

Susan's Story

Susan's husband Rex died at the young age of 52 from massive hereditary heart disease. Despite the fact that her husband Rex had a family history of early heart disease, his condition went undetected until his death. When he died, the doctor told Susan that his heart disease probably started when he was in his 20s but nothing was done about it until it was too late. If Rex and his doctor had been more aware of his family health history, surgery could have been performed that would have lessened his chances of dying at such a young age.

Now Susan worries her four children may be at an increased risk of developing heart disease, too. After Rex died, their doctor explained to her children that this particular type of heart disease could be inherited. The doctor warned her children to not smoke or drink and to have annual check-ups with their doctors. Talking about their family health history and father's death would be critical for their own health care decisions in the future.

Susan doesn't want her children to have to go through another tragedy and so encourages each of them to get an annual physical, not smoke, eat right, and exercise. Susan also reminds them of the importance of sharing their family health history with their doctor and family members.

"We each need to be aware of our family health history and be responsible for ourselves. Maybe if my husband would had done this and been more aggressive, my four children would still have a dad," Susan said.



Tell us your story by visiting www.health.utah.gov/genomics.