

The Pan-Massachusetts Challenge August 1 - 2, 2009
to benefit the Leslie's Links Ewing Sarcoma Fund at Dana Farber Cancer Institute

June 30, 2009

Dear Family & Friends,

On August 1st and 2nd, I will once again be participating in The 2009 Pan-Mass Challenge (<http://www.pmc.org>), a fundraising bike-a-thon from Sturbridge and Wellesley, MA to Bourne, MA with an optional second day ride from Bourne to Provincetown, MA. The route that I am riding this year is the 85 mile route from Wellesley to Bourne. Why you ask would I want to sit on a bike seat for 85 miles in the heat and humidity?

I used to say, "I ride to help find a cure. I ride for Leslie." Unfortunately, as time passes, more and more names are added to the list. I now say "I ride to help find a cure. I ride for Leslie Semonian, Mary Dedekian, Filomena Capizzi, Judith Paiewonsky, Suzanne Lipschitz, Enoch Lachinian, Vahe Maroukhian, John Janjigian, John Kefeyan, Vicki Consalvi Jones, Khorshed Jungalwala, Rosemary Davidian and many more who have lost their battle with cancer.."

I am part of a team of riders who are raising money in honor of Leslie Semonian who died of cancer on December 14, 1999 at the age of 32. Leslie led an amazing life and rode in the Pan Mass challenge for a number of years. She was also the only active chemotherapy patient to finish the ride in 1994. I have attached a copy of her story so that you might know her and be inspired by her as I am. In the months before her death, Leslie set up a charity in conjunction with the Dana-Farber Institute to help raise money for Ewing's sarcoma cancer research. The organization is called the **Leslie's Links/Ewing's Sarcoma Fund**. For more information on this charity, please visit the website Leslie set up in the last few months of her life. (<http://www.leslieslinks.org>).

How few are lucky enough to say that cancer has not touched our lives in some way. Whether it be a relative, friend or acquaintance, we all have felt the pain of losing someone close to us. Please help to fight this disease and especially Ewing's sarcoma that affects so many young people.

Now for the pitch. **In order to participate, I must raise \$4000.00.** My goal is to raise much more. I ask that you complete a pledge sheet or make a pledge online and give as much as you can. Any amount is greatly appreciated. I will do all of the hard work, but with your support we will all contribute to this worthy cause. Please help me get there. Send your completed pledge sheet and check to:

Aram Aslanian, PO Box 434, Belmont, MA 02478

Please make out your checks to the **PMC/Leslie's Links**. Your contribution is tax deductible

You may also pledge online via the PMC gift website.

<https://www.pmc.org/egifts/MakeADonation.asp?eGiftID=AA0018&FromSelection=Yes>

Anyone who knew Leslie knew her appreciation and enthusiasm for life. We hope that you will help to honor her and many others by participating in my fund drive. I will send you an update after the ride.

Thank you in advance for your generous contribution and support,

Aram Aslanian

Pan-Mass Challenge

<p>Yes, I/we want to help in the fight against cancer! Here is my/our donation of: " \$150 " \$100 " \$75 " \$50 " Other \$ _____</p> <p>Name: _____</p> <p>Address: _____ _____</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Gifts are tax deductible! Your donation is greatly appreciated.</p>	<p>" My check is enclosed. (Please make checks payable to "PMC-Leslie's Links".)</p> <p>" Please charge my donation to: " VISA " MC " AMEX Acct. No. _____ Exp. Date _____ Signature _____</p> <p>" My employer will match my gift. (Please enclose your employer's matching gift form.) Employer _____</p>
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Mail Payments to: Aram Aslanian, PO Box 434, Belmont, MA 02478

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Leslie's Story

September 13, 1967 - December 14, 1999



It was August 17th, 1991 and the Semonian family was celebrating a 25th Wedding Anniversary as well as mom's 50th and dad's 60th birthday. Leslie, in her usual vivacious style, had spent weeks planning, creating a superb invitation and arranging the perfect event. The party went off without a hitch except for one thing - her secret, two weeks old, now had to be shared. Leslie had recently been diagnosed with CANCER, but with all the planning for her parents' party it was simply a major inconvenience to be dealt with later.

What had begun as severe leg pain in the preceding months turned out to be a tumor in her fibula known as Ewing's Sarcoma, a rare bone cancer which predominately appears in children ages 10-20. Immediately following the wonderful celebration, Leslie underwent surgery to remove a portion of her fibula bone and began intensive chemotherapy.

Leslie Before Cancer

Born as the first of three children to Armenian-American parents in Newton, Massachusetts, Leslie was raised in a family which stressed tradition and strong cultural values. Her family also encouraged her to be her own person.

Leslie's formative years were idyllic, filled with many friends, successes and few crises. Aside from the quintessential young female teenager preoccupation with constant socializing, Leslie distinguished herself in a variety of ways. As a star athlete throughout her youth, Leslie enjoyed competing in tennis, swimming, softball and skiing, earning many awards and titles including the Junior Achievement award from Oakley Country Club; she also served as the captain of her varsity tennis team in high school. Upon graduation from Newton South High School in 1985, she attended the University of Massachusetts Amherst, School of Business Administration where she earned a bachelor's degree.

She enjoyed her college years at The University of Massachusetts at Amherst, which were filled with many social activities. Her junior year was spent studying abroad in Copenhagen, Denmark, which sparked her interest in travel and history. Her sense of independence was further developed during the summer before her senior year when she backpacked by herself through Eastern Europe. Upon graduation, Leslie landed employment at MCI, where she worked as an inside sales representative marketing long distance services. She enjoyed the young, social workplace, but swore she would never cold call again.

Leslie With Cancer

After Leslie's surgery on her fibula, she was left with a large 18-inch scar on her right leg. Fortunately, due to advancements in surgery, she retained the ability to walk. Though the ensuing chemotherapy was grueling, she was optimistic - she had been given a 65% chance of survival over the next five years. Leslie grew introspective and changed during this ordeal, and she decided to refine her priorities in life and live with a new intensity.

Over the next three years Leslie was employed as a corporate travel agent for Thomas Cooke Travel, renewing once again her interest in world travel. During this time, she traveled to Southeast Asia, Greece and Turkey; she also skied and snowboarded throughout North America. She also became a columnist and calendar editor at The Improper Bostonian Magazine, where she created and produced the popular feature column "Woman on the Street."

The scar on her leg served as a constant reminder of the possibility that her cancer could return. It inspired her to work in any way possible so others would have the same excellent cancer treatment she received and could benefit from future cancer research.

In 1994 Leslie, after being cancer free for two years, volunteered for the Pan-Mass Challenge, a 192-mile bike ride to raise money for the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. During her first year of involvement with the event, she supported the riders by collecting trash at the finish line in Provincetown. It was at this point that she committed to herself to participate as a rider the following year. Shortly after her first 192-mile bike ride, Leslie was re-diagnosed with cancer. The following year, despite grueling chemotherapy treatments, she rode once again, teaming up with her friend, Chris McKeown, on a tandem bike. Every year after that, she rode on her own.

The PMC became a constant in Leslie's life. She met many new friends and doggedly recruited/insisted that old friends ride and donate. Her involvement in the PMC included everything. She served as the poster child for a Dana-Farber ad campaign, volunteered during the ride, stuffed envelopes at headquarters, arranged housing for riders, and rode in the

bike-a-thon; she even created a riding team of her own, called Wicked Women on Wheels. She was also the only active chemotherapy patient to finish the ride in 1994.

After completing her year of treatment, Leslie decided to apply to graduate school. In the fall of 1996 she began working on her MBA at Babson College's Graduate School of Management. While completing her MBA, Leslie continued her world travels, including a visit to Armenia. She also participated in study programs in South America and China. Not surprisingly, she was a very active and involved student. She was elected Director of Community Activities for the Graduate Student Association, and was creator and publisher of her class's MBA yearbook, the first hard cover version ever published. As a tribute to her accomplishments as a student and as the class' social secretary, she was chosen to be listed in the publication, Who's Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges. While at Babson, she also met the love of her life, a fellow MBA student. After graduation, her success in publishing the student yearbook paved the way for a contract to produce the Harvard Business School's MBA yearbook, which she completed the following year.

With her MBA in hand, Leslie accepted a job from her tandem bicycling partner in the PMC, to work as financial controller for ServiSense, an internet start-up. She also earned her real estate license, traveled to Costa Rica, and continued her charity work.

In January 1999, Leslie was diagnosed with cancer for a third time. At first, she received radiation to her head and her shoulder. Unfortunately, the cancer was widespread at this point. In October 1999 she began chemotherapy, which had little effect on slowing the growth of the cancer, and her condition continued to worsen.

During the next several months, as her health continued to decline, Leslie developed a vision for a charity to carry on her legacy. Even while she was bedridden in the hospital in a morphine-induced state with a patch over one eye, Leslie convened bedside meetings to convey her ideas and vision. Assembling a team of friends and relatives, she founded Leslie's Links in conjunction with the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute to help raise money for cancer research. Leslie's Links will serve to link patients, family members and doctors together to help each other share information, find support and raise money for a cure, thus continuing Leslie's style of connecting people to benefit others.

During the eight-and-a-half year period of cancer, until her death on December 14th, 1999, Leslie never allowed her illness to stand in the way of her goal of helping others. Her passion for life was boundless, and will continue in the hearts of the many friends and relatives whom she inspired.