

Longtime Jackson restaurateur pitches in to help cure childhood cancer

Dinners raise more than \$125,000 to support cancer research.

By Timothy J. Woods Aug 11, 2021 0

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Chefs Gavin Fine and Alex Seidel (middle) stand with Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation founder Liz Scott at a recent Jackson Hole fundraiser to help the foundation find cures for childhood cancer.

Having been exposed to the painful realities of cancer at an early age, longtime Jackson restaurateur Gavin Fine has forged a connection to a childhood cancer-fighting campaign and is doing his part in the fight against the awful disease.

Fine recently recruited other well-known chefs to participate in simultaneous Jackson Hole fundraisers for Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation, an organization whose goal is to find cures for childhood cancer and provide services to families who are fighting the battle.

The ongoing relationship came naturally to Fine, though in part due to his own experience.

"My mother died of cancer when I was young, and I love kids," Fine said.

So when he watched the story of 8-year-old Alexandra "Alex" Scott's ultimately fatal fight against the disease and her parents' subsequent founding of Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation, he recalled, "I was totally taken with it from there."

With support from Fine and others, two simultaneous Jackson fundraisers on July 29 netted more than \$125,000 for the foundation.

Fine owns several popular Jackson establishments under his Fine Dining Restaurant Group. He was a key cog in helping the nonprofit, led by Alex's mother, Lea Scott, and hosts Kristin and Mike Kelly put on the lucrative fundraiser.

Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation was founded in 2005 after Alexandra Scott died at 8 years old after battling childhood cancer since just before her first birthday. At age 4 Alex set up her first lemonade stand to pay doctors to find a cure for the malady that she and too many other youngsters suffer. That first day she and her brother raised \$2,000, all of which was donated to the cause of curing childhood cancer, according to [the foundation's website](#).

The foundation has since raised more than \$200 million to battle childhood cancer, in part owed to such partnerships as the one Fine has developed with the foundation.

On July 29 Fine was instrumental in orchestrating a successful fundraiser for the effort for the seventh straight year, which included bringing Lea Scott together with a number of donors — including Jackson Hole resident and well-known Motley Crüe bassist Nikki Sixx — at a Teton Village home owned by Mike and Kristin Kelly. They had raised over \$125,000 as of Monday.

Fine also recruited his friend and James Beard Award-winning chef Alex Seidel, who owns successful restaurants in Denver, to donate his time and resources — as Fine does — to participate again. Seidel has volunteered the last few years, though the 2020 event was put on pause due to COVID-19 concerns. Just as Fine and Seidel donated their time and food free of charge, Kristin Kelly also thanked Washington-based Gramercy Cellars for donating thousands of dollars of wine to help support the cause.

"I'm so honored to follow so many great chefs that have contributed to Alex's Lemonade Stand," Seidel said. "Chef Gavin helped me feel a real connection to the organization when I had the opportunity to meet [Alexandra's mom] Liz and hear her story first-hand. Knowing that Alex's Lemonade has contributed so many resources to fight childhood cancer, it inspires me to want to help in that fight."

The Kellys hosted one of two coinciding events in Jackson Hole last week — the event was divided into two smaller groups to accommodate coronavirus concerns. They made sure the fundraiser was successful. The couple offered a donation match of up to \$50,000 as a gesture of their commitment to the cause. Kristin Kelly said there were a couple of potential donors who might come through with even more on top of what's already been raised.

"Mike and I are grateful to be able to donate \$50,000 to such an important cause and to be able to use our fundraising efforts from the dinner to double the impact of our dollars by providing the match," Kelly wrote in a text.

The cause of finding a cure for cancer hits home for Kelly, too, just as it does for Fine.

“My father has gone through three different struggles with three different types of cancer,” she said. “And as a parent, I just can’t imagine what it would be like to go through that with one of my kids. So when I was able to connect the dots and host an event to benefit Alex’s Lemonade Stand, it was a no-brainer to host it in Jackson Hole, which is my favorite community in the world.”

Kelly pointed out that another aspect that drew her to the organization is the fact that all of the research it funds is shared among researchers, the goal being to lead to faster and better outcomes for children.

“It just builds this incredible team of data and of researchers and just increases the power of the funding,” she said.

“I can’t imagine what it would be like to go through that with one of my kids.” — Kristin Kelly