

THE 2025 SUMMER UPDATE

13THIRTY INSIGHTS

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

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HEALING WITH
HUMOR

PAGE 3



PAGE 7

THE NEW FACES
AT 13THIRTY



PAGE 6

A "HOLE" LOT OF
GOOD



SNAPSHOTS:
CELEBRATING MOM

PAGE 4

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Our mission is to help teens and young adults diagnosed with cancer meet their unique challenges through a coordinated, continuum of essential resources and public advocacy efforts.

13thirty Cancer Connect is a registered IRS 501 (c) (3) tax exempt organization.

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A Message from Lauren Spiker Founder & Executive Director

Hello Friends,

As I write this note, a song from my teenaged past, written by Pete Seeger and made popular by The Byrds, seems especially poignant today, the day, twenty-five years ago, that Melissa died.

*To everything, turn, turn, turn
There is a season, turn, turn, turn
And a time for every purpose under heaven.*

In the early days, I couldn't fathom 25 days, no less 25 years, and despite the adage, time does not heal all wounds. Time, as I've experienced it, is more as Nathaniel Hawthorne once wrote, "Time flies over us but leaves its shadows." I like to think of Hawthorne's shadows rather as memories. Memories happy and sad, old and new, some more painful than others, but all bits and pieces of the seasons of our life and our purpose on this Earth.

Now, I don't pretend to understand the mysteries of life. Why some seasons, like my daughter's, are so brief and others much longer. Why cancer struck her and not me. I can't even really explain why the sky is blue, but I am certain of one thing I learned from Melissa. And that is this. I believe that life happens with purpose. That every step takes us one step closer to where we are supposed to be, even when we can't see the end of the winding road.

I learned from my daughter that life lived with purpose is more meaningful than just passing time, and that finding meaning in even the smallest step makes the next one easier. Remembering how Melissa lived every day with purpose, cancer be damned, encourages me to be like her, especially on the hard days.

To everything, there is a season, turn, turn, turn. In what season of your life are you? To what purpose has it brought you? What's your next step?

In friendship and with thanks, as always,

Lauren

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Sometimes, You Just Gotta Laugh!™ 2025



It started with a simple question by comedian Todd Youngman,: "How about doing stand-up comedy?" Lauren answered quickly, "No way, they'll never do that." Three years and seven sold-out shows later, Lauren happily admits, "I was wrong."

Each year, the goal is the same - to give our members the chance to share the dark but often ridiculous things that happen when you are an AYA with cancer. To address parts of the experience you might be avoiding and feel the rush of confidence when a sold-out room laughs out loud.

This year brought many firsts. For starters, we hosted **two** shows in Rochester, with nearly 600 people in total. Our cast was also larger with 12 AYAs, and for the first time, a 13thirty parent! Linda Jacobson was the Rochester opener each night. "I was terrified. But then I remembered how terrifying it is to be a AYA facing cancer and knew I could face the challenge with the other comics by my side," said Linda about the experience.

Two of our AYAs traveled long distances to be in the show. Hannah Tornos, former Syacuse member, came from her new home in Missouri to be in the Rochester shows. "I wasn't able to attend other programs but wanted to still be in the show because of the deep connections that develop." Steve Napolitano, also a former Syracuse member, participated for the first time and practiced via Zoom from his new home in Savannah, GA.

The following weekend, the show went to the Redhouse Arts Center in Syracuse and wow'ed another sell-out crowd of over 100 people. Deep thanks to the Syracuse show's **Presenting Sponsor - Alan Beyer Volvo** for their generous support and year-long commitment to AYAs with cancer.

As always, we offer deep appreciation to Todd Youngman, comedian and mentor, for leading the process and caring for each and every member of the show.

Thank you, Todd, for proving Lauren wrong!



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Snapshots



Strike-out Fun!

We hit the lanes at Flamingo Bowl in Syracuse for a night of strikes and spares! To everyone's surprise, our trick shots ended up being the best shots of the night.



A Fond Farewell

After nine impactful, dedicated, and dad-joke filled years, we said goodbye to our Associate Director, Steve Esposito. We wish him the best of luck at his new job!



Students Against Cancer

April's Bald for Bucks event, hosted by St. John Fisher pharmacy students and NCODA, raised over \$10,000 for our programs and cancer research at Roswell.



A Look Within

Meaghan Flaherty from Path Forward Counseling led our members in an expressive art program, creating moving self-portraits using traditional art and dance.



Tote Your Strength

Our classic tie-dye night, with a twist! Instead of our usual t-shirts, we tie-dyed tote bags this year, each color representing the different supports we tote for strength.



A Scent-sational Night

Scent is our strongest sense tied to memory. For this program, members and their moms created new scent memories together by making one-of-a-kind candles.



Zenned Out

To round out April programs, Kaitlyn Vittozzi led our members through a night of mindful movement yoga. Members learned to listen and reconnect with their bodies.



Squeaky Clean

The team from First American spent the day deep cleaning our Rochester center during their Impact Day, a day dedicated to supporting local non-profits.



Celebrating Survivors

We spent an amazing Sunday celebrating our young survivors with C.U.R.E. Childhood Cancer Aduring their annual Survivors Day Family picnic.



Garden to Glass

Heartbeat Gardenscapes got Syracuse members ready for summer by creating refreshers using fresh herbs. Members planted herbs to recreate the recipes anytime.



Sweating For A Cause

On National Cancer Survivors Day, Burn Boot Camp Webster for a second year in a row hosted a sold-out work out class to support 13thirty programs.



Welcome To Club 13thirty

We welcomed two new employees to Club 13thirty the same way we started - around Lauren's table sharing a meal. Learn more about Kelly and Cassidy on page 7.



The 5th Annual Courtney's Court Challenge on June 7th was nothing short of a grand slam! Since its humble beginnings in 2021 with just 24 players and \$1,000 raised, the tournament has now surpassed \$66,000 in total donations, growing into a much anticipated event for the Rochester tennis community.

Held at Mendon Racquet Club, this year's tournament welcomed a record 93 players, filling the courts with fierce competition, laughter, and heart. "Serving Up Hope" took home the team win on the courts, while the "Rally Against Cancer" team won honors as highest fundraising team raising over \$3,000 of this year's \$21,471 grand total.

One competitor, Lydia Varon, who has played every year, served as a team captain, and member of the planning committee, summed up the day, "This is what tennis is all about, building community. It has been an honor to watch this tournament grow, and to know that the growth equates to the impact we have on 13thirty is truly amazing!" The unwavering support of fellow planning committee members, John Miller, Adam Moran, and Daniel Seaberg, made this year's tournament the most successful yet.

Courtney's Court Challenge is dedicated to beloved 13thirty member, daughter, wife, sister, niece, cousin, and good friend - Courtney Ferrara Wilhelm who died at age 27 on September 14, 2022. Courtney's tennis career started in middle school and continued through college at Alfred University which competes each year in her honor.



A huge thanks to tournament sponsors Walgreens, USTA Eastern, and Safran for their continued support. Pinnacle Hill Chiropractic provided free chiropractic services to players as well as being the 2025 Ball Sponsor.

As the sun set on our 5th tournament, everyone agreed that Courtney's spirit could be felt throughout the entire day. Courtney's parents said it best. "She was much like a flower that is beautiful and spreads joy, but flowers don't always last as long as we would like." Courtney left an indelible mark on our hearts and we are honored to keep her spirit alive as we prepare for our 2026 Courtney's Court Challenge.

Helping Others is Par for the Course

The moment the ground thaws, Rochester golfers flood to the courses. This year, hundreds of golfers are teeing up for 13thirty Cancer Connect. Three tournaments held thus far have raised over \$50,000 for our programs!

Tournament season started for us on May 31st with the "Keep on Fighting" tournament at Mill Creek Club, hosted by PepsiCo-Rochester and organized by 13thirty parent, Bob Gorski. "This is one thing I can do to give back to the organization that has given us so much," said Bob, speaking of the role 13thirty played in his daughter, Tatum's, cancer experience.

Two days later, the Jerry T. Griffo Jr. Tournament, was held at Penfield Country Club on a picture-perfect day. "I believe Jerry and Melissa sent the sunshine!", said Gina Griffo, speaking lovingly of her deceased husband. We were honored to be chosen as this year's beneficiary of the Griffo tournament. And on June 17, VP Supply Corp. hosted 134 golfers at the 22nd Annual Elliot Curwin Golf Invitational at Ravenwood Golf Club in honor of the corporation's founder. 13thirty shared the proceeds with two other very worthwhile local charities.

Golf season is far from over, so if you're looking to make a difference in the lives of local teens and young adults with cancer, please reach out to Caroline at caroline@13thirty.org to learn how you can help!



SAVE THE DATE:

The Connection Cup Golf Tournament
Hosted by Fuse Creative
Monday, September 29, 2025
Brook-Lea Country Club

13thirty Cancer Connect and our friends at Fuse are teaming up once again for our 2nd annual golf tournament! Register your foursome today at 13thirty.org.



SPOTLIGHT ON

Kelly Boehm & Cassidy Layman

Events Coordinator

Syracuse Program
Engagement Manager



What sparked your interest in working for 13thirty?

K: Shortly after my breast cancer diagnosis in 2022, I connected with 13thirty. Their vibrant community provided helpful resources, meaningful connections, empowering opportunities, and lots of laughter at a time when I needed it most. Knowing firsthand their impact, I'm excited to put my heart and energy into a cause I truly support, and I'm grateful to give back to an organization that has given me so much.

C: The people I met as I was introduced to 13thirty sparked my interest in joining the team. Everyone has been warm, welcoming, and enthusiastic as I've navigated a move from Albany to Syracuse. I'm excited to get to know more members of 13thirty over the coming months!

What is your role at 13thirty??

K: As Events Coordinator, I'm responsible for helping plan and coordinate 13thirty's events and contribute to the organization's broader goals through teamwork and collaboration. I'm always here as a resource for others, whether it's being a friendly face, offering a listening ear, providing encouragement, or to laugh!

C: My role as the Program Engagement Manager will be to develop and run engaging programs for members at our Syracuse center. In addition, I'll be working to grow 13thirty's footprint in Syracuse by raising awareness throughout the community and building on the organization's history of success.

How will your previous life and career experience help you in this new role?

K: I've always had a passion for working with people and building meaningful connections. I truly enjoy creating spaces where others can be themselves and feel supported. My own cancer experience has given me deep understanding of the unique challenges AYAs face. I love being creative, adventurous, and adaptable, which will help me in this role.

C: I expect to lean into my past experience in community engagement and program management in this exciting new role with 13thirty. I have five years of community engagement and program management experience, including three years as an AmeriCorps VISTA.

What keeps you busy when not at 13thirty?

K: Anything outdoors! I enjoy being in nature, especially on the water or hiking through the woods. Quality time connecting with my people is important to me - best enjoyed with food! I love to laugh, read, and write. Also, traveling and exploring new places near and far. Otherwise, I can be found at home, obsessing over my cats, and planning my wedding!

C: When I'm not at 13thirty, you can probably find me hiking, hanging out with my friends and family, or studying while curled up with my two cats. I recently completed a Graduate Certificate in Nonprofit Management and Leadership through the University at Albany and am excited to finish my Masters in Public Administration next May, also at UAlbany.

URMC Genetic Counseling Students, Irena Ceferri and Stefania Cichella, Gain Community Engagement Skills

As genetic counseling students, we chose this field to support individuals through uncertain times with empathy and respect. Volunteering at 13thirty has been a meaningful part of our training. Spending time with adolescents and young adults affected by cancer reminded us why we chose this path.

We're grateful to have been part of various events and activities, including a comedy show, game night, plant workshop, tennis tournament, rowing therapy, and more. We've been fortunate to experience the strong sense of community and connection this organization fosters. What stood out most was how naturally this community uses connection, humor, and shared experience to process incredibly difficult things.

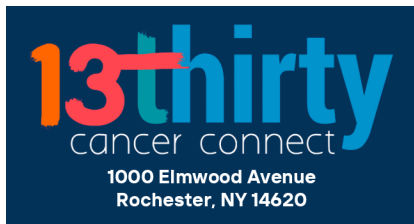
There's power in simply being seen and understood, especially during such a vulnerable time. In genetic counseling, we often meet patients facing challenging decisions, such as whether to undergo genetic testing or how to share results with family. The individuals at

13thirty reminded us these decisions are deeply influenced by lived experience, identity and community. We've been inspired by the resilience and positivity this groups has shown during our time with them.

We are appreciative of everyone at 13thirty for making us feel welcome and sharing their experiences. We hope to carry these experiences forward as we continue providing empathetic support on our genetic counseling journey.



Thank you, Irena and Stefania! Best of luck in your careers!



SAVE THE DATE

Journeys, the 24th Annual Celebration of Living
Saturday, November 8, 2025
Temple B'rith Kodesh

MAKE A DIFFERENCE - DONATE TODAY!



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"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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