

THE 2026 SUMMER UPDATE

13THIRTY INSIGHTS

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

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13thirty
cancer connect

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.

United Way Donor Choice #2383
Tax ID# 47-4493013



A Message from Lauren Spiker Founder & Executive Director

Hello Friends,

Well, I've finally said it out loud – retirement! Who knew just one word could carry such a punch? But as a lover of words, always learning new ones in order to choose just the right one, I'm not sure exactly what that word means to me.

The AI definition of retirement is, "*The permanent withdrawal from your active working life or occupation, typically in later adulthood.*" Ughhh, I meet the last criterion but I'm not sure about the rest! Though I may not yet know what retirement will mean for me, I do know how it feels - at least right now.

Melissa's death changed the trajectory of my life in a direction I would never have chosen for myself. But as a tapestry on my office door reads:

*We must be willing to let go of the life we have planned,
So as to have the life that is waiting for us.*
E.M. Forster

I couldn't have imagined the life that was waiting for me after Melissa died. But now, as I reflect on the past 25 years, myriad emotions flood my heart. Joy tempered by sadness. Hope buoyed with faith in the universal order. Love multiplied by hundreds of young people whose courage fortified my own.

As I prepare to let go and discover what is awaiting, I'm excited to explore new ways to keep the promise I made to Melissa. Curious how else I might "make a difference." Eager to share new adventures with Doug, doing things for which we haven't had time.

I am confident that our once small, grassroots organization, now a national leader in AYA cancer support, is prepared for even greater growth and impact.

Tears flow freely when I think of not walking into the Center each day, not seeing the smiling faces of kids I love, their photos gracing our colorful walls. But don't worry, I'm not leaving tomorrow! I still have 10 months to make sure we're all ready. You haven't heard the last of me!

I hope you'll join us at Journeys on October 10 to celebrate 25 Years! See you there!

With thanks, as always,

Lauren

Featuring 13thirty Members

HOST Michaela DEEG

Sophie FRIEDMAN

Alex KOUZAN

HOST Kelly MEEHAN

Justin RABJOHN

Maya TAYLOR

ROCHESTER COMEDY FESTIVAL 2026

SOMETIMES, YOU JUST GOTTA LAUGH!™

Don't Miss Original Sets by 13thirty Cancer Connect Young Adults with Cancer

13thirty cancer connect

ROCHESTER COMEDY FESTIVAL 2026
SATURDAY, JULY 18 • SHOWTIME 4PM • THE CARLSON EVENT SPACE
TICKETS AT 13THIRTY.ORG

10.10.26

SAVE *the* DATE



JOURNEYS, THE 25TH ANNUAL CELEBRATION OF LIVING:
THE ROAD WE'RE FOLLOWING

CELEBRATE 25 YEARS OF IMPACT WITH US AS WE HONOR
THE LEGACY & RETIREMENT OF OUR FOUNDER &
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, LAUREN SPIKER.

RIT INN & CONFERENCE CENTER

Snapshots



Music Magic

Thank you to The KEYS Program for not only teaching our members the basics of ukulele at a recent program, but also giving them their own ukulele to take home!



Stronger Together

We announced the formation of the Greater Rochester Cancer Alliance, with the mission to untie nonprofits and raise awareness of cancer resources in our community.



Cut, Shave, Style

St. John Fisher pharmacy students, for a second year in a row, went Bald for Bucks, raising \$1,395 to support 13thirty's peer programs.



Just Kickin' It

We took advantage of the warm weather with a night of kickball at Highland Park. Thank you to Avery and Tyler at the Legacy of Clover Blossom for donating supplies!



Sweating Success

ROC Strong Club hosted a fundraiser workout class in honor of our 25th year! Mike had attendees sweating and celebrating throughout this high energy class for a cause.



25 Years of Impact

We celebrated this milestone with an evening of conversations and community, reflecting on our journey of 25 years and the future we are building together.



Garden Goodness

Melissa's garden is usually maintained by Lauren and Doug alone. This year, associate board members helped, hauling mulch to lay the base for the garden's beauty.



Mixology Madness

Our Rochester young adults were bartenders for the night as we learned the basics of NA cocktail creation from owners of local NA bar, Altbar.



Club 13thirty Grows

It was a night of great food and even better company as our Syracuse members gathered for a family meal to welcome our new Syracuse Program Manager, Tim Kaiser.



Sparkle and Shine

The team at First American had our center sparkling after spending their Impact Day cleaning our space, an annual effort for which we are incredibly thankful.



That's A Wrap!

After two successful comedy shows this May, 13thirty performers gathered for a celebratory meal, rehashing the laughs and favorite moments from both shows.



Home Run Fun

We had an amazing night tabling at the Mets Survivors Night. A chance to put cancer to the sideline while being surrounded by others who truly understand.



SPOTLIGHT ON

Tim Kaiser

Syracuse Program Manager

What are your responsibilities as the Syracuse Program Manager?

I am responsible for running programs, making connections, and developing the Syracuse area to better serve AYA's in Syracuse. I also have some analytical responsibilities to better help 13thirty as a whole.

Tell us a little bit about how you got involved to 13thirty

My connection to 13thirty goes back to before I was diagnosed with cancer. In 2018, a good friend and classmate of mine, Charlie Poole, died as a result of a brain tumor. Charlie used to drive from Syracuse to Rochester in order to participate in 13thirty programming. After Charlie died, the Syracuse center was opened, in part, in his honor. After I was diagnosed with Testicular Cancer in October of 2020, Charlie's mom, Linda, encouraged me to start attending programs. After some initial hesitancy, I started attending programs and I haven't looked back!

How will your past experience, both personal and professional help you succeed at 13thirty?

I am an incredibly driven person. When I set my mind on something I will get it done. I love being around people and making them feel known and loved. Also, being a cancer survivor, and a friend of Charlie's, motivates me to help the Syracuse area grow and fully actualize its potential for serving AYAs.

What are you most looking forward to in this role?

I am most looking forward to building relationships. Relationships with AYA's, community members, and hospital staff. I am hoping to be a part of growing the Syracuse area for 13thirty and this can only be done through solid relationships.

What is your favorite memory as a 13thirty member?

I really enjoyed being apart of SYJGL, our annual comedy show. It was so much fun to make good friends with members from the Rochester center all the while laughing at cancer.

What keeps you busy when not at 13thirty?

The great outdoors! I love to hunt, fish, and be outdoors. My wife and I also love doing puzzles and reading together.



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Cancer Advocacy in Action

"One person can make a difference, and everyone should try."
— John F. Kennedy

On a Monday morning in April, seven of our PAC members from Rochester and Syracuse boarded Amtrak bound for Albany, ready to put those words into action and advocate for the needs of cancer patients. Joining the American Cancer Society's Cancer Action Day, we spent a full day advocating at the state capital for three specific points of legislation, improving access to patient navigation services, improving NY's paid family medical leave program, and to preserve biomarker testing for those insured through Medicaid.

We arrived in Albany the day before Cancer Action Day for some sight-seeing before the big day. Our first stop was a tour of the capitol learning about the history, purpose, and people behind the building where decisions affecting New Yorkers are made every day. Over dinner we discussed how our personal stories would be our strongest tool in convincing NY state legislators to sponsor the three points of legislation.

Karen Rector, Rochester PAC member, shared how the issue of biomarker testing had an effect on her cancer journey and why it was so important to her. **"Biomarker testing wasn't available to me with my first cancer. I wonder if my second cancer would have happened? We need to identify and treat cancer the right time, the first time."**

Armed with knowledge, prepared talking points, and a shared sense of purpose, we joined over 200 other New Yorkers, ready to ensure that the voices of cancer patients were heard.

For six hours, in back-to-back meetings, we spoke with over 20 different legislators, putting a face on AYA cancer, making them aware of the real impact their support would have on current and future cancer patients.

Valerie Lopez, Syracuse PAC member and active cancer advocate's takeaway was simple - progress feels possible. "Today felt incredibly hopeful compared to other days of advocacy, like a change could really be made."

On Sunday, May 31st, Valerie's words rang true as the newly adopted New York State Budget preserved access to biomarker testing for Medicaid enrollees.

This success was a powerful reminder of why we advocate in the first place, honoring Melissa's final request.

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

Points of Legislation

- **S55465 / A6586:** Improving Access To Patient Navigation Services
- **A9571 / S172:** Improving NY's Paid Family Medical Leave Program
- Preserving Biomarker testing for those insured through Medicaid

Match Point: Six Years of Community Impact

Six years ago, we hosted the first *Courtney's Court Challenge Memorial Tennis Tournament* and dreamed of what might be. Thanks to the unwavering support of our local tennis communities, that dream has grown beyond what we imagined, raising over \$88,000, to date, for peer programs at 13thirty Cancer Connect.

In May, we held the first tournament in Syracuse, where the Drumlins Tennis Center hosted our mixed doubles round robin. Sixteen new 13thirty Champions served up \$1,690 for CNY teens and young adults, a Grand Slam success. In June, our 6th annual Rochester team event was record-breaking, once again exceeding our \$20K goal!

Community support started before racquets hit the court with a happy hour at The Carlson, a chance for teams to socialize before the competition. With **94 players**, the most ever, it was a full day of serving for a cause at Mendon Racquet Club, with teams competing for first place, best team spirit, and the Highest Team Fundraiser title!

We are grateful for the players, sponsors, volunteers, and supporters who continue to make our dreams a reality, proving that when the community rallies together, the possibilities are endless. It is an honor to host *Courtney's Court Challenge* in memory of our beloved 13thirty member, Courtney Ferrara Wilhelm (breast cancer). Together, we celebrate her life, spirit, and love of tennis.





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We arrived in Albany the day before the event for some sight-seeing and team bonding. Our first stop was touring the Capitol, learning about the history, purpose, and people behind the building where decisions affecting New Yorkers are made every day.

Over dinner, we discussed how our personal stories could influence NY state legislators to sponsor the legislation on our agenda. Karen Rector, Rochester PAC member, shared how the issue of biomarker testing had an effect on her cancer journey and why it was so important to her.

"Biomarker testing wasn't available to me with my first cancer. If it had, I wonder if my second cancer would have happened?"

We need to identify and treat cancer the right way, the first time. This legislation is not only important to cancer patients, but to ALL New Yorkers."

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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

Please make checks payable to: 13thirty Cancer Connect
1000 Elmwood Ave., Rochester, NY 14620

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