

and is unable to touch anything," Schwartz relates. "But when they move closer, they look at his eyes and see a sparkle. They rub his chest or say his name and this beautiful boy comes to life. That's what inspires people, to see this light come from a lifeless body."

From the time he was born, nurturing Jacob has been incredibly demanding for Schwartz and her husband, Jeff. It took several years for the family to accept the sheer magnitude of his limitations and the fact there was no cure. But with immense fortitude not only did they pull through, they decided to turn their adversity into an opportunity by launching the Jacob's Ladder Foundation. In seven years, the foundation, which supports innovative research, education, prevention, and treatment of neurodegenerative diseases, has raised \$1.5 million.

"At our annual event, we get a turnout of 3,000 people and over 200 volunteers," says Schwartz. "Our theme is teaching children how to give. And when they walk out, they have this wonderful satisfaction of knowing that they helped another child."

In addition to her hard work for neurodegenerative research, Schwartz has also been a tireless advocate for raising awareness about genetic screening. Jacob's Ladder has teamed up with several other foundations and as a result of their efforts, there are now seven different diseases that people can be screened for, without any fee. "I will be somewhere on the street, and a person will come up to me, hug me, and say, 'Thanks to you, I now know that I am a carrier of a certain disease and I would not have known that without you,'" Schwartz says.



They say the apple doesn't fall far from the tree and Schwartz is living proof of that. Her optimism and strength are rooted in the values and example set for

her by her parents, Bonnie and Peter.

"My parents are happy and positive people who have been through real adversity in their lives and have bounced back," Schwartz says. "They are so resilient and kind to others. And I believe that watching them has instilled those values in me."

Schwartz is passing on that sense of optimism to her own children. In addition to Jacob, daughter Beverly and son Ben are both joyful children who cherish life the way their parents do. "Beverly is pure sunshine, and Ben is so well adjusted," Schwartz reveals. "They are



Photo by Al Gilbert

Cherry Tabb

great kids who have learned patience and acceptance." Schwartz equally credits her husband not only for their children's development, but for acting as a devoted partner in their joint work in support of Jacob's Ladder. "Jeff is a very hands-on father," Schwartz says. "He is wonderful with the kids."

Along with all the work she does with Jacob's Ladder, teaching part-time and being a doting mother and a public speaker for Coping with Adversity, Schwartz has penned a captivating book called *Lessons from Jacob*. The brilliantly written book is full of powerful lessons about hope, courage, and living life to the

fullest. She is also in the midst of starting an innovative, curriculum-based project to instill students with the values of giving.

With all she has accomplished, Schwartz was a natural choice to be one of the extraordinary women honored by the ICRF. "Cancer is an awful disease and research is the answer," Schwartz relates. "Even though I initially felt uncomfortable with being given this honor, I believe I have to do this for the cause, to try to help people."

Reflecting on what has happened in her life since Jacob came into this world, Schwartz realizes the family could have taken a very different path, but she's thankful they chose to make their struggle very public. "We could have just been private, closed the doors, and tried to live a simple life," she relates. "But by starting Jacob's Ladder and having our friends, family, and entire community come together for this cause, we have gained so much strength. And I believe that strength is our inspiration to keep doing it."

For more information, please contact info@jacobs ladder.com.

Cherry Tabb

When Cherry Tabb reflects on the origins of her business savvy, the time and place that springs to mind is a baseball field in Texas nearly 38 years ago.

Usually the lone girl among a group of neighborhood boys, 10-year-old Tabb was selected last for the team. To make matters worse, when it was her turn at the plate, the boys moved in, anticipating a weak hit. But Tabb, with something to prove, cracked a hit right over their heads. "Actually, I even surprised myself," relates the co-founder and CEO of the Herzig Eye Institute. "But after that, I was never picked last again.

"Being a woman in business is a lot like playing baseball with the boys. And I've always enjoyed the challenge."

Since the Toronto-based Herzig Eye Institute was launched in 1996, Tabb