



Giving from the Heart

Lovemark happens to be their last name, but it's also the perfect name for the nonprofit foundation that Tiva and Jamie Lovemark have established to financially and emotionally support patients diagnosed with brain tumors at Smilow Cancer Hospital. Through their generous donations—nearly \$500,000 over the past five years—the couple is making their mark and showing their devotion to patients whose journey they understand so well.

In 2002, when Tiva was a high school freshman in nearby Stamford, CT, severe headaches prompted her to have an MRI. The diagnosis: a benign cerebellar brain tumor. She consulted with doctors elsewhere who pressured her to have brain surgery immediately. She and her parents weren't comfortable with that recommendation. Tiva was so young, an active cheerleader and gymnast, and she had no other symptoms.

Then they met with Charles Duncan, MD, FAANS, a now retired Yale neurosurgeon, who established the first dedicated pediatric neurosurgery program in Connecticut. "You feel like you're with a family member when you're with him," Tiva said. "His

Tiva and Jamie Lovemark

bedside manner stood out; it didn't feel so sterile. And my mom had done her research; he was the best neurosurgeon we could have seen in our area." Dr. Duncan recommended a different course for Tiva: They would instead monitor the tumor, with regular scans, rather than surgery.

However, MRIs are expensive. While in nursing school, Tiva didn't have health insurance to cover the scans. And even though she worked two jobs, she didn't have the money to cover the significant out-of-pocket expense. "I wrote to Yale to ask for a grant," Tiva said. "When I received it, I was very grateful. I felt, 'I'm going to give back some day.'"

Tiva's desire to pay it forward intensified with each stable scan and as she worked with oncology patients in her nursing career. When she met her husband Jamie, a pro golfer on the PGA tour, she shared her intentions with him. In 2017, the couple decided the time was right to make Tiva's wish come true. They established the Lovemark Foundation and put their plan into action.

They were introduced to Jennifer Moliterno, MD, FAANS, Associate Professor of Neurosurgery, Chief of Neurosurgical Oncology, and Clinical Director of the Chênevert Family Brain Tumor Center at Smilow Cancer Hospital and Yale Cancer Center. Dr. Moliterno has established herself as the busiest brain tumor neurosurgeon in Connect

icut and is renowned for taking on complex brain tumor cases that other neurosurgeons have referred to her for her expertise "The stars aligned when we met with Jen," Tiva said. "Our vision was symbiotic with what she was already doing on a personal level."

They all understood how a brain tumor diagnosis can put an enormous financial strain on families, even those who are normally able to cover their bills. The Lovemark Foundation would help alleviate that strain by covering expenses that patients sorely needed, by providing funds to be put towards mortgage or utility payments, wheelchairs and, particularly, transportation to seek the exceptional care at Smilow Cancer Hospital.

"As a neurosurgical oncologist, I strive to give my patients the best clinical outcome with the safest and most aggressive surgery possible," Dr. Moliterno said. "The generosity of the Lovemark Foundation perfectly aligns with the overarching clinical mission of our Brain Tumor Center and that is to provide the most exceptional care with compassion and support. The Lovemark monies also allow people who may not otherwise have the resources to travel here from afar to now do so and receive the high quality of care that we provide."

Those costs are covered by the Lovemark Foundation's annual Charity Golf Pro-Am tournament. Every penny

raised goes directly to patients. Given his longevity on the PGA Tour, Jamie has been able to recruit many of his friends and fellow pros—including Luke Donald, Keegan Bradley, and Camilo Villegas—to participate in the tournament. "We usually get between 15 to 18 pros, which stands out in the PGA Tour community," Tiva said. "The fact that our friends come back year after year says a lot about the tournament."

As the pandemic unfolded in 2020 and forced the cancellation of the golf tournament, the Lovemarks still made a sizeable donation at year's end to help brighten the holidays for patients and families with young children. "I know firsthand that you can work so hard, but sometimes it's just not enough," Tiva said. "Sometimes you need a bump—maybe just \$1,000—especially at the holidays to get you over the next hump and get you where you need to be."

The tournament resumed in 2021. Jamie and friends will be back on the links at the Hudson National Golf Club on June 27 for another round of golf and another infusion of support for patients cared for through the Chênevert Family Brain Tumor Center. "Tiva and Jamie are such kind and generous individuals," Dr. Moliterno said. "Their work comes from the heart. I'm so thankful on behalf of our patients for the ongoing support they provide our patients." 🔄

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—Dr. Jennifer Moliterno