13thirty Members Michelle Hopkins, Jake Tower, Kelly Boehm, Michaela Deeg

.insights

On How We're Helping Teens & Young Adults Live With Cancer

Sometimes, You Just Gotta Laugh!

Some things, like peanut butter and jelly, just go together. Other things, not so much. Like cancer and comedy? Now, that just seems wrong.

Cancer is scary with many unknowns and, all too often, heartbreakingly sad, as we experienced this year when four of our friends died within 6 weeks of each other (see page 3). But as our AYA members will tell you, sometimes, you just gotta laugh!

And that's just what four of our members did this year at Journeys, the 21st Annual Celebration of Living. As many who have been to Journeys know, a performance or presentation by our AYA members is always the highlight of the event.

After two years of virtual celebrations due to COVID, we thought this was a good year for some levity. "We laugh a lot at 13thirty Cancer Connect," said Lauren, our Executive Director, "and it often surprises people."

So, as usual, plans for this year's Journeys started early in the year. What can we do to lighten spirits after two hard years, the team at 13thirty Cancer Connect asked. Doing another comedy night seemed like a good idea.

In the past, we've produced sketch comedy routines based on our members' cancer experiences but this year, we ventured into unknown territory.

"Have you considered stand up?" asked Todd Youngman, a Rochester comedian to whom we reached out.

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13thirty cancer connect

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Our mission is to help teens and young adults with cancer live their very best lives by providing a comprehensive continuum of care throughout all stages of their cancer experience.

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A Message from Lauren Spiker Founder and Executive Director

Hello friends,

As I write, the holiday season is in full swing! Thanksgiving turkey has been replaced with glittering lights and messages of peace and goodwill. 'Tis the season for reflection and renewal when the past, present, and future converge around festive family tables and new year resolutions. It's a time for telling stories about how our holidays began and why we believe what we believe. Much like the stories of our own family's heritage and timeless traditions, these stories endure the test of time. But why?

What is it about certain stories that stay with us? Stories that are told and retold around fireplace hearths or at grandparents' feet. Stories that pass from generation to generation and become the stuff of legend and lore. I think there are a few things.

First, every good story starts with characters who are relatable and relevant. In order to "stick", the story must be engaging enough that it stays with us long past the last word. Every good story has a theme that resonates and makes us think about our own lives.

Melissa's story is all that and more for us. It is the story of our past and future. Our North Star, pointing the way, helping us stay the course. But hers is just part of the larger story of AYA cancer. Each time I tell an AYA's story, it becomes more real for those listening. Not just data about a dreaded disease but a face, young person's face, on a health crisis affecting 90,000 AYAs each year in the United States.

Their story has not been told enough, so we must. It is in the telling and re-telling that a story lives in our hearts and minds, becoming part of our collective history. So, as we close one year and welcome another, please tell our story. Be a story teller and help us spread the word. Invite others to re-tell the story. Over and over again!

With gratitude and warm holiday wishes,
Lauren

BIG THANKS TO OUR COMMUNITY SPONSORS AND FRIENDS!

For Buffalo Bills head coach, Sean McDermott, skin cancer prevention is important. Not only does this increasingly more common cancer run in his family, he's had squamous cell carcinoma several times.

"The fight has become for me – personal," he revealed in an interview earlier this year.

Because of this, McDermott joined forces with Wegmans this past summer to promote skin care safety and 13thirty Cancer Connect was chosen to benefit from this effort.

For the months of July and August, Wegmans donated $1.00 from every Wegmans brand sunscreen product sold in all Rochester and Syracuse stores to 13thirty Cancer Connect.

"Melanoma is one of the most common cancers diagnosed in young adults," said Lauren, our Executive Director.

"Given the population we serve, we are especially grateful to the Bills and Wegmans for helping us spread the word about being safe in the sun."

Thank you, Buffalo Bills and Wegmans, for the $25,000 earned during this campaign.

This is yet another example of your community leadership and goodwill!

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK
a community thrives
2022 #1 Fundraiser
13thirty
cancer connect
July 18 - August 12

For the 4th time in 5 years, 13thirty Cancer Connect was the top national fundraiser in the on-line fundraising campaign, *A Community Thrives,* sponsored by the Gannett Foundation and the USA Today Network.

This 4-week initiative is designed to encourage non-profits from around the country to submit innovative ideas to improve the communities in which they serve.

It also provides an opportunity for non-profits to share their big ideas with new and old supporters.

In addition to the top prize, participating organizations can earn weekly bonus-challenge grants based on the number of unique donors, or total amount raised in a specific week.

Not only did 13thirty Cancer Connect win the top prize of $25,000 but also earned two weekly challenges for another $7,000.

And that's not all! We were also awarded a $2,500 operating grant from the Gannett Foundation.

Thanks to over 350 13thirty Champions, $34,500 was raised to directly support our peer support programs in Rochester and Syracuse!

Our community is truly thriving!

SNAPSHOTS!

What's been happening with - and for - teens and young adults with cancer!

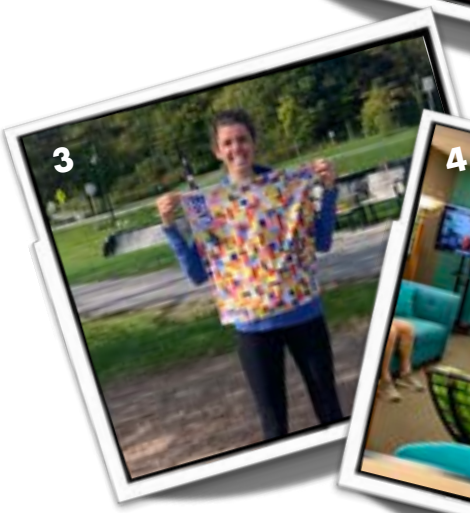
1. Let's Go Saxons!
The Alfred University women's tennis team hosted the Pink Match in memory of our beloved 13thirty friend, Courtney Ferrara Wilhelm '17.

2. Let the Good Times Roll!
Our AYAs took over the lanes at Radio Social for some good old fashioned bowling and arcade games!

3. Syracuse Bandana Bolt
13thirty Champions near and far participated in the Virtual Bandana Bolt to support AYAs in the Syracuse and CNY regions.

4. Passions in Action
Jenna Cottrell, NFL anchor and reporter at 13WHAM, joined us as our third Passions in Action presenter. She discussed how her cancer diagnosis in her 20s impacted her journalism career.

5. Annual Halloween Party
Card games, candy, costumes and carving pumpkins...our AYAs got into the spooky spirit for our annual Halloween party!



6. That's a Wrap!
Journeys 2022 performers gathered at the Spikers' to celebrate the success of the night and reminisce about their stand-up comedy experience. Oh, what a night it was!

7. An Afternoon with the Buffalo Bills
Thanks to Wesley, Clark and Peshkin, LLP for sending our Bills fans to training camp this year. We cheered from the sidelines in the VIP section! Go Bills!

8. 2022 Family Picnic
13thirty families gathered at the Spikers' for an afternoon of good food, fun, and friends!

9. Rochester Associate Board
Our dedicated group of young professionals helped ensure Journeys ran smoothly by fulfilling all our volunteer needs. This group of 25+ members has big plans for 2023!

10. 2022 Spoke Charity Social
Special thanks to board member and Spoke cycling instructor, Christina DiBaudo, for bringing our two communities together. Guest bartenders from Spoke raised over $800 during our night out at La Bola.

Happy Winter!

Sometimes, You Just Gotta Laugh! - cont. from page 1

We were introduced to Todd by Mark Ippolito, Operations Director for Comedy at the Carlson, a world-class comedy club in Rochester, NY. When Mark heard we were thinking of comedy for Journeys, he said, "I have the perfect person to help - Todd Youngman (read more about Todd, p. 7)."

Clare McKenna, Michaela Deeg, Meesh Hopkins, Todd Youngman, Kelly Boehm, Jake Tower

As soon as we met Todd, we knew he would make our members feel safe and confident going outside their comfort zone and trying their hand at stand-up comedy.

"Laughing with others over relatable things helped me step out of my comfort zone," said Kelly, still in treatment for breast cancer. "I was so nervous but the camaraderie among everyone helped build my confidence."

Over the course of seven weeks, the group, led by 13thirty's Program Engagement Specialist, Clare, met with Todd to brainstorm ideas, develop their bits, and practice their delivery. "All I did was give a little help in terms of structuring their jokes," said Todd. "The content was all theirs."

To get used to performing, rehearsals were held at the comedy club where everyone got used to being on stage and using a microphone, hard to do if you're not used to public speaking!

Not only did they give helpful feedback to each other, friends and other guests were invited to practice sessions to ease the anxiety of performing in front of others.

November 5th was the big night and they were ready. In front of a sell-out crowd of over 300 people, they each took the stage as our guests roared with laughter - about a very un-funny subject.

"I laughed my head off," said Keith Poole, a13thirty bereaved dad. How can something as tragic as cancer be funny, especially to a parent whose child died from the disease?

British actor Peter Ustinov summed it up well. "Comedy is simply a funny way of being serious." Under all the punch lines, there is always an element of truth. Being able to speak that truth and laugh about it, is healing and an effective coping strategy when faced with adversity.

"It's really been healing, after such a life changing experience," said Jake. "I learned I could still surprise myself with what I'm able to do if I push myself against my comfort zone." The entire cast echoed Kelly. "It was an amazing experience that I'll forever be grateful for."

So remember. When life gets tough, follow their lead.

Sometimes, you just gotta laugh!

Spotlight On

Todd Youngman
Comedian

Thank you, 13thirty Cancer Connect, for trusting me with your members and giving me an opportunity to let them shine.

How did you begin your career in comedy?

I started my comedy career 12 years ago on a dare from my therapist. The first time was the worst but on the second try, I actually got some laughs and that was all the validation I needed. And 12 years later....I'm so happy I took that dare.

What first attracted you to the idea of working with 13thirty Cancer Connect?

The Director of Operations for Comedy at the Carlson, Mark Ippolito, had met with Lauren and Steve and recommended me. When he told me, I was so excited at the prospect of doing this with the members. Thank goodness they all decided to go with the stand-up comedy idea!

What was it like helping 13thirty members, with no comedy experience, put together their sets?

It was one of the most fulfilling experiences I have ever had. I knew that if they actually went home and did the assignment of coming back with some stories/notes, that this was going to be an amazing experience. They went above and beyond my expectations!

Throughout the entire process, what changes did you notice in the participating 13thirty members?

I saw confidence build as well as beautiful camaraderie. To see them help and support each other with this process made me so happy. Comedy isn't easy but to have a community of friends to help you punch up jokes ....there is nothing better.

How would you describe the role 13thirty Cancer Connect plays in its members' lives?

13thirty gives its members a nest to be themselves with other people that are going through a similar situation. I was amazed to see how this warm, bright space gave these members a sanctuary to laugh, cry, and build friendships.

From your perspective, how does comedy provide an effective coping mechanism in the face of adversity?

I love comedy. I just enjoy the feeling of being able to make someone laugh. We live in a crazy world that needs laughter, and as comedians, if we can make a few people smile and laugh after a not-so-great day, we have given them a special gift: happiness. This is why I do it.

Thank you, Todd, for helping us laugh at cancer. You have made a big difference!

Performing on the Big Stage!

Welcoming, warm, safe. These are all words that many have used to describe 13thirty Cancer Connect. It is a space in which our members feel such a sense of security and support that they can begin to rebuild the autonomy, confidence, and power that their cancer has worked very hard to tear down.

This year's Journeys performance provided this exact opportunity, especially for Kelly Boehm. "I was so nervous, but the camaraderie of our group was so helpful. We all really care about each other and pushed each other to succeed," she stated. Kelly not only blew us away at Journeys with her stand-up set, but she took that confidence all the way to the stage at Comedy at the Carlson where she was invited to open four shows for Earl David Reed over Thanksgiving weekend! For us at 13thirty, it is not about 'empowering' our members. It is about giving them opportunities and experiences where they will hopefully come to find that they had the power all along. *We're so proud of you, Kelly!*

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If you need to make a Required Minimum Distribution from your IRA account, make a gift to 13thirty before December 31 to decrease the taxable portion of the RMD.

Cash or Check

Mail a check dated no later than December 31 and postmarked as late as December 31. If you itemize your deductions, the IRS will allow you to take a tax deduction for 2022, even if the check is not received and cashed by 13thirty until after the New Year.

Stocks and Bonds

Donating appreciated securities is easy and tax effective. You can avoid capital gains tax and receive a charitable income tax deduction for the full value of the securities.

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