



## A LEGACY LIVES ON

Sarcoma-Oma Foundation provides medical travel assistance, funds innovative sarcoma research

BY SARAH WATSON

As an event planner in the San Francisco Bay Area, Linda Noack Wiener wore many hats throughout her successful career. But above all she relished her role as “Oma,” grandmother of two. Sadly, Linda died in 2015 at age 61 of liposarcoma, a type of soft tissue cancer. In their grief, her family saw an opportunity to honor her life and the role she so joyfully embraced by establishing the Sarcoma-Oma Foundation. Guided by Linda’s love of people, they turned their focus to easing the burden of travel expenses for other sarcoma patients and their loved ones.

“I recalled sitting in the waiting room at MD Anderson with other families who had traveled long distances to Houston,” says Gary Wiener, Linda’s husband. “We were blessed that we were not restricted due to employment or financial limitations, but that is not the case for all patients. We thought it would be helpful to give them assistance getting to and from home and the hospital.”

Gary and his family worked with MD Anderson’s Social Work department to set up an application process enabling them to provide help on a case-by-case basis. The foundation supports U.S. residents with any type of sarcoma, a rare cancer with little research funding.

In addition, the Sarcoma-Oma Foundation helps patients search for treatment options through its informative website, [sarcoma-oma.org](http://sarcoma-oma.org).

“Linda and I learned so much the hard way on this journey,” says Gary. “If we had known many of these things on the day she was diagnosed, such as the benefits of palliative care, it would have made Linda’s two-plus years of fighting easier and possibly given her a little more time.”

The foundation’s third goal is to support innovative sarcoma research. Sarcoma-Oma provided initial support for an immunology correlative study led by Neeta Somaiah, M.D., associate professor of Sarcoma



Neeta Somaiah, M.D., associate professor of Sarcoma Medical Oncology, is interviewed onstage by comedian Mark Pitta, host of the fifth annual Linda Noack Wiener Sarcoma-Oma Foundation Gala, Nov. 16, 2019, at the Four Seasons in San Francisco.

CLAYTON J. MITCHELL PHOTOGRAPHY

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—NEETA SOMAIAH, M.D.,  
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Medical Oncology, and has contributed a total of \$70,000 to her team’s efforts. Somaiah, who provided consultation throughout Linda’s treatment, sits on the foundation’s medical advisory board.

Sarcoma-Oma raises funds through donations and events such as an annual gala and a spin cycle tour endorsed by such celebrities as baseball great Barry Bonds, Entertainment Tonight’s Samantha Harris, and actors Malcolm McDowell, Joe Manganiello and Sarah Rafferty. To date, the San Francisco-based 501(c)3 organization has contributed more than \$100,000 to approximately 50 patients from 20 states.

“We are grateful for the support of the Sarcoma-Oma Foundation,” says Somaiah. “This generosity is helping advance my team’s efforts in understanding the immunotherapeutic landscape of sarcomas, allowing us to translate findings into sarcoma subtype-specific treatment strategies for patients.”