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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
**CONTACT:** Christina DiBaudo  
13thirty Cancer Connect  
christina@13thirty.org  
office 585-563-6221  
mobile: 585-704-8701

**PRESS RELEASE**

**13THIRTY CANCER CONNECT CELEBRATES 20 YEARS OF MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN 2020**  
**Partners in Government Joined Teens and Young Adults with Cancer to Celebrate the Important Milestone**

**ROCHESTER, N.Y.** - On Monday, January 20, 13thirty Cancer Connect kicked off its 20th year celebration of making a difference for teens and young adults impacted by cancer with a pancake breakfast, an annual tradition that took on a much larger meaning as the organization embarks on a year of celebrations since its start two decades ago.

“20 years ago, I made a promise to my daughter, Melissa, *‘to make a difference, make things better’* for other teens and young adults facing a cancer diagnosis,” said Founder and Executive Director Lauren Spiker. “Back then, people weren’t paying attention to the unique needs of the teen and young adult cancer population. While the rest of the world has started to catch up, the mission of 13thirty Cancer Connect has always been, and will always be, to help teens and young adults with cancer live their very best lives - today.”

One of the very first programs was a pancake breakfast held at Spiker’s home. As an annual tradition, members of 13thirty Cancer Connect gathered at the Rochester Center for the annual pancake breakfast, and this year Congressman Joseph Morelle, State Senators Rich Funke and Joseph Robach, and Assemblywoman Jamie Romeo were in attendance to help kick off this milestone year. The Congressman, Senators and Assemblywoman enjoyed homemade pancakes with 13thirty members and helped unveil the 20th year logo.

“I am so thankful for organizations like 13thirty Cancer Connect that provide indispensable services to young people and their families as they battle cancer,” said Congressman Joe Morelle. “Unfortunately, I know all too well the devastating impact that cancer can have on a family – but the support and hope provided by organizations like 13thirty help families like mine get through impossibly difficult times. Congratulations to this incredible organization on celebrating twenty years!”

“Receiving a cancer diagnosis can be a hard thing to process and understand, especially for teens and youth,” shared Senator Joe Robach. “Having the support of 13thirty Cancer Connect has been invaluable for countless Rochester area young people and families impacted by a cancer diagnosis. As a state Senator and member of this community, I am extremely grateful to the staff, volunteers and everyone at 13thirty Cancer Connect for their commitment and all that they do for people fighting this terrible disease.”

“Cancer is a life changing disease, but with the help of 13thirty Cancer Connect, teens living with cancer can get the proper support and care they deserve,” added Senator Rich Funke.

“I want to congratulate 13thirty on 20 years of amazing work providing opportunities to adolescents and young adults struggling with a cancer diagnosis,” said Assembly woman Jamie Romeo. “13thirty offers strength, hope, and compassion to young cancer patients in need and have developed critical

resources that for too long were absent in our community. I applaud their tremendous work and thank them for their commitment to support those in need.”

Since its beginning (first called *Melissa’s Living Legacy Teen Cancer Foundation*), 13thirty Cancer Connect has become an internationally known and respected leader in the field of adolescent and young adult (AYA) cancer with strong passion, clear vision, and steadfast commitment to a singular focus - teens and young adults with cancer. Started as a grassroots effort 20 years ago, peer support programs for teens, young adults and their parents are offered at the 13thirty Center in Rochester and as of July 2019, at the organization’s new Syracuse center.

20th year celebrations will be held all year long for both community members and 13thirty families. Signature events include the 8th Annual Bandana Bolt 5K on Sunday, June 7th at Seneca Park, and Journeys, the 19th Annual Celebration of Living on Saturday, November 7th at Temple B’rith Kodesh.

Follow 13thirty Cancer Connect on social media and at [13thirty.org](http://13thirty.org) for additional celebratory events throughout the year.

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