



Celebrating 25 Years of the Jewish Healthcare Foundation

Advancing Public Health



Montefiore Hospital distinguished itself in the arena of public health. JHF, established from the sale of Montefiore, demonstrates a similar commitment to advancing public health, as evidenced by its work on behalf of women, children, and adolescents.

Women's Health

Former JHF board chair Pat Siger remembers when JHF's women's health agenda began taking shape. Recalls Siger, "My first encounter with JHF was when Laurie Moser, Eileen Lane, and I came to [JHF President and CEO] Karen Feinstein. We represented the National Council of Jewish Women, and said that we wanted to do Race for the Cure in Pittsburgh and needed some planning money. Without a blink, Karen said that this is really important. When Karen put a sword in the ground around this issue, it was clear we were on the same team."

The first Pittsburgh Race for the Cure occurred in 1993 and has become a Mother's Day tradition for women and men, raising some \$2 million annually.

JHF was poised for this partnership, having supported a public television documentary called *The Breast Test*. Aired across Pennsylvania, the documentary taught thousands of women about the importance of early detection, screening methods, and treatment options.

"When we started our work in breast cancer," recalls Dr.

Feinstein, "women didn't want to talk about it—not about the problem, not about having breast cancer, and certainly not about having a mastectomy. It's amazing how that's changed today. Last Mother's Day, 23,000 people participated in Pittsburgh's Race for the Cure, including 2,000 breast cancer survivors. Runners wear their status—and pink ribbons for all and pink T-shirts for survivors—proudly. One wonders whether the widespread adoption of mammography screening, and much of the recent groundbreaking breast cancer research, would have been possible if women hadn't been activated to race for a cure."

JHF's focus on women's health didn't end with breast cancer. When a well-known member of Pittsburgh's Jewish community had a heart attack during an aerobics class despite having no obvious pre-existing risks, the community took notice. Her heart attack was unrecognized as such because women present different symptoms than men. The result was Working Hearts®—one of the

first campaigns in the country to focus on heart health as a women's issue.

With seed funding from JHF, and leadership from Siger and Gert Caplan, Working Hearts® ran from 1999 to 2007, growing quickly to a coalition of more than 70 community organizations dedicated to the credo "Strong Women/Strong Hearts." The plan was to get women to know their numbers (body mass index, cholesterol, glucose, and blood pressure), and to realize that making incremental lifestyle changes could greatly reduce their risk for developing heart disease.

Child and Adolescent Health

For children and adolescents, JHF funded School Wellness Centers, as well as Safe Schools (a program to combat drug abuse), Lead and Kids, the Healthy Start Infant Mortality Review, and the Problem with Food (on teen eating disorders). Among these, *Operation Kidshot* perhaps best illustrates JHF's early willingness to move beyond a traditional foundation role and engage in policy advocacy.

Vaccines have dramatically enhanced population health. But children are reliant on those who love them to act in their best interests. In a story that parallels recent national news, a measles outbreak in Philadelphia in 1991 resulted in the death of eight children. These tragedies created an urgency to get kids vaccinated.

So, along with the Rotary Club of Pittsburgh, Children's Hospital, and the United Way, JHF started *Operation KidSho*—one of its first public health campaigns.

As JHF's first program officer, Jim Denova (now vice president at the Benedum Foundation) recalls, "*Operation KidShot* mobilized so many organizations, public health officials, corporations, and educational institutions. We set up immunization drives, especially in poor urban neighborhoods and very rural pockets of western Pennsylvania. Bruce Dixon [at the Allegheny County Health Department] was a great partner. Businesses also helped with outreach, and provided incentives to families." JHF staff attended rallies and even helped transport workers and vaccines around western Pennsylvania.

Ultimately, nearly 6,000 children in western Pennsylvania were immunized—and JHF staff worked with partners in Philadelphia and Harrisburg to pass a state law requiring that insurers cover the costs of immunizations.

Twenty-five years later, JHF is still concerned with immunizations and adolescent health. "Of all the public health advances in the last 100 years, immunizations stand out as a beacon of prevention trumping treatment," says Dr. Feinstein. In keeping with that theme, in 2014 JHF launched the HPV Vaccination Initiative, which aims to get adolescents vaccinated to prevent multiple cancers caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV), and in 2015 introduced a new Genes and Vaccines curriculum to our three Jewish Day Schools.

This monthly series, marking JHF's 25th anniversary, gives us a chance to remember, take stock, express gratitude, and celebrate successes.

Learn more about JHF's journey to better health and health care by ordering our 25th Anniversary ROOTS magazine (contact Carla Barricella at: barricella@jhf.org).



(L-R): WTAE media personality Sally Wiggin, Pat Siger, and Karen Feinstein were among those who joined forces for the Working Hearts® campaign to promote women's heart health.