

# Valley Fever Americas Foundation

Volume 11, Issue 2

Quarterly Newsletter

December 2008

## Helping others see the face of Valley Fever

This year two families in the Bakersfield area have “gone public” with the story of their loved ones struggle with Valley Fever. Their goal is to help others recognize that the disease must be taken seriously as it can be devastating, and even fatal. Too many people still dismiss Valley Fever as more of a joke than a problem.

Many in Bakersfield and the surrounding area followed the story of **Jacalynn Hernandez**. We heard first about a young



high school student who wanted to get back to classes and her sports team. News photos from the hospital showed graphically the impact of Valley fever on Jackie and her family. We all shared the hopes of her family that she would be able to recover and return to them. It was a shock to the whole community when she passed away in early August 2008.

**Jacalynn Faith Hernandez**  
November 11, 1990 - August 1, 2008

**Edith Preller**'s struggle was private, but she left a challenge to her family: “I only ask that if I am unable to write things down, someone will and make sure that the public is made aware of what Valley Fever is and how it destroys your life.”



**Edith Lorene Preller**  
May 11, 1947 - May 18, 2008

Edith kept a journal for as long as she was able, and her sisters (“*Helping others*” *continued on page 3*)

### ANNUAL COCCI STUDY GROUP TO MEET IN BAKERSFIELD APRIL 4, 2009

Every year researchers and physicians involved with the fungus that causes Valley Fever meet to share and learn from one another. This year the meeting will be held on the campus of Cal State University, Bakersfield. The day before the conference will be dedicated to a review of the Valley Fever Vaccine Project.

### LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

I'd like to express my deep appreciation to the Bakersfield families of Edith Preller and Jacalynn Hernandez who are honoring their loved ones by doing what they can to increase awareness of the disease. Please help by sharing their stories with your friends and co-workers.

We also deeply appreciate the many families who have suggested our foundation for memorial contributions in honor of their loved ones. The suffering of so many of our friends and neighbors keeps our attention focused on the need for a vaccine.

This disease is our problem, and it is up to us to solve it. The rest of the world doesn't know Valley Fever 'up close and personal' the way we do.

Thank you for your continued interest and support!

Michael W. Cooper  
Project Chairman and Board President

## CONTRIBUTIONS THAT TOUCH THE HEART

This summer the Valley Fever Americas Foundation received a contribution that uniquely touched my heart and memories.

A note accompanied the check explaining that it represented a gift made in lieu of table favors at the wedding of Eric and Stacie Walker.

The gift was in memory of Stacie's father, Michael Steven Youngblood, who died of Valley Fever several years ago.

(“Contributions touching the Heart” *continued on page 2*)



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*("Contributions touching the Heart" continued from page 1)*

This gift, along with carrying his rosary in her wedding bouquet, was Stacie's way of including her dad in the wedding ceremony.

His family says they were relieved when the diagnosis of Valley Fever was made, thinking then as so many still do that it isn't a "serious" disease. They now help dispel this myth whenever they can. When his wife Cheryl Youngblood was interviewed by a California public television team preparing a program that was subsequently viewed state wide, she brought family photos which showed him slowly wasting away.

I never met Michael Youngblood, but I know our paths crossed in the early 1980's because we both were volunteers in the human trials of a valley fever vaccine. Because of this, I know he and I both tested negative for Valley Fever at that time despite exposure in the endemic area for many years.

I also know both he and I received the "real stuff" and not the placebo. I remember thinking when he passed away that Valley Fever could still be in my future. The donation from the wedding favors reminded me how sorry I am that it is still in the future for anyone!

Sandra Larson, Executive Director, VFAF

## IN MEMORIAM

The name of **Wayne Frederick Harms** was missing from the list published in January 2008 of those for whom memorial donations had been made. Our apologies for the oversight. Wayne Harms is another victim of the disease living in the endemic area who did not get Valley Fever until later in life.

There are several names to be added this year, including Jere Sullivan, who did not die of Valley Fever but, as part of the Bakersfield East Rotary Club, felt very strongly about the mission of the Valley Fever Americas Foundation. **A full list will appear in the January 2009 edition of this newsletter.**

## GREAT NEWS !

**If all goes well, an international event in late summer 2009 will focus attention on Valley Fever and the need to build up funds for vaccine research.**

**The event will be streamed live on the internet and will be interactive so that donation pledges for vaccine research can be made in real time.**

**Watch for an announcement in the next newsletter!**

**We have just a few months to organize volunteers throughout the Southwestern United States to make the most of this opportunity.**

**We will need people who can help a little and people who can help a lot. We need contacts in every community of interest - service clubs, sport teams, retired folks, pet owners, elected officials, chambers of commerce, and more.**

**Can you help even just a little? Contact us at the website [www.valleyfever.com](http://www.valleyfever.com), or call 1-800-825-3387. In the Bakersfield area, call 661-832-1456**

## Bakersfield Area Volunteer Meeting

**Organizing to meet the challenge described above!**

**Sunday Afternoon, 2:00 p.m.  
January 11, 2009**

**Call 661-832-1456 and leave your name and phone number or email address. Someone will contact you.**

*("Helping" continued from page 1)*

took up the task when she was not. Her journal tells the story from the summer of 2005 until her death just after her birthday in May of 2008.

What a wonderful tribute to Edith and Jacalynn that their families have gone beyond the pain of loss to helping others understand the disease. Both families gave many hours to a video documentary project that will follow a victim in Arizona. Edith's sisters are taking an active part in fundraisers benefiting the vaccine project or that help increase awareness of the disease.

Jackie's grandmother and uncle were at the Valley Fever Information Table at the Kern County Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Consumer Trade Show in September. Many of those attending had followed Jackie's story and had been shocked to learn that one so young could be taken by the disease.

The significance of families and victims sharing their stories is so important. Thank you to everyone who is making this kind of effort!

**Valley Fever Americas Foundation**

**President:**

Michael W. Cooper

**Treasurer:** Bob Parker

**Newsletter Editor:**

Sandra Larson

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Valley Fever Vaccine Project of  
the Americas:  
A Rotary District 5240 Project

Dear Friends,

We hope you will include the **Valley Fever Americas Foundation (VFAF)** in your end of the year tax deductible donations. Your contribution will help fund research to find and develop a vaccine to prevent Valley Fever.

Every year we lose family members to this disease, and hundreds of other victims struggle to care and provide for their families. Many lose that struggle and must be cared for the rest of their lives.

A vaccine is needed to help prevent the immense personal and public costs of this disease. Unfortunately, Valley Fever remains mostly invisible outside the endemic area. This means it is up to us who live where the disease is known.

Please help if you can!

**A LITTLE HELP WITH THE ALPHABET SOUP:** This newsletter is published by the Valley Fever Americas Foundation (VFAF), an IRC 501.c.3 charitable organization formed in 1995. The VFAF is also known as the Valley Fever Vaccine Project of the Americas (VFVPA), a Rotary District 5240 Project. We are just one partner in the Valley Fever Vaccine Project (VFVP) but the only partner whose sole purpose is raising funds for research focused on finding a vaccine as soon as possible, and providing education to help people understand why this is necessary. All research contracts with the five academic institutions brought together for the VFVP have been coordinated through the California State University of Bakersfield Foundation (CSUBF). CSUBF manages the funds contributed by large donors such as the State of California. The VFVP is overseen by a Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) headed first by Dr. Hans Einstein, and now by Pauline Larwood.

Enclosed is my tax deductible contribution to the Valley Fever Americas Foundation in the amount of

\$25 \_\_\_\_\_ \$50 \_\_\_\_\_ \$100 \_\_\_\_\_ \$1000 \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

This gift is sent in memory of \_\_\_\_\_  
Please notify the family at the address enclosed.

\_\_\_\_\_  
My name (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mailing Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone Number(s)

\_\_\_\_\_  
City/State

\_\_\_\_\_  
ZIP

EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail with your check payable to  
Valley Fever Americas Foundation, P.O. Box 2752, Bakersfield CA 93303

# Valley Fever Americas Foundation

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## Return Service Requested

**“I wanted to write to let people know what Valley Fever does to your body and family. So I guess I will start at the beginning.”**

Edith Preller, deceased, May 18, 2008, age 61, from her journal..

**This issue is dedicated to the families of Edith Preller and Jacalynn Hernandez and ALL families who have lost a loved one to Valley Fever.**

**“Jackie was always smiling. . . She was so full of life.”**

Obit, Jacalynn Hernandez, deceased, August 1, 2008, age 18.

“We appreciate your continued advocacy for public awareness.”  
—Julie Louise Gerberding, MD, MPH, Director CDC

# Valley Fever Epidemic

Everything tourists, residents and YOU need to know about this incurable, debilitating and deadly disease



“The authors have filled the need for a detailed understanding of the region Valley Fever. This volume is complete up to date, and accurate in describing this illness.”  
—Hans E. Hoops, MD, FACP  
Legislative Valley Fever Patient & Expert

“This is a disease that many would just as soon sweep under the rug — you’ve laid the dirt out where all can see!”  
—Sandra Larson, Executive Director  
Valley Fever Action Project of the American

“... if you breathe here, you can catch it.”  
—Joe Wilson, 4009 15 Phoenix, Arizona

David Filip and Sharon Filip

## Need a Last Minute Gift??

Valley Fever survivor Sharon Filip and her son David Filip recently published an excellent book describing all aspects of Valley Fever! The book provides well researched information on the disease and current treatments, as well as compelling stories from victims and their families.

This is a book anyone can appreciate and everyone should read. The book can be ordered from many bookstores, including Amazon.com.

NOTE: If purchased through their website, a portion of the cost will help fund their very commendable ongoing efforts. Check it out!

[www.valleyfeversurvivor.com](http://www.valleyfeversurvivor.com)

## MAY 18, 2009

### SAVE THE DATE!

11:30 a.m. registration and lunch  
1:00 p.m. Shotgun Start

### 13TH ANNUAL VALLEY FEVER BENEFIT GOLF TOURNAMENT

BAKERSFIELD COUNTRY CLUB



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Bakersfield

