

Thursday, June 27, 2013

MHN Interview: How Apartment Communities are Raising Money for Breast Cancer Research

By Jessica Fiur, News Editor



Andrew Abramson and Lindsay Brooke Weiss of the Cure Breast Cancer Foundation

Clifton, N.J.—[The Cure Breast Cancer Foundation](#), a Clifton, N.J.-based foundation, is now in the fourth year of its Lease for a Cure program. *MHN* talks to Andrew Abramson, treasurer and cofounder, and Lindsay Brooke Weiss, director of events and special projects, about how apartment communities can help raise money for breast cancer research.

MHN: Tell me a little about the Cure Breast Cancer Foundation.

Abramson: The organization was founded approximately six and a half years ago. Its goal was to raise unrestricted research funds for research under the direction of Dr. Larry Norton at Memorial Sloan Kettering. The impetus of this was that my wife has had breast cancer three times, and my youngest daughter, when she was 12, made a key ring for my wife when she was going into chemotherapy. The nurses and the doctors saw it and went nuts about it, so she made a few more of these things. Over a relatively short period of time, at \$15 a key ring, we raised \$10,000 and donated that to Sloan Kettering. We decided that we were going to see, in conjunction with Dr. Norton, about taking this to the next level, and the creation of the foundation was the next step. Since we were founded, we've raised almost \$5 million, and we're now sponsoring research not only at Memorial Sloan Kettering, but also we're doing a project in Israel now, and we're probably going to be doing another project based in England.

The key to what we're doing is we're providing the research funds for an idea, and the idea is called the self-seeding theory of breast cancer, which three or four years ago was revolutionary, and now is in literature all over the world. That research, under the direction of Dr. Norton, is taking on a life of its own. But one of the key things to what we do is that it's unrestricted funds. We want doctors who are the geniuses in this to move in whatever direction they feel the research takes them, and not be in a position where, for instance, they give us a grant proposal and they have an idea, and they're three months into the research and find out it's a dead end. Under a standard grant proposal, the researcher has two choices: either waste the money, or give it back. We don't want to waste it, and we don't want it back. We want the researchers to say, "Well maybe we didn't go down the right path, so now we need to go left." We don't want to be the impediment in their ideas.

MHN: What is the Lease for a Cure program?

Abramson: The Lease for a Cure program started about three years ago. The idea was to get landlords and owners in New Jersey to get out more information and involve more people. The landlords would agree that they would put up some materials in their office, and for every lease that was signed in October [Breast Cancer Awareness Month], they would send us a donation of \$10-\$20 per lease. Through this program, we've raised close to \$100,000.



MHN: Why the decision to go to apartment communities?

Abramson: It's really about trying to feed off of a different demographic. A lot of charities pick an industry, and our industry was apartment owners. On an individual basis, it's not a big-dollar amount, although with some of the bigger landlords it could theoretically be a lot of money. But we're just trying to get more people involved and get more exposure through different means.

MHN: Do you plan to take this program beyond New Jersey?

Abramson: That's our goal. We're going to start reaching out to the Philadelphia Apartment Association and the New York Apartment Association and see if we can make some headway there. The goal would be to try to figure out how we could get some sort of national base and have this all over the country.

MHN: How can other people get involved?

Weiss: Besides the programs mentioned, we're also customizing programs for people in other industries. So if someone has a roofing company and wants to donate a certain percentage during the month of October, or however long they want, we're working on customized programs for that as well. So we're reaching out beyond apartment communities.

MHN: And how could more apartment owners get involved?

Weiss: They can contact us through the [website](#) or email me directly, and we have all the information.

Abramson: We're redoing our website right now, but there will be a way to sign up on the foundation's website.