

**Join “Heather & TEN & Families & Friends” at the
LA Cancer Challenge 5K/10K at Warner Park in Woodland Hills on
Sunday, October 25, 2015!**



My wife lost her sister to pancreatic cancer in 1998 and their mother was diagnosed a month later. She died in 2001. In our quest to find information about the disease and our options, we stumbled upon the Hirshberg Foundation for Pancreatic Cancer Research, then barely a year old. They seemed to have the answer to every question – about medications and outcomes, clinical studies, referrals, etc. – but more than that, they seemed to exist for no greater purpose than to help us in any way they could. That is why I *became* involved (in 1998, the year of their inaugural run) but this is why I am so committed 17 years later: Any cancer diagnosis is a devastating one but hundreds of thousands of people survive other, more prominent forms of cancer (breast, colon, prostate, leukemia, lymphoma, etc.) and they become ever-growing armies to advocate for funding for those diseases. Pancreatic cancer, however, is still essentially a death sentence – one that claims as many lives in the US as breast cancer (40,000 each per the American Cancer Society estimates for 2015) – and it has no army.

There will be 190,000 new breast cancer survivors in the US this year. Pancreatic cancer is no more important than breast cancer but we cannot compete with their foundations in the quest for research dollars. They have armies and they are loud. So here’s what we do to amplify our voice: We fund \$50,000 pancreatic cancer seed grants. We give docs and post-docs with ideas on how to tackle the disease (in every aspect from early detection to pharmacology and treatment) the means to rent labs and equipment and buy the supplies they need to collect data that proves their hypotheses. That gives them a voice and opens doors in places that matter: places like the NIH and the National Cancer Institute; places that can fund their research in earnest and help them bring it from concept to patients.

I have been a runner for more than thirty years and I have run hundreds of races but I have never been involved with an event that means (and accomplishes) so much. It’s not just a race; it’s a mission! We host our own run so we can funnel all the proceeds into research grants. We have slowly grown from 300 participants in 1998 to more than 3,200 last year and we funded ten \$50,000 pancreatic cancer seed grants from this event last year alone, topping our previous high of seven. We hope to fund eleven this year. Still, we had 65 grant applicants last year and we have 79 this year so as rewarding as it is to revel in what we’ve accomplished, I see every project that doesn’t get funded as a potential breakthrough that became a missed opportunity. And meanwhile, like a broken water main with water gushing out unchecked, people are dying from pancreatic cancer in the US at a rate of more than 100 per day.

Heather, pictured, was a member of a local running group. Her son Connor was 14 when she died.

Team Page: <http://support.pancreatic.org/goto/heatherandten>
Donations: <http://support.pancreatic.org/goto/dougatkin>
Main Race Website: www.lacancerchallenge.org

Doug Atkin
310/418-7778
aaii@gte.net