

SACHEM PATCH

Oct. 11, 2011

Local Resident Fundraises for Lustgarten Foundation, Supports Research Walk
Stephanie Giraulo honors her late father by supporting The Lustgarten Foundation's Long Island Pancreatic Cancer Research Walk every year.

By Erin R. Rafferty

When Nesconset resident Stephanie Giraulo lost her father Steven Platzner to pancreatic cancer, she knew that she had to do something to join the fight against the deadly disease. This year marks the sixth that Giraulo and her team have banded together to support The Lustgarten Foundation's annual Long Island Pancreatic Cancer Research Walk.

"It's not a glamorous cancer, not a feel-good cancer," commented Giraulo. "You don't go to a fundraiser and see a whole group of survivors. It just doesn't happen."

Giraulo's father was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in 2005 and lost his life after a 20-month battle with the disease. Following his death, Giraulo and her family wanted to do something that might help prevent another family from experiencing the same heartache that they endured.

While researching the various organizations established for pancreatic cancer research, Giraulo noticed multiple advertisements for the curePC campaign, the public awareness campaign in support of The Lustgarten Foundation. She selected the foundation as the best outlet for her fundraising efforts.

"I was so glad to see that it was a local organization, and I wanted to get involved in their annual research walk," said Giraulo.

"It's also so important to note that 100 percent of all proceeds goes directly to research due to Cablevision's pledge to underwrite all administrative costs."

The Lustgarten Foundation held its 11th annual Long Island Pancreatic Cancer Research Walk on Sunday, October 9 at Jones Beach. According to Kerri Kaplan, The Lustgarten Foundation's Executive Director, the foundation has raised upwards of \$38 million dollars towards research since its inception.

"The Lustgarten Foundation is the nation's largest private foundation dedicated to funding pancreatic cancer research," asserted Kaplan. "We are doing research

to determine target therapies; developing early detection tests, hopefully one day including a blood test; testing vaccines as treatment options; developing more clinical trials and examining the genes that may indicate a person's genetic predisposition to the disease."

Each spring preceding the walk, Giraulo and her family hold a fundraiser at Danfords On The Sound in Port Jefferson. The event typically attracts over 350 people, and through the generosity of Stewart Weiner and Roy Feicco of Danfords, the costs associated with the fundraiser remain low. Giraulo and her team donate between twenty- and thirty-thousand dollars every year to The Lustgarten Foundation.

In addition to raising money for pancreatic cancer research, The Lustgarten Foundation is dedicated to spreading awareness about the devastating effects of the disease. The five-year survival rate for pancreatic cancer patients stands at around 4 percent, making the need for an early detection test one of the most pressing research issues.

Those interested in joining the fight against pancreatic cancer can learn more about The Lustgarten Foundation on their website, as well as via the curePC campaign.

"Stephanie and her family have done an unbelievable job fundraising for us over the years," said Kaplan. "We at The Lustgarten Foundation want to thank people like her and say that raising awareness and coming together like this is really what we're all about."

"The Lustgarten Walk brings us so much hope," said Giraulo. "I know that my dad would be very proud, and we're always moving forward in his spirit."