



Celebrating Food, Art & Community

Heart Health Month
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Grassroots catalyst
for improving heart health



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A year after Steven Cohen died of a heart attack in Los Angeles, his friends, family and community founded the Steven S. Cohen Heart Fund in 1996. Cohen was a seemingly healthy 35-year-old husband and father of two children. His untimely death motivated those who knew him to keep his legacy alive and raise awareness about heart health, early detection and intervention.

In 2004, after years of building a partnership with Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, the fund's name was changed to The Heart Foundation. It's based in Westlake Village outside Los Angeles.

The mission grew to "save lives by increasing awareness of heart disease, promoting early detection, and supporting the innovative research taking place at Smidt Heart Institute at Cedars-Sinai under the direction of world-renowned cardiologist Dr. P.K. Shah."

"We are very proud to fund groundbreaking research ... under Dr. P.K. Shah," says Hannah Drake Litman, the foundation's digital content manager. "He's a rock star in the world of cardiology and hearth health."

A grassroots nonprofit

Private donors, patients and corporate sponsors help to fund The Heart Foundation. The nonprofit's largest fundraising event is the annual Galpin Motors Golf Classic Benefitting The Heart Foundation at Sherwood Country Club in Thousand Oaks, California.

"We are very much a grassroots nonprofit," Litman says. "It's a tiny group of people motivated to create change."

Litman's social media posts share information about health tips, questions to ask your doctor and how overconsuming alcohol and energy drinks can affect heart health.

"I do a lot of live interviews on our Instagram," she says. "I've interviewed Jamie Foxx, Dana Carvey, David Foster, Paul Stanley. I've interviewed influential people about their experiences with heart health or with heart disease. They're really happy to use their platforms to spread even more awareness and help their supporters."

Heart Warriors is a series on The Heart Foundation's social media channels. People who have been touched by heart



Heart Foundation Chairman Mark Litman, left, Digital Content Manager Hannah Drake Litman, Executive Director Catherine Mullaney and Auction Coordinator Margaret McNicoll attend the 27th annual Galpin Motors Golf Classic benefitting The Heart Foundation. Photo by Tom Neerken

disease or have experienced a cardiac event go live with Litman to discuss symptoms they had or didn't notice, their journey and what their future looks like.

"This gives people a support community that they can look at and say, 'I am not alone,'" Litman says. "It helps people see, 'That person is like me, and I didn't know that could be a symptom.'"

Research and development

The Heart Foundation has raised more than \$30 million to support research spearheaded by Shah and his team. They have been collecting information on heart failure, inflammation, metabolic syndrome and obesity, and have developed two vaccines for atherosclerosis, the buildup of plaque in arteries. One vaccine is in the preclinical trial stage and the other completed Phase 2A clinical trials and is preparing to enter more extensive Phase 2B clinical trials.

The P.K. Shah Laboratory centers its work on new techniques for diagnosing heart disease and new therapeutic interventions.

"My focus is on prevention," Shah says in a Cedars-Sinai YouTube clip. "There's been a revolution in the field of cardiovascular medicine and surgery. There's hope for every patient."

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