The Gootter Foundation: The Little Foundation That Could

Success for the Steven M. Gootter Foundation is bittersweet. Established in 2005, the Foundation is named for a beloved son, father, brother, husband and friend. “We wish we never would have had to establish this Foundation. But when we lost Steve to sudden cardiac arrest, we had to do something—and we hope that the work of the foundation will prevent other families from having a loved one stolen away too soon,” says Steven’s sister, Claudine Messing.

The Gootter Foundation has found incredible success in raising awareness and significant support toward preventing sudden cardiac arrest. “Two things still surprise me—the number of people that my son touched in some way and the number of families that have similar stories to ours,” says Steve’s mother, Paulette Gootter.

It is perhaps because of these two observations and the dedication of the all-volunteer Foundation that in six years more than $1.5 million has been raised to support the Sarver Heart Center’s research.

The Gootter Foundation has made 12 research awards to faculty with innovative and novel ideas to prevent sudden cardiac arrest and is working to establish an endowed chair to recruit a new faculty member focused on this issue. The Foundation also has provided

Generous Bequest Funds Cardiovascular Research

“Mom and Ed were a wonderful couple,” says Sharon Seekins, the daughter of Virginia Madden. “They met through their church in Sierra Vista. We were thrilled when they married,” she explains. Virginia and Edward “Ed” Madden had both lost two previous spouses to cancer and heart disease, so finding love a third time was something a bit unexpected.

Ed, a retired postal worker, had saved throughout his life, though he was always a generous man when it came to causes he believed in, including the University of Arizona Sarver Heart Center. Heart disease played a role in the deaths of his first and second wives. These losses led him to make a generous provision through his estate for the UA Sarver Heart Center.

Growing up in New York, Ed never drove and always used some form of public transportation. This didn’t change when he moved to Sierra Vista in 1980. In fact, it was because he didn’t drive that he met Virginia. “Mom was a volunteer driver for their church and Ed was one of her passengers.” From their friendship grew romance and eventually marriage. “Much like Ed, Mom had been widowed twice before, so for them to find each other was wonderful,” says Sharon.

Before Ed passed away in 2007, Virginia and he would travel and spend time with children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. Just after Ed’s passing, Virginia wrote to the UA Sarver Heart Center to say simply that she and her children had discussed it and although Ed had changed his will to provide for her, she would be honoring Ed’s wishes by ensuring that his estate passed on to the Center, just as he had intended.

“This story behind this gift is wonderful,” says Dr. Gordon A. Ewy. “Mr. and Mrs. Madden’s hope to make a difference in the lives of those suffering from cardiovascular disease will be realized through critical research funded by the Edward and Virginia Madden Investigator Award. We also are grateful to Mrs. Madden’s daughter, Sharon, for helping us to get to know the Maddens and why this gift meant so much to them.”

The research award recipient for 2011-2012 is Maria I. Altbach, PhD, who is working with Aiden Abidov, MD, PhD, to study a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) technique that may be a non-invasive way for doctors to diagnose whether a patient with chest pains is at risk of developing a heart attack. If successful, this project could alter the management of patients suspected of acute coronary syndrome as a result of atherosclerotic disease.

If you would like to make a provision in your estate to benefit the Sarver Heart Center, please call the Office of Development at 520-626-4146.