. After this was missed in an initial CT scan, he ended up with an inflamed pancreas later diagnosed as pancreatic cancer – Stage 4.

My wife Jess and I had just relocated to LA from Chicago, where my dad lived. We were settling into new jobs and new lives, making new friends. But without thinking twice, we decided to travel home every chance we could get. Every weekend. Sometimes longer. Because we didn't want to miss a moment. And... because we could. Because every holiday, weekend, day, minute, second...

could be our last together.

It wasn't long after a holiday visit before we had 'the talk.' That conversation I never imagined having with my dying father. The one that makes me tear up watching it in movies. The one where he told me there's nothing that could make him better and he only had a couple weeks left to live. I tried desperately to hold back the wave of emotions that came over me. I fought to be the strong one, but eventually gave in and just hugged him sobbing. We got through it, I told him how much I'd miss him, how great it was to have him as a coach, a dad, and all the other memories I'll cherish forever.

About a month before dad passed away, it struck me. What do people do when they can't be there? Jess and I had been so fortunate, to be able to make all those trips without so much as blinking. It pained me to think of those who couldn't see their loved ones before their passing or be able to talk about life prior to passing... simply because they couldn't afford the cost of travel.

Looking back on it now, though it is all still so painful to recall, I feel so blessed that I was there. I was there right after he was diagnosed. I was there when he got sicker. I was there for his last cognizant moments. I was there for his last moments of life. And I was there when he died.

I was inspired to create a non-profit company. Our mission is to give those who cannot afford to travel the opportunity to visit their loved ones dying of cancer, so they can cherish the last holiday, weekend, day, minute, second... together. I was, and still am, determined to make the Extra Mile a success in his honor and was happy that I could show him some of our progress on one of my last trips home.

In my father's last days and beyond, stories came pouring back

to us. How he – as a father, coach, friend, neighbor – always went the extra mile to help anyone in need. So our name, The Extra Mile, is my way of honoring my father and carrying on his legacy.

Now others can have the chance I had: To say goodbye.

*To learn more about The Extra Mile, visit www.thextramile.org.
To donate miles, visit www.mileage.org/thextramile.*

Debbie Never Gives Up!

Debbie's fundraising efforts over the past 6 years have resulted in over \$28,000 gifted towards pancreatic cancer research! She continues to welcome friends, family, and the community to help raise awareness, fundraise for pancreatic cancer research, and enjoy some friendly competition on game day. In honor of her sister Julie and friend Don, Debbie remains committed to winning the fight against pancreatic cancer never giving up!

Kids Can Cure in Action – Dr. Maitra & Teenager Jack Andraka Collaborate for a Cure

Editor's Note: In 2012, 15 year old Jack Andraka from Maryland became instant news by winning first place at The Intel National

Science Fair. He had developed a novel test to detect early stage pancreatic cancer and we began receiving countless calls and emails about this budding scientist in the pancreatic cancer community. Jack's mentor, Dr. Anirban Maitra at Johns Hopkins, was a Hirshberg keynote speaker several years ago at the annual American Pancreatic Association's meeting. Dr. Maitra's lecture on genomics and clinical applications was brilliant and inspirational, so it was no surprise that he became a mentor to this young scientist. We asked Jack and Dr. Maitra to share their story with us and say a few words about their collaboration...

By Jack Andraka, 15 Year Old Researcher

When I was 14 years old a very close friend of our family died from pancreatic cancer. I didn't even know what a pancreas was! I began to do some research and quickly found out what a terrible disease it is and discovered that it's often diagnosed until much too late. There had to be a better way. While I continued learning about current ways of treating cancer I was also working on the effects of nano particles on marine and freshwater organisms. I was fascinated by single walled carbon nanotubes- they're like the superheroes of material science! I smuggled an article about nanotubes into my high school biology class and was reading it while the teacher was telling us about antibodies. Suddenly it hit me- what if I dispersed antibodies to a protein over expressed by pancreatic cancer with single walled carbon nanotubes and dipped strips of filter paper to create a sensor. When the 'cancer protein' was dropped onto the strip the protein would bind with the antibody and cause a change in the electrical property of the strip. I could measure this change with an ohm meter from Home Depot.

Of course there was a lot more research to do but finally I had my proposal ready. I searched the Internet for professors who

did pancreatic cancer research and sent out emails to about 200 people and got 199 rejections. I got one interview and it was with Dr. Maitra! I could finally start working in the lab but at first nothing was working. I had so much to learn. I worked after school and on weekends and my school holidays and finally, after 7 months, came up with a strip that worked! Of course, I thought it could be sold in stores right away but Dr. Maitra patiently explained about all the refinements and trials that still needed to be done. Now I'm talking to several Biotech companies who have the resources for further development and to bring the test to market. If a 15 year old who didn't even know he had a pancreas could create a sensor to detect cancer using Google and Wikipedia, imagine what you can do!

By Dr. Anirban Maitra, MBBS, Johns Hopkins

It was truly a privilege to mentor a student as committed as Jack in my laboratory. Remarkably, when we first met he was too young to drive. His mother would wait downstairs in the parking lot while Jack completed his experiments. His parents, who did such a fabulous job immersing Jack and his brother in an environment permeated with science and curiosity, deserve a great deal of credit. It's very unusual for a 15 year old to write an introductory email that contains 30 pages of protocol, complete with supplies, catalog numbers and pitfalls! So, accepting Jack into the laboratory was a no-brainer. Genius is 99% perspiration and 1% inspiration, and Jack worked very hard during the 7 months he spent in my laboratory prior to the Intel Science Fair. I truly hope Jack is able to inspire the younger generation of this country that science can be cool!"