

# & HEREDITARY CANCER RISKS

## MY PROMISE TO MY DAUGHTER

By Paulinda Schimmel

No one saw this coming.

No doctors saw past her youth.

And surely I could not have imagined what lay ahead.

But then the earth tilted and my life as a mother changed forever. One dark, seismic event forever transformed my comfortable, familiar life into that of an unstoppable activist.

In 1988, my daughter, Robin, began TIOH pre-school. In a blink, Robin was a Bat Mitzvah and her brother, Ehren, was a Bar Mitzvah. On the same TIOH Bima, Robin was confirmed in 2001. We made friends with parents, their children, the teachers, and the rabbis. Steady and safe, TIOH was our happy, enriching home away from home.

In her senior year at Pacific Hills High School, in the midst of her usual high-octane schedule of school, cheerleading, community volunteering and more, Robin suffered from an increasing series of elusive, painful symptoms. Missed signals and inconclusive tests led to a CT scan, emergency surgery and a frightening, terrible diagnosis: Robin had Stage 3 ovarian cancer. Robin was only 17 years old, by all accounts far too young for this disease. During that year Robin endured major surgeries and grueling chemo treatments. Nonetheless, with sheer grit, she graduated from high school, enrolled at UC Santa Barbara and pledged Kappa Kappa Gamma. But six months into her freshman year, the cancer recurred and had metastasized.

On June 29, 2006, Robin died. She was 20 years old!

Grief, shock, sorrow, despair and yes, anger collided. But struggling forward, I dug deep into my soul and decided that however stricken by my loss of dear Robin, her death would not triumph. An unthinkable fatal illness of a child must "be for a reason," as Robin confessed to me toward the end of her short life.

And so I chose to shine a lasting light on the life of my beautiful daughter and create a legacy for her.

After running my own successful digital imaging business for some 40 years, it was nonetheless a HUGE leap for me to accept the urging of close friends to establish a 501c3 nonprofit organization. In a big learning curve, intimidated but determined, I founded THE OVARIAN CANCER CIRCLE/INSPIRED BY ROBIN BABBINI. We established [www.theovariancancer.org](http://www.theovariancancer.org) as a resource for news, education and donor support.

In the past 7 years, THE CIRCLE has grown into a vibrant organization, working tirelessly to heighten the awareness of ovarian cancer and educate women of all ages about the elusive symptoms. With no early detection test, education is the most effective tool in fighting ovarian cancer.

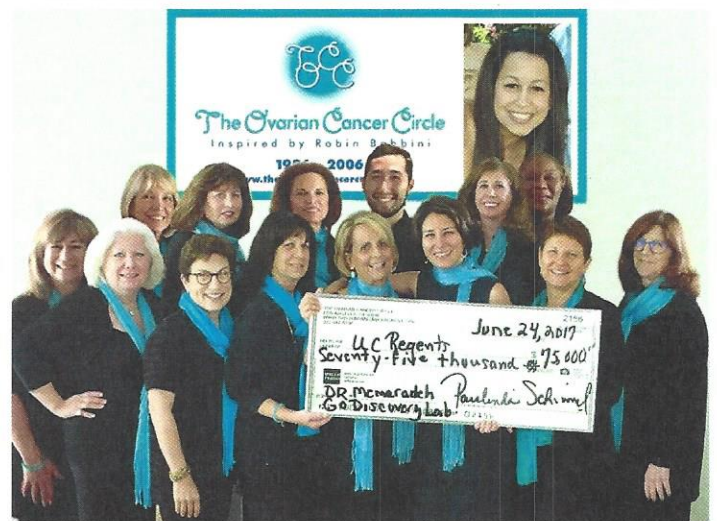
I'm ever indebted to the board, an amazing team of volunteers, and of course all of our generous donors. Many of THE CIRCLE members have joined me to network throughout L.A. at health fairs, seminars, regional conferences, and even national conventions in Washington, DC.

Fundraising is the key to research and clinical trials that will lead to ovarian cancer being conquered. THE CIRCLE has dedicated its support to the prestigious UCLA-based G.O. Discovery Lab, led by Dr. Sanaz Memarzadeh. The CIRCLE hosts two annual fundraising events, "Take a Bite Out of Ovarian Cancer" at Ruth's Chris Steak House and "Teal There's a Cure." To date we're thrilled to have raised \$400,000!!!

I am deeply proud that THE CIRCLE has achieved increasing public civic recognition. With humility, I have been honored with a "Women in Leadership Award" by West Hollywood; KNX Radio "Hero of the Week"; and a "Certificate of Recognition" by the City of L.A.

Moreover, just this past fall, THE CIRCLE attained a 'first-ever' milestone: The City of Los Angeles and Councilmembers Paul Koretz, Monica Rodriguez and Nury Martinez proclaimed Sept. 19, 2017 as *Ovarian Cancer Awareness Day*.

To my precious Robin: You are by my side each and every day. You motivate me, inspire me. Your brief life sustains a loving flame that shines on this vital cause. I promise you that I shall walk this path until a cure is found for ovarian cancer.



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