

Harold and Shirley Pidgeon Honor Their Son's Memory with Help from the Jewish Community Foundation

When doctors discovered stage IV lung cancer in Harold and Shirley Pidgeon's 47-year-old son, the family thought their strong and resilient loved one would beat the deadly scourge. "I was in denial until the very end," said Harold.

As they mourned their devastating loss, the Pidgeons soon found themselves the recipients of a generous trust left by Lawrence, or Larry as they called him, who had been an extremely successful investment banker in New York. It was an unexpected, but not surprising gift from Larry, one of the couple's three accomplished and caring sons.

"We decided that we wanted to give away the money our son left us," said Harold, noting he and his wife wanted to choose causes that would be important to Larry. "I'm 79 years old. At my age, I found myself asking the question, "what would he do?"

The parents turned to the Jewish Community Foundation, a nonprofit philanthropic services provider, for help. "I initially contacted (then JCF executive director) Marjory Kaplan," recalled Harold of his first outreach to JCF in 2012. "I told her our son has just passed away and we want to do something for him."

It was the beginning of a strong friendship that continues to this day and which has benefitted several local charities. "The Foundation has been very good to me," said Harold. "I use them as my resource for all charitable giving."

Harold, a successful business executive, said the Foundation provided information about various charities of interest to his family. "Even now, I turn to them for any kind of research," he said. "Every time I get a call about a charity, I ask the

Foundation to check it out and they tell me if it's a good group. I use them as an advisor."

Along with research and information, the Foundation also helped Harold and his family structure their charitable giving to be distributed annually over several years. "I tend to focus on Jewish causes," said Harold, who has served on the boards of the San Diego Jewish Academy, American Israel Public Affairs Committee and other local Jewish organizations. However, the family also donated to secular causes as their and Larry's interests were diverse and involved a broad spectrum of community areas. The gift recipients include:

- The Lawrence S. Pidgeon sanctuary was dedicated in 2014 at the Temple Solel in Cardiff-by-the-Sea in north San Diego County. It stands as a beautiful reminder of Larry, who had moved to San Diego with his wife, Sue, and their three children, to be nearer to the large, extended Pidgeon family. "We decided to give a naming gift that helped fund the new sanctuary at Temple Solel," said Harold. "Everything we donate is in Larry's name."
- An endowment in Larry's name supports an educational trip to Israel for graduating high school seniors at the San Diego Jewish Academy. Recipients spend three weeks in Israel and one week in Poland learning about the rich traditions, history and experiences of the Jewish people. "We think it's the best place for Jewish kids to get a shot in the arm," said Harold. "Everyone who has been there thinks it's wonderful. The kids go and visit famous sites and learn more about their culture."

- Moore's Cancer Center at UC San Diego receives funds to help support a patient communications representative. "Some doctors are very good at communicating with people and some are not so good at communicating," said Harold, explaining that they contribute toward the cost of a spokesperson who helps family members better understand the diagnosis and treatment of their loved ones.
- In addition, Harold and Shirley established several endowment funds at the Foundation: The Larry Pidgeon Endowment Funds for Holocaust Education, JCC Youth Basketball and for JCF Young Philanthropists.

Harold added that his experiences with the Foundation have been extremely beneficial in helping the family achieve their philanthropic goals. "Sharleen Wollach (JCF's Vice President of Operations) and all of the people there are very nice. They are attentive, responsive and understand our needs."

JCF President and CEO Beth Sirull said that in celebrating its 50th anniversary, the Foundation continues to be proud to help facilitate the charitable good works of the Pidgeon family, as well as the giving activities of the many other wonderful JCF donors.

"Harold and Shirley are making a real difference by distributing charitable gifts on Larry's behalf and continuing to support other causes from their Donor Advised Fund held at the Jewish Community Foundation," Sirull said. "Their far-reaching charitable efforts are benefitting people in so many ways and are a beautiful example of what can be accomplished in our community."

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