

# 25 YEARS OF IMPACT

A PROMISE MADE IS A PROMISE KEPT



SPECIAL ISSUE | MARCH 2026



# THROUGH THE YEARS

## 25 YEARS OF IMPACT

13THIRTY CANCER CONNECT WILL ALWAYS HELP AYAs WITH CANCER LIVE THEIR VERY BEST LIVES - **TODAY!**



### 2000 - 2005

2000 - Melissa died on June 22 with one last request of her mom.

2001 - On April 9, Melissa's Living Legacy Teen Cancer Foundation received IRS nonprofit status.

2002 - Launched the first teen cancer website!

Lauren brought teens together to share their experience and the magic started!

### 2005 - 2010

Picnics and pancakes at Lauren's, meeting in borrowed places, time to just be 'normal' teens.

2006 - Became a charter member of the first national young adult cancer alliance.

The National Cancer Institute listed us as an important resource.

2009 - Moved into our first home at the Al Sigl Community of Agencies.

### 2010 - 2015

Others began taking notice of AYAs and followed our lead.

2010 - Hired our first full-time position.

2012 - Opened a satellite center in Buffalo with Roswell Park Cancer Institute.

2015 - Expanded our programs to include young adults and teens.

13thirty Cancer Connect - new name, larger space, same mission!

### 2015 - 2020

Our programs doubled and so did our capacity. Ready to do more!

2019 - Opened a second center in Syracuse - just months before COVID shut us down.

Not deterred, we pivoted to virtual programs and events. Challenge became opportunity.

2020 - We celebrated 20 years of making a difference for AYAs with cancer!

### 2020 - 2025

2022 - Mentored by comedian Todd Youngman, members tried stand-up comedy. Each year, we laugh at cancer with sold-out audiences.

2023 - The first Louis D'Amada III Early Career Research Grant, named in honor of our 13thirty friend, awarded to study the needs of AYAs in Rochester.

2025 - The Power of a Promise campaign was launched!

### THE NEXT 25?

As the incidence of early on-set cancer rises, our work is more important than ever.

We will continue building innovative programming and resources for this group.

We will proactively respond to opportunities as the needs of our AYAs change.

We will always be good stewards of the trust our donors place in us.



**Lauren Spiker**  
Founder & Executive Director

# CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF MAKING A DIFFERENCE!

Dear Friends,

As we celebrate our 25<sup>th</sup> year of making a difference for adolescents and young adults (AYAs) with cancer, these words by Ralph Waldo Emerson seem particularly fitting.

***Every sunset brings the promise of a new dawn.***

Melissa's last request at the end of her life launched our beginning, but as the sun set on my daughter's life, I could not see the light of dawn. The expression, "It's always darkest just before dawn," certainly held true for me.

But I had made a promise. A promise to use what I had learned from her to "make a difference, to make things better." I truly had no idea what I could do and dawn was breaking, so I just got started. And 25 years later, with the help of many, our work continues to shine a light on the needs of AYAs with cancer.

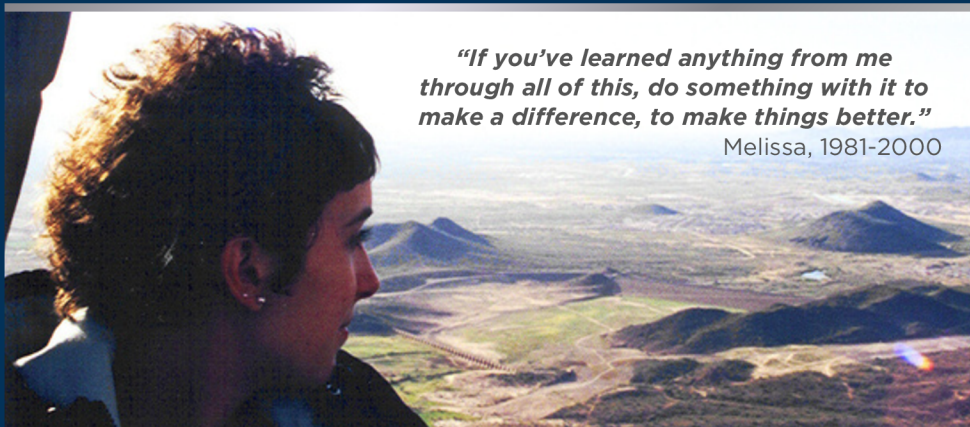
In this special 25<sup>th</sup> Year issue, we are proud to highlight not only the impact we are making today, but the road we followed to get here. You might say we took "the road less traveled" as we were among the first to recognize the gap in support for AYAs with cancer. Twenty-five years later, we are still leading the way.

For 25 years, I've been blessed with dear family and friends who believed in our mission. I've admired medical providers who quietly walk hospital hallways with words no one wants to hear. And I've worked side by side with fantastic 13thirty teammates who make the magic happen every day.

But my greatest joy has come from the hundreds of brilliant, courageous young people I've been honored to know and love. Their strength and love for life inspire me every day to be just a bit better.

I don't know if this is what Melissa had in mind when she challenged me "to do something." Maybe, she just knew I'd need something to do after she died. Either way, we've done our best for 25 years and can't wait to see what the next 25 will bring!

## THE POWER OF A PROMISE: A LEGACY LIVES ON



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

Melissa, 1981-2000

Before she died, Melissa had a last request of her mom. Lauren's response was simple, ***"I promise."***

Twenty-five years later, the impact of that promise still reverberates.

Each day we make a difference for adolescents and young adults (AYAs) with cancer.



A pledge of support to our ***Power of a Promise*** sustainability campaign will help us reach our goal of \$250,000, in honor of our 25<sup>th</sup> year. Your gift will help secure our future and ensure that Melissa's living legacy will endure for another 25 years and beyond. **This is your moment to make a lasting impact. We're 98% of the way to our goal!**

# FLASHBACK: THE FIRST PANCAKE BREAKFAST



**It all started around Lauren's dining room table!**

We didn't have a home of our own for several years, so much of the early activity happened at the Spiker's house. Actually, much still does! No wonder everyone describes 13thirty as a place that feels like home.

From the very beginning, when our program was known as TLC (Teens Living with Cancer), our values were reflected in the culture we cultivated. **A place where everyone feels safe, respected, and seen as more than the "cancer kid."**

Twenty-five years later, we have our own kitchen in which to flip flapjacks but the hallmarks of "family" are embedded in every program, every interaction, every decision we make in service to our mission of helping teens and young adults with cancer live their very best lives. Stop in sometime. Lauren's always got the coffee on!



## PROGRAMS THEN & NOW

It's been said that that the only constant in life is change! In many ways, that's been true at 13thirty Cancer Connect. Over the years, our membership has grown, our staff has increased, and our space has gotten larger. Technology has changed how we work, communicate, and relate to each other.

**But one thing hasn't changed - our commitment to helping our AYAs live their very best lives - today!**

Back in 2012, we participated in a study to test the feasibility of a multi-week fitness program. Our members worked out every week for 12 weeks with our first coach, the indomitable Mary Eggers. As their strength and endurance increased, so did their confidence. We were on to something!

Today, 13thirty Fit! is still a core program with the goal of improving functional fitness - endurance, flexibility, and strength. Brianne Young, our current coach, keeps everyone motivated with her upbeat - and tough - workouts! With 14 years of data as proof, we can say with absolute certainty that it works! **Thank you, Mary and Brianne!**



## OUR IMPACT



### Direct Support

Providing essential resources that enhance health-related quality of life for AYAs



### Service Delivery

Helping providers understand the challenges of AYA cancer



### Advocacy

Influencing appropriation of resources to meet the diverse needs of AYAs



### AYA Cancer Research

Supporting & participating in research relevant to AYAs with cancer

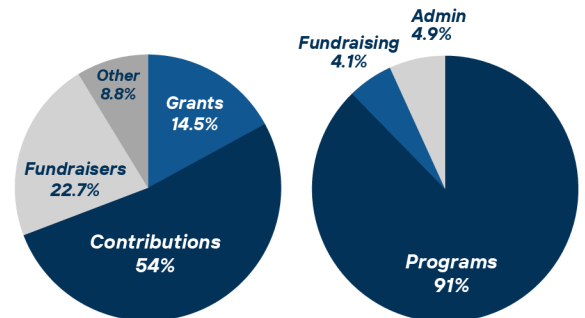


## OUR CAPACITY

**ABOUT 30% OF NONPROFITS FAIL AFTER 10 YEARS. WE'RE STILL THRIVING AFTER 25 YEARS WITH THE VISION AND CAPACITY TO MEET A GROWING NEED.**

Though still small, we accomplish much with very little. Our team is committed, adaptable, and agile, ready to seize opportunities and adjust when necessary.

Every dollar is used judiciously. In 2024, nearly **\$.91 of every dollar** was directed to our programs. All our programs are free and we receive no government funding, so we are reliant on our dedicated and loyal donors.



2024 REVENUE

2024 EXPENSES

124.5 PROGRAM HOURS • 82 PROGRAMS • 137 UNIQUE PARTICIPANTS

\*2025 YTD not yet available

## OUR FUTURE



**WE WERE THERE IN THE BEGINNING AND 25 YEARS LATER, WE'RE STILL HERE BRIDGING THE GAP IN SERVICES FOR THIS VULNERABLE SEGMENT OF CANCER PATIENTS.**

Unlike when we started, there is much greater awareness today of AYA cancer and its impact. A sense of urgency is spurring new research, fostering collaboration, and accelerating the rate of much needed change. Now is the time for us all to act and act boldly!

Because of our years of experience, we are ready to capitalize on new technology, respond with confidence when opportunities arise, and utilize our broad network for advice and best practice.

We are well prepared to take major leaps in AYA supportive care over the next 25 years to leverage our leadership position, and build on our strong foundation. **The ROI on today's investment will be realized in reduced healthcare costs and more vibrant communities tomorrow.** We helped ignite the AYA movement and understand the landscape of care for AYAs. They tell us what they need - and we listen. **With your help, we will keep the flame lit!**



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# MARK YOUR CALENDARS TO CELEBRATE 25 YEARS WITH US!

## 25TH YEAR CELEBRATION

*AN EVENING OF CONVERSATION & COMMUNITY*

- THURSDAY, APRIL 9, 2026 | 4:30 - 6:30PM
- THE CARLSON - 50 CARLSON ROAD, ROCHESTER, NY 14610
- RSVP AT 13THIRTY.ORG



## SOMETIMES, YOU JUST GOTTA LAUGH!™

*A NIGHT OF COMEDY WITH ORIGINAL SETS BY 13THIRTY MEMBERS*

- FRIDAY, MAY 15 AT COMEDY @ THE CARLSON (ROC) | 8PM
- SATURDAY, MAY 16 AT THE SONG & DANCE (SYR) | 8PM
- PURCHASE TICKETS AT 13THIRTY.ORG



## JOURNEYS, 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CELEBRATION OF LIVING

- SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10 | 6PM
- RIT INN & CONFERENCE CENTER
- JOURNEYS SPONSORSHIPS AVAILABLE

*Save the  
Date!*

13THIRTY.ORG/FUNDRAISERS