Those who Give-Family Member Helps Philly Get Its “Rear in Gear” to Prevent Colon Cancer

Follow this and additional works at: http://jdc.jefferson.edu/jss

Let us know how access to this document benefits you

Recommended Citation

Available at: http://jdc.jefferson.edu/jss/vol4/iss2/9
Those who Give-Family Member Helps Philly Get Its “Rear in Gear” to Prevent Colon Cancer

Maria Grasso was stunned when her father, Frank Hepperlen, was diagnosed with stage 4 (advanced) colon cancer in 2005. After 10 months under the care of Scott Goldstein, MD, Associate Professor of Surgery, and Jefferson oncologist Edith Mitchell, MD, Mr. Hepperlen lost his fight with the disease. “The tragic reality of colorectal cancer—the second most-fatal kind of cancer,” Dr. Goldstein says, “is that it often goes undetected until it has spread and is more difficult to treat.”

Ms. Grasso had also lost her maternal grandfather to colon cancer in 1979 and was eager to support Jefferson in fighting this disease. “When I learned that some 90 percent of colorectal cancer is treatable,” says Ms. Grasso, “I felt an obligation to make a difference in the lives of those who still had time on their side.” She decided to partner with the Colorectal Cancer Coalition, which already sponsored a fun run/walk in several cities. The first annual Philadelphia “Get Your Rear in Gear” event was held March 22 on Fairmount Park’s West River Drive. With more than 1,600 participants and 50 teams, it was Colon Cancer Coalition’s largest inaugural event to date. Other event co-chairs were Shona Bradley, and Jenny Ashbrook, whose brother Tony Snow, former White House Press Secretary, fought a very public battle with colon cancer; The Children’s Run was named in his honor. Mayor Nutter, the Honorary Chair, helped kick off the run, along with NBC 10 Meteorologist Bill Henley. Many cancer survivors took part in the event, wearing bright blue “Super Survivor” shirts so they stood out in the crowd.

Of the ninety-seven thousand dollars raised at the event, forty thousand dollars will support patient care and colorectal cancer research initiatives in the Department of Surgery and the Kimmel Cancer Center. Ms. Grasso’s goals are to increase screening, treatment, and prevention. “I’m confident that the funds we raised will go directly to the patients, including the hardest cases as well as providing colonoscopies to underserved populations,” she says. According to the Prevent Cancer Foundation, disease affects a disproportionately high
number of Native Americans, African Americans, and Hispanics, who are encouraged to begin screening at age 45.

Ms. Grasso and her co-chairs are gearing up for the 2010 event on March 21, with Jefferson as a sponsor. For more information, go to http://www.getyourrearingear.com

For more information, or to make a gift to the Department of Surgery, please contact Lara Allan Goldstein at 215.955.8797 or Lara.Goldstein@jefferson.edu.

This article is available in Jefferson Surgical Solutions: http://jdc.jefferson.edu/jss/vol4/iss2/9
The first annual Philadelphia “Get Your Rear in Gear” event was held on September 26, 2009 at Fairmount Water Works. With more than 1,900 participants and 300 runners, it was Colon Cancer Coalition’s largest inaugural event to date. Other event co-chairs were Sonya Beadle, and Jenny Arnold, whose brother Tony Snow, former White House Press Secretary, founded a private battle with colorectal cancer. The children’s Run was named in his honor. Mayor Nutter, the Honorary Chair, helped kick off the run, along with NBC 10 Meteorologist Bill Henley. Many survivors took part in the event, wearing bright blue “Super Survivor” shirts so they stood out in the crowd.

On October 22, 2009, Herbert E. Oettl, MD, a Jefferson Medical College alumnus, professor of Surgery and Vice Chair of Quality, was honored at the Seventh Annual Jefferson Awards Gala. Dr. Cohen received the Achievement Award in Medicine to recognize his achievements in endocrinology and thoracic diseases. Gifts to the Gala in honor of Dr. Cohen will support education and research in thoracic and endocrine surgery.

For Jeopdexa Lazos, struggling with her weight was a lifelong endeavor. “I’ve tried everything,” she says. “I was in my primary care physician’s office, and my endocrinologist managed her diabetes and endocrine levels. With his help, she continued to gain weight, and it bothered them. At the age of 49, it was time for more dramatic action. Her nephrologist James Burke, MD, suggested the meet with David Tichansky, MD, Director of the Jefferson Bariatric and Metabolic Surgery Program, about weight loss surgery. She was worried about possible complications, but Dr. Burke and her endocrinologist Serge Snow, former White House Press Secretary, encouraged that the alternative was to go on dialysis—a measure that generally cannot be reversed once it begins. She agreed to make the appointment.

She found great relief when Dr. Tichansky explained the details of the gastric bypass procedure and the fast long-term support the program offered. Coming to the U.S. from the Philippines in 1988, English is her second language, and she appreciates how clearly and simply Dr. Tichansky explained the details to her. The Jefferson program is entirely laparoscopic, which means rather than a large incision, a series of small incisions are used to perform the procedure which drain the portions of the food a person consumes. Ms. Lazos described that this was a step she was willing to take, for the sake of her health, and of her husband (of nineteen years) and her eight-year-old son.

“We learned that some 50 percent of colorectal cancer is treatable, and I obligation to make a difference.”

Ms. Lazos had also lost her maternal grandmother to colorectal cancer in 2009, and was eager to support Jefferson colorectal cancer research initiatives. “I watched her struggle, and wanted to be part of something that would make a difference….”

“I’m really cured… My chest pains are also gone, and I don’t get tired like I did before.”

Jefferson’s Department of Surgery is publishing Surgical Solutions, a publication for friends and family of patients undergoing surgery. In Fall 2009, Volume 4, Number 2.

Published by Jefferson Digital Communications, 2009

For more information about the Jefferson Bariatric and Metabolic Surgery Program, founded by David Tichansky, MD in 2006.

To contact Dr. Tichansky, please call Lara Allan Goldstein at 215.955.8797. For more information, go to www.jeffersonsurgery.org/bariatric.

I joined the Department of Surgery in 2008 to create the new Bariatric and Metabolic Surgery Program which offers a range of fully laparoscopic procedures—including gastric bypass and adjustable gastric banding. Many extremely obese individuals begin the journey to health only to be turned away because they are either too large or too small to be treated effectively.

Volunteer and community leaders, along with the Jefferson Pancreas, Biliary and Related Diseases Center, have each been named to serve on the Journal of Gastrointestinal Surgery editorial board.

The support of the hospital and the Department Chair, Charles Yoo, MD, has enabled us to achieve great results in a small amount of time. Since January 2009 my bariatric surgery colleague Bernadette Shandon, RN, MS, has performed close to 100 procedures which is an impressive volume for a young program.

The aim of this collaboration is to bring the “Philadelphia Model” into the clinical arena. These procedures are being offered free of charge to patients like Jeopdexa Lazos, I feel extremely lucky to work in an area of medicine in which we can actually reverse clinical, lifestyle and health-related screenings—the patients are generally grateful for our work. Dr. David Tichansky, MD, FACS, Director, Jefferson Bariatric and Metabolic Surgery Program