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DONOR OF THE DAY | By Melanie Grayce West

Fighting Cancer Is Family Effort

Funding breast cancer research is a family affair for the Abramsons.

The North Caldwell, N.J., family started the Cure Breast Cancer Foundation as a way to expand on a small fund-raising effort started by Carly Abramson. Her mother, Lisa, was undergoing breast cancer treatments at Memorial Sloan-Kettering when Carly made her a key ring as a gift. The key ring proved so popular that Carly began making and selling them to support the hospital. She raised thousands of dollars, but wanted to do more.

Andrew Abramson, Carly's father and president and chief executive of Value Companies, a real-estate and property management firm located in New Jersey, wanted to build on his daughter's successes and so in 2007 formed the Cure Breast Cancer Foundation.

"When she said, 'What more can we do?' that's when we approached Dr. Larry Norton," says Mr. Abramson. Dr. Norton is the Deputy Physician-in-Chief for breast cancer programs and Medical Director of the Evelyn H. Lauder Breast Center at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center.

Mr. Abramson and Dr. Norton met decades ago when they served on committees for another hospital. Over the years, they remained in touch and Dr. Norton was the physician that urged more regular screening for Mrs. Abramson based on a family history of breast cancer.

"It's because of the fact that she was already being checked a little bit more thoroughly, that when she was diagnosed the first time we were immediately in the system and we were able to move quickly," says Mr. Abramson.

Dr. Norton's research focuses on the theory of breast cancer "self seeding," meaning

that breast-cancer cells move and cause new cancers to grow in other organs, as well as in the breast. A classic example of the theory is when breast cancer is found again in the original surgical site where it was initially removed.

"There are tremendous implications for this research," says Mr. Abramson. "It not only applies to breast cancer but appears to apply to a lot of other cancers, such as prostate, lung, colon and other similar type cancers."

In all, the Cure Breast Cancer Foundation has raised \$2 million for Dr. Norton's research. About \$1.5 million, including a recent grant of \$400,000, has gone to support research at Memorial Sloan-Kettering. Funds have also gone to support Dr. Norton's research at other institutions.

The majority of funds raised come from golf tournaments, walks, fashion shows and a tennis tournament, but Carly, now a college sophomore studying art, still makes key rings to support the foundation.



Laura Levy

ANDREW ABRAMSON