

# CONCERN FOUNDATION

BEVERLY  
WOLMAN  
1931-1973  
WITH HER  
HUSBAND  
AND THREE  
DAUGHTERS



IT'S THE DIAGNOSIS NO ONE WANTS TO HEAR. **CANCER.** BUT WHEN BEVERLY WOLMAN LEARNED SHE HAD BREAST CANCER AT AGE 35, SHE AND HER HUSBAND, GERD, ALONG WITH A CLOSE-KNIT GROUP OF FRIENDS, CAME TOGETHER TO TURN TRAGEDY INTO HOPE BY FORMING THE CONCERN FOUNDATION. WHAT BEGAN IN 1968 WITH 15 COUPLES LOOKING TO HEAL THEIR HEARTS BY HELPING OTHERS FIGHT THE DISEASE TURNED INTO AN ORGANIZATION THAT NOW BOASTS 10,000 CONTRIBUTORS AND HAS RAISED \$40 MILLION FOR CANCER RESEARCH.

BY MIA MCNIECE

On July 12, the foundation celebrated its 40th anniversary with its biggest fundraiser yet—the 34th annual Block Party Celebrating *Los Angeles* magazine's Best of LA® 2008 at Paramount Studios. The event, which featured food from 50 L.A. restaurants, two performances by the *Stars of Beatlemania*, and casino-style gaming for prizes, was attended by close to 4,000 guests and raised more than \$1.5 million.

### AN INSPIRATION REMEMBERED

This year's event paid special tribute to Beverly by bestowing on her the organization's Spirit of Concern Award. Beverly, who lost her battle to cancer in 1973, was celebrated for being a great wife and mother and an inspiration to others battling cancer.

Cheryl Wada, one of Beverly's three daughters, remembers a mother who "stood for what she believed in and was an activist. My mom was constantly involved with the community and nonprofit organizations." In addition to being charitable, her mother was also charismatic, Wada says. "People were just drawn to her."

Joan Schaeffer, who has been with Concern since its inception, agrees. "Beverly's physical beauty can be seen in photographs, but her inner beauty can best be understood in the way she could bring people together. That ability is how Concern was born, how Bev was able to bring her close friends together with a common goal."

Especially bittersweet are the memories of Beverly's friend Sally Shafton. "I will forever remember the day on the tennis court," she says. "We were playing and she shrieked, 'Oh, I think I got stung by a bee.' We couldn't find a stinger. However, that 'bee sting' turned out to be the discovery of her lump in her breast, which would forever change her life."

Shafton also remembers the day the idea for the Concern Foundation came about. "After her third

THE WOLMAN FAMILY



hospitalization and rooms filled with flowers from so many who loved her, Beverly decided that she had to do something. The something was to stop with all the flowers that would die and to establish a group to support cancer research so that many could live," she says. "She could never have imagined that her support group would grow into the Concern Foundation, an organization that would rock the local scene with its success."

### A FAMILY AND A FOUNDATION CONTINUED

Today Beverly and Gerd Wolman's daughters all have families of their own. Karen Wolman lives in London with her two children and studies landscape architecture. Twin sisters Andrea Wolman and Cheryl Wada live in the L.A. area, where they own the West L.A. home furnishings store Duet Interior Collections.

"It was when I became a mother myself in my 30s, the same age my mother was in the grips with her battle with cancer, that it became clear just how much courage my mother had," says Karen. "She taught us by her own example to strive for excellence. She instilled

a thirst for knowledge and a love of art and beauty in all three of us. I will forever be in awe of just how well she managed our home, family, and her growing commitment to a fledgling Concern with all she was going through."

Wada adds, "My sisters and I are all very proud that my mother started this organization with a group of friends and 40 years later they are raising well over \$1.5 million a year."

The foundation has achieved that success in part because its mission to CONquer canCER Now—hence the name Concern—was clear from the start. But when the 15 Los Angeles couples who were high school friends first joined forces in Beverly's living room to brainstorm, they had no idea their work would eventually touch so many lives. "I don't think my mom would believe what has transpired," says Karen.

The founders decided early on that they wanted to raise funds for research. The group worked with Beverly's internist, Dr. Wilbur Schwartz, to figure out the best way to do this. He suggested focusing on immunology, which looks at what causes a person's natural immune



system to break down and allow inactive cancer cells to become active. Dr. Schwartz recommended the group work to raise funds for Dr. David Weiss, a leading immunologist who was conducting research at Hebrew University in Jerusalem and for Dr. George Klein in Sweden, who was making strides in the field. Today, although the foundation has grown immensely and now works to fight all types of cancer, its mission to raise money for research persists. "I am proud that the organization has stuck to its guns, its original concept, and principles," says Gerd.

Besides the large amount of money they've raised, the nonprofit organization also prides itself on maintaining an administrative overhead of 5% or less, so that the highest-possible proportion of every dollar raised goes directly to cancer research. In 1975, Concern's initial funding support went to Hebrew University and the Karolinska Institute as well as the Department of Immunology at UCLA. Today Concern maintains the funding of two ongoing endowments: the Lautenberg Center at Hebrew University in Israel and Karolinska

Institute in Sweden, where over 30 young cancer research scientists are working on various projects thanks to the funding Concern provides.

An additional 19 cancer researchers have been awarded individual "seed money" grants of \$50,000 per year for the two year period of 2006 through 2008. Their cancer research projects cover 13 different types of cancer at leading institutions in the U.S. and abroad. Research grant requests are evaluated and approved by the Concern Foundation Scientific Review Committee, which is composed of senior cancer research scientists from around the world, many of whom have been recipients of Concern Foundation funding.

Concern remains a primarily volunteer-driven organization, with 10 of the original 15 couples still actively involved. Now those couples' families have become involved too, making Concern a multi-tiered organization with in some cases four generations of families working to sustain the mission to find a cure.

"We have 18-year-olds, or even younger, working side by side with 80-year-olds," says Concern Foundation president Derek Alpert, "and it is such a beautiful thing to see."

### A SUMMER CELEBRATION

In the organization's first two years, the founders raised \$18,000 with help from their friends. By 1973, the foundation had begun to attract A-list celebrities for its fundraising efforts: Jack Benny hosted An Evening at the Music Center with

Andy Williams, Sonny & Cher, Groucho Marx, and Liza Minnelli. The next year, none other than Ol' Blue Eyes himself, Frank Sinatra, joined Williams, Arte Johnson, and Jack Lemmon to entertain 900 guests at the first unofficial Block Party held in the gardens of the Al Hart estate in Bel-Air. The Block Party has now become an annual affair and, in addition to raising funds, it is a great way for the Wolmans to reconnect with family and friends.

"A lot of friendships and relationships have developed as a result of Concern. The block party is a great way to see everyone and for our family to get together," says Gerd.

It's also a great way for the city of Los Angeles to support the cause. "For our Block Party on Rodeo Drive, it was the first time Beverly Hills had ever agreed to shut down Rodeo," says Alpert.

As the fundraisers grew, so did the community's support. "To keep costs down, we moved the fundraiser to Paramount Studios' back lot, where we can maintain a Block Party feel and can grow our event with more participation from restaurants and sponsors." Gerd is thankful that so many L.A. eateries donate food to the party. "Everyone from the Grill to Pink's is there," he says. "Pink's always has the biggest line."

"We've been able to accomplish most of our goals thanks to the support of the community," says Wada. "It takes a village to do this and everyone is willing to help because everyone is affected by this disease. We all want to one day find a cure."

### THERE IS A BEVERLY WOLMAN IN ALL OUR LIVES.

It's up to each of us to make sure cancer does not take them out of the picture.

Join *Los Angeles* magazine today in support of cancer research by making a donation or sending a tribute "in memory of" or "to honor" someone special to the Concern Foundation at (323) 852-9844 or [www.concernfoundation.org](http://www.concernfoundation.org).

Every dollar counts in the quest to cure cancer!



CONCERN FOUNDERS REUNION

## THE FOUNDERS LOOK BACK

### The Gottliebs

“Beverly was a beautiful woman inside and out,” says Jackie Gottlieb, Concern’s first president. “She had the most infectious smile. Beverly was intelligent, articulate, and appreciative of everything going on in her life. She was compassionate, understanding, and caring, and always interested in what was going on in your life. ... From the beginning [Beverly] knew she was going to die of cancer, but she thought she would be much older when she finally passed away. This was the first time a contemporary of mine had been hit by a dreaded disease and we wanted to do whatever we could to make her feel comfortable and make her live on in all of us.”

She recalls the foundation’s humble beginnings as “a bunch of young kids who decided to try to raise money for cancer research. We put all of our friends’ names on a list and we wrote letters.”

JACKIE AND HER HUSBAND STAN ARE STILL ACTIVE MEMBERS OF THE CONCERN EXECUTIVE BOARD.

### The Schwartzs

Dr. Wilbur “Bill” Schwartz’s guidance was instrumental to the group’s early development, but he credits Beverly’s desire to want to help others for Concern’s success. “My



involvement began with Beverly Wolman, who was my patient,” he said. “She was dying of breast cancer and she requested that we start an organization. All of her friends came to me and we sat down and we started Concern. We elected early to stay in one particular area of cancer called immunology because we knew we would be too spread out if we tried to enter all of the areas of cancer research. The more money we can get, the more scientists we can support, the more research will get done and eventually the proper research will lead us in the right direction.”

BILL AND HIS WIFE DANA REMAIN ACTIVELY INVOLVED AS MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD AND OVERSEE THE WILBUR SCHWARTZ ENDOWMENT THAT PROVIDES FUNDS FOR SOME OF THE RESEARCH DONE AT HEBREW UNIVERSITY’S LAUTENBERG CENTER.

### The Powells

For founding member Larry Powell, it was important that the fledgling organization was as efficient as possible in turning funds raised into research dollars. “My mother had passed away from cancer, and I wasn’t satisfied with the organization that I set up a fund with,” he said. “Their expenses were so huge that the money wasn’t getting to the right place.”

LARRY AND HIS WIFE JOYCE’S SON, RICK, WHO IS CURRENTLY A CONCERN EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER, AND DAUGHTER, NANCY, WHO’S NOW BLOCK PARTY FOOD CHAIR, FOUNDED CONCERN II FOR VOLUNTEERS AGE 18 TO 35 IN THE EARLY EIGHTIES. WITH CONCERN II, FRIENDS AND GRANDCHILDREN OF THE ORIGINAL FOUNDERS CONTINUE TO FULFILL THE ORGANIZATION’S MISSION.



**ON SATURDAY, JULY 12, CONCERN FOUNDATION CELEBRATED THE 34TH ANNUAL BLOCK PARTY CELEBRATING LOS ANGELES MAGAZINE’S BEST OF LA® 2008**

**TUNED IN TO CANCER RESEARCH TO COMMORATE \$40 MILLION IN 40 YEARS**

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