

THE 2024 WINTER UPDATE

# 13THIRTY INSIGHTS

ON HOW WE ARE HELPING ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS LIVE THEIR BEST LIVES - TODAY!

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

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## A Message from Lauren Spiker

Founder & Executive Director

Hello Friends,

Each year as the holidays approach, I always say, "Where did this year go?" It has certainly been a turbulent year, nationally, internationally, and on several local fronts. For many, life has been difficult personally. With year-end looming, you, like I, might be reflecting on that which sustained us and that which drained our spirits and resources. At 13thirty, we enjoyed many successes, managed a few small hiccups, and joined hearts and hands in celebration and loss.

As we close 2024 and herald 2025, I'd like to share a quote by Ralph Waldo Emerson that I've had on my desk for years. It always centers and refreshes me.

*Finish each day and be done with it. You have done what you could.  
Some blunders and absurdities no doubt have crept in.  
Forget them as soon as you can.  
Tomorrow is a new day. You shall begin it serenely  
And with too high a spirit to be encumbered with your old nonsense.*

While I find comfort in Emerson's words, I might disagree on one point. I would suggest not forgetting past "blunders and absurdities" until we ask – and answer – the following questions. What did I learn? What could I have done differently? Did I do the best I could? If not, why?

Then, as Elsa in the Disney film, *Frozen*, would say, "Let it go! Let it go!"

So, welcome 2025! May you be blessed with good health, much happiness, and opportunities challenging enough to stretch but not break you. Your support this past year has meant the world to me personally, and most importantly to the amazing young people we support. Happy New Year!

With thanks, as always,

**Lauren**

*p.s. If you are able to send a little year-end gift, you'll help us start 2025 strong!*

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# Journeys, 23rd Annual Celebration of Living

**The phenomena known as “the butterfly effect” suggests that something as small as the flutter of a butterfly’s wings can create a breeze so powerful it causes a hurricane on the other side of the world.**

At 13thirty Cancer Connect, we’ve seen the butterfly effect in action! Melissa’s last request to her mom, “to make a difference, to make things better,” led our small grassroots effort to become a respected leader in AYA oncology and sparked this year’s theme for Journeys.

At 13thirty, our members build life-long connections with peers who truly understand and help them spread their wings to weather whatever storms come their way. What better symbol than a butterfly to reflect the transformation that happens every day at 13thirty!

Next, were the Golden Butterfly Awards, presented to our AYAs in categories ranging from mentorship to advocacy, all important aspects of our mission. The winners did not know that they had won until the presenters called their name.

In a curious twist, two members, Tatum O’Connor and Jake Tower, unknowingly nominated each other for awards. “It felt heartwarming,” said Jake. “The person I cared about and respected felt the same way about me.”

The Best Life Awards, the finale of the night, were given to all past and present 13thirty members in attendance in recognition of living their best lives every day.

Our AYA “butterflies” received a standing ovation as they all came on stage and it was announced that we had surpassed



Thus was born the peer-nominated Golden Butterfly Award Show, the highlight of Journeys and a chance for members to recognize their friends who had impacted their lives.

As they arrived, our 300+ guests walked the red carpet on which all our AYAs had a Hollywood-style star of fame. Dressed to impress, they posed for photos by our wonderful photographer, Diana Kapatos. Upbeat music from local group, “Special Blend”, filled the expanded event space where friends, old and new, mingled, sipped drinks, and perused auction items.

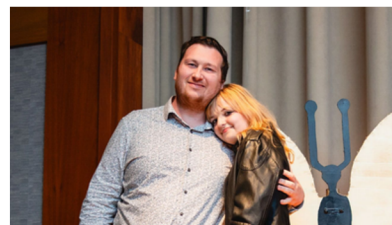
A delicious dinner was followed by remarks from Lauren, our traditional candle lighting ceremony, the Corporate Sponsor Salute (Mark Ippolito, Comedy @The Carlson), and the Make a Difference Award (Brianne Young, DPT).

our fundraising goal, raising over \$80,000 to continue empowering AYAs in our communities.

If you ever doubt the power of a small act of kindness, think of us. For over two decades, the small ripple stirred by Melissa’s legacy continues to effect positive change for AYAs with cancer around the world.

As Lauren said that night, “Let us all be butterflies!”

**“I really loved the expanded space and additional bar! It was easier to view the raffle items, listen to music, socialize, and grab a drink.”- David Simoni, Legacy Circle Member**





# Snapshots



## Reach New Heights

Rochester and Syracuse members tackled Syracuse University High Ropes Challenge Course, collaborating to overcome obstacles and complete the course together!



## Tossing for a Cause in ROC

Our first Cornhole vs. Cancer Tournament was a huge success! With 16 teams, 32 players, raffles, and brews, we all kicked cancer to the curb for the afternoon!



## Community in Action

We attended the 5th Annual Community Cancer Action Council retreat, where cancer leaders shared research and discussed prioritizing access to clinical trials.



## Creepy Cookie Halloween

This year's Halloween party was such a sweet treat. Board member, Christina, worked with our members who learned how to create creepy, sugary masterpiece.



## Game, Set, Match!

In October, 13thirty members caused a "racket" at the Fairport Pickleball Club! We learned the basics, got competitive and ended with pizza, of course!



## Survivorship in Syracuse

We had a great time sharing the importance of peer communities in survivorship at Upstate's Pediatric Oncology Survivor Wellness Education Day.





### AYAs Gone Wild!

A trip to Rosamond Gifford Zoo calmed the nerves of our AYAs before they hit the stage for our September stand-up show in Syracuse.



### Friends and Feasting

The Syracuse center was full of warm holiday gratitude as members gathered for a thanksgiving fest made possible by the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society.



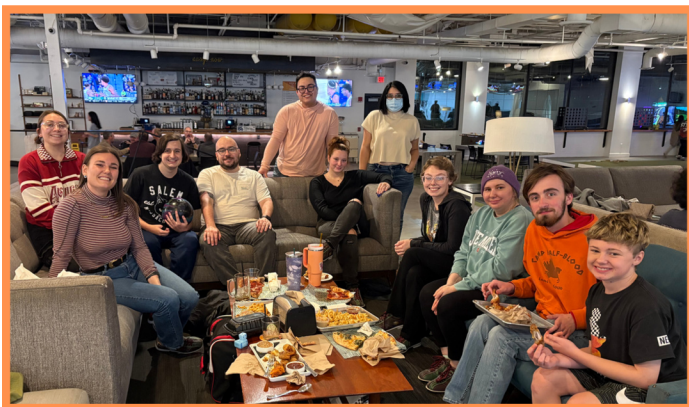
### Support from Senator Cooney

We received a generous donation from Senator Cooney, jump starting our upcoming three-year initiative to develop a centralized supportive care network for AYAs.



### Celebrating Success

After a packed year of events and programs, Club 13thirty headed to Skaneateles for a day of team bonding and whiskey tasting, courtesy of Last Shot Distillery.



### Striking Good Fun!

Rochester members took to the lanes for some friendly competition and to enjoy all the fun that Radio Social has to offer! It was raining strikes and spares.



### Shopping Local to Support Local AYAs

We benefitted from ROC Made Holiday's fundraising raffle! This event was the perfect opportunity to support over 35 local vendors and local AYAs!





## Half a Decade of Making a Difference

According to the National Center on Charitable Statistics, about 12% of nonprofits fail to exist after 5 years. Add in a global pandemic a few months after opening the doors, and the number of nonprofits that survive are even fewer.

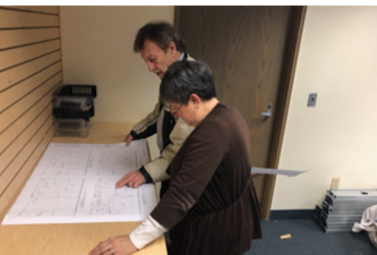
With the odds stacked against us, we knew staying true to our strong passion, clear vision, and steadfast commitment to a singular focus - teens and young adults with cancer - would lead us to success. This past July, our commitment paid off as we beat this statistic and celebrated five years in Syracuse.

Over the past five years, we have provided support to over 50 AYAs and their families, formed the CNY Cancer Alliance, a hub for local cancer resources, and hosted a variety of fundraising and community events.

To celebrate this milestone, we brought our successful comedy show, *Sometimes You Just Gotta Laugh!* to Syracuse. With over 100 tickets sold, Syracuse and Rochester AYAs had the entire Redhouse Arts Center laughing in the face of cancer. It was only fitting that our five year celebration raised over \$5,000, our largest Syracuse fundraiser to date!

From day one of demolition all the way to our five-year celebration, our mission has been to create a safe and supportive space for AYAs with cancer in Syracuse.

Thanks to the tireless dedication of our team, the support of our community, and the spirit of an amazing teen named Charlie driving it all, we have been successful in making that mission a reality for the past five years.



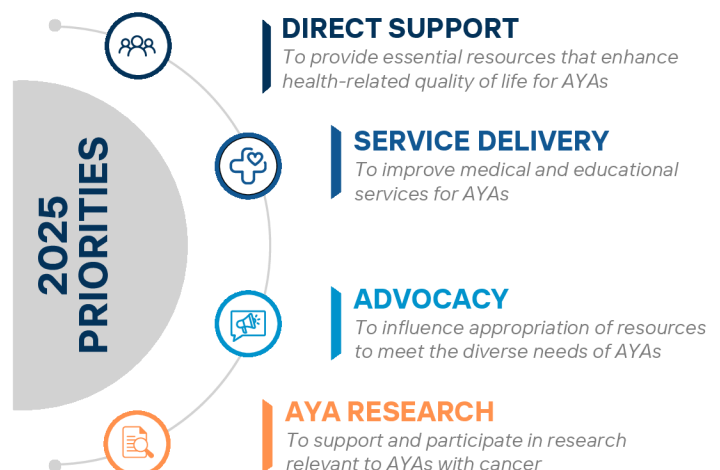
## 2025 is Right Around the Corner!

As 2024 comes to a close, we are grateful to all who helped us achieve our goals this year. Strong partnerships resulted in exciting program collaborations and research opportunities.

Most importantly, we provided support to over 100 AYAs, their families and friends. As the new year beckons, we're hoping you can help us jump-start 2025 with a year-end gift.

With careful planning and a watchful eye, nearly \$.91 of every dollar received this past year was used to directly support our members, and we promise to continue being good stewards of your trust and support in the new year. 90,000 AYAs will be diagnosed with cancer this year.

**Can you help us help them?**







# SPOTLIGHT ON

*Dan Roach,* Sound and Projection Designer

## **Tell us a little about yourself and the work you do in the community.**

I do sound design and projection design mostly for theatre. I really love to create and have always been that way. Both images that immerse you, and finding or creating original sound/music to underscore or enhance the theatre experience. I've been doing it for a while and it fits my laid back but detail oriented personality.

## **From your perspective, how do audio-visual elements and sound design enhance or impact a production?**

I realized early on the emotional impact music has in enhancing your connection to a production. The "perfect" music for a scene can help the actors and audience feel something quite profound. Images and animation have a similar impact. Together, it can be quite powerful when the tempo of the images match the tempo of the music being played. Watch a scene from a favorite movie without the sound sometime. You'll understand immediately.

## **How did you first get connected with 13thirty?**

I first connected with 13thirty through an ask from PUSH Physical Theatre. They were working on Journeys way back in 2009 and knew of my skill with sound. I met Lauren and then helped on my first Journeys. It was an amazing show. So glad that I did!

## **What about 13thirty continues to inspire and motivate you to stay involved?**

I've always been blown away by the resiliency of the kids and young adults that I have met there, and the staff as well. They are so open and honest about their situation and I've always felt a bond that is hard to describe. It reminds me that no matter your situation, you can be positive and be yourself. Truly inspiring to be around.

## **Can you share a memorable moment or experience you've had working with 13thirty that has left a lasting impact on you?**

Preparing for my first Journeys, I was doing audio interviews and asked a few questions that brought tears from one of the young adults. I realized that no one had ever asked this before and it was a release of emotion that actually was helpful in the healing process for this individual even though it occurred 2 years out. This moment has been with me since that day.

**"I've learned to always be honest, ask, and most importantly, to listen and be involved."**



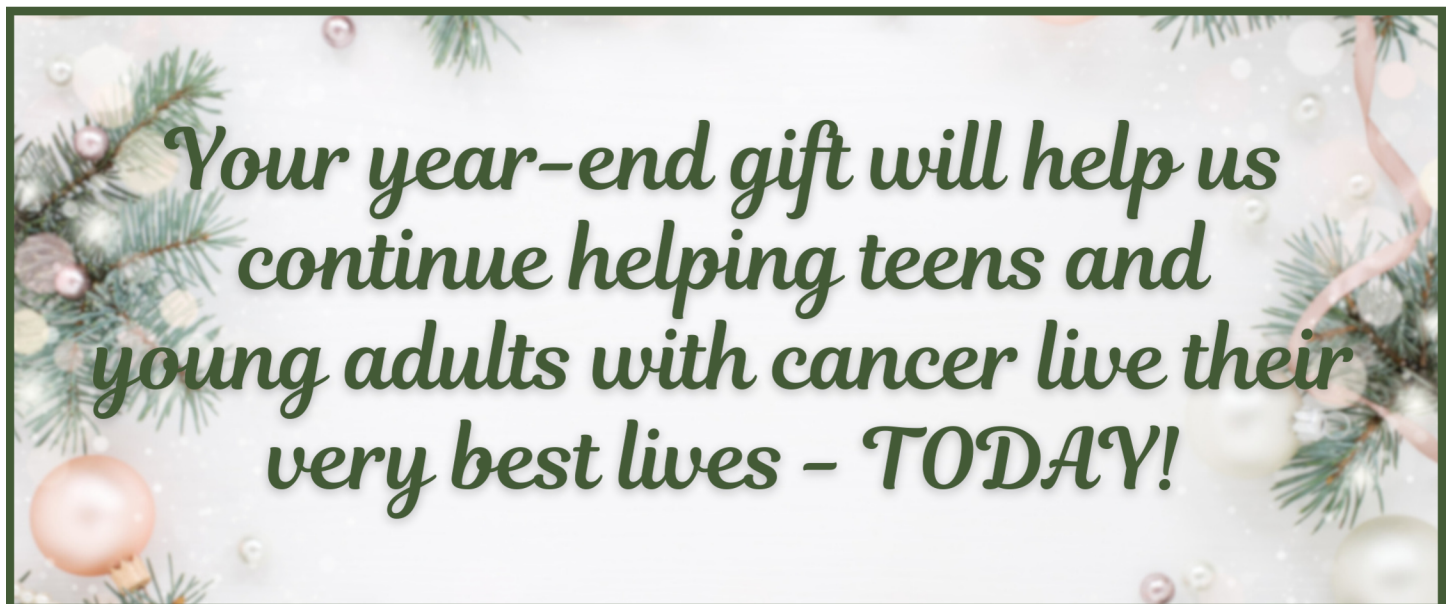
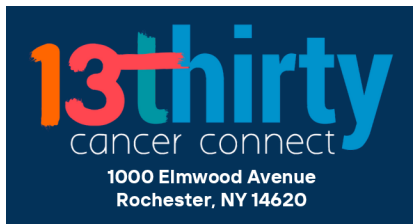
In each issue of "Insights", Katelyn MacDougall, MSW, LCSW, 13thirty Program Director, shares how 13thirty addresses the psychosocial needs of AYAs with cancer. Through our peer support programs, clinician workshops, and on-going needs assessment, Katelyn helps ensure that our initiatives adhere to best practices by incorporating member feedback and aligning with current research.

## **Understanding Impact: How Are Our Programs Benefiting AYAs?**

After the successful implementation of *Taco 'Bout it!* this year, it was important for us to evaluate if this new initiative aligned with our mission of improving the lives of AYAs with cancer. We were fortunate to have Dr. Ward Strickland, a pediatrician and advanced program evaluation student at the University of Rochester, evaluate this new series.

Two key themes emerged: the alleviation of psychological distress, and the sense of community/support. Interestingly, the specific topic of the program appeared less important than the shared experience itself. Many found 13thirty events in general to be a starting point for ongoing, supportive conversations, often centered around the challenges of living with cancer. The shared experiences helped build a community of peers grounded in empathy and mutual understanding. As Dr. Strickland noted, "This wasn't unique to this program, but rather a defining characteristic of 13thirty as a whole."

As we plan for 2025, it is imperative our programs align with our mission to make a difference in the lives of AYAs with cancer. Dr. Strickland said it best himself, "13thirty has filled a unique role in their lives that would not be filled otherwise."



## MAKE A DIFFERENCE - DONATE TODAY!



### *Will you help keep the promise?*

**"If you've learned anything from me through all of this, do something with it to make a difference, to make things better."**

Melissa Marie Sengbusch, 1981 - 2000

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