

# Westie Owners Triumph, Raise Funds for Innovative PF Study

*By Teresa Barnes*



Tyler

**P**J Kessler and Westie owners whose dogs suffer from Pulmonary Fibrosis have made history. They successfully raised funds for the first-of-its kind drug study in Westies with Pulmonary Fibrosis (PF).

## Background

When PJ Kessler heard about an innovative approach the WFA was taking to solving the deadly lung disease that afflicted her Westie, Tyler, and claimed the life of another of her Westie pets, she took action. She quickly created a GoFundMe page and months later, had raised the funds needed for the study (the full story appeared in the Fall/Winter 2018 issue of this newsletter (on pages 10-12 – <http://www.westiefoundation.org/assets/ipfstudywestienewsfallwinter2018web-4.pdf>).

The WFA initiated the collaboration of researchers at Yale and Tufts Universities to look at a potential drug for treatment of PF (the initial scientific work was done at Yale looking for human therapy). Kessler and other owners and friends of Westies with PF, mostly via the Facebook page started by Kessler “Westie Lung Disease—IPF in USA (Treatments, Symptoms, Studies, Etc.)”, joined forces to help raise funds for the study. Their fundraising efforts were an outstanding success with approximately \$31,000 raised. The WFA has now granted the donated funds to the PF study and it is currently underway.

## Inspiration for Facebook Page and GoFundMe

Kessler’s dog, Tyler, was diagnosed with PF in 2014 and she began sharing his story and supporting other dog owners going through the same thing via a Facebook page that has grown to more than 2,000 members.

Sadly, Tyler lost his fight to PF on August 26, 2019 at the age of 17. Kessler, in another incredibly selfless gesture, voiced her interest in helping WFA fund another study of PF in dogs in the near future with plans for additional GoFundMe efforts in Tyler’s memory.

## Message from WFA President Bebe Pinter

“Our heartfelt sympathies go out to PJ and others that have lost their dogs to this horrible disease. PJ kept everyone updated on Tyler’s progress since his disease was diagnosed and everyone knew about Tyler and enjoyed photos and stories about him via the Facebook PF group page. It also helped other owners who had Westies or other breeds with PF feel that they were not alone and had a place to share experiences about the disease. PJ understands that while research is slow, we must all be advocates for our dogs and keep pushing for meaningful studies. She is an exemplary role model.”