

2023 ANNUAL REPORT





FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends and Supporters,

As I reflect on 2023, the word “growth” is at the forefront of my mind. Moving into our headquarters, hiring our Events Coordinator, partnering with Calm Pittsburgh to launch a free counseling program, building phenomenal relationships with local Pittsburgh nurses who share a passion for supporting financial assistance for YAs, beginning the YA Research Registry and passing IRB, and ending the year with partnering with the Christian Cochran Legacy Fund to develop Distribution Days ... what a year!

Growth continued as the Wig Out and annual Golf Outing sold out, and the Young Adult Cancer Camp (co-hosted with Elephants and Tea) served 95 campers at YMCA’s Camp Kon-O-Kwee Spencer. With the help of local treatment nurses and generous supporters, we’ve raised over \$10,000 since October 2023 aiming to expand the amount of financial support we can provide to our members. We ended 2023 growing to 800 YASU members; 200 more than last year!

It warms my heart to see how much we’ve grown since launching YASU in March 2020. I can’t live one day without recognizing and appreciating my staff and board of directors for their dedication and teamwork to ensure YASU’s sustainability and trajectory. May we always celebrate the milestones while remaining humble and motivated to continue closing the gaps and enhancing the quality of life for young adults impacted by cancer.



Stephanie Samolovitch, MSW
Executive Director



Staff

Executive Director

Stephanie Samolovitch, MSW

Assistant Director

Lindsey Harshaw

Events Coordinator

Sara Talerico

Administrative Assistant

Kelley Johnson

Board of Directors

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Kimmy Pederson, PsyD

Laurin Scanlon

Our Mission

To help young adult cancer survivors and caregivers/co-survivors cope and thrive by providing emotional, social, and financial support; the comprehensive care model that enhances their quality of life.

BY THE NUMBERS

Growing Membership

800 YASU Members

42% more than 2022!

397

385 Outside of PA

Moved into the first

YASU HQ



Combatting Toxicity



\$50K

Financial Assistance Grants

Reducing Stress

4.8

Before & After Receiving Financial Assistance

2.7

Average stress rating on a scale from 1 (least) to 5 (most)

Access to Therapy



24 YASU Members

Provided with free counseling through Calm Pittsburgh



82

In-Person & Virtual Support Groups

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“...[YASU] made my life a lot easier to deal with because of all the help I received. I'm glad I joined and now I gained a family during my cancer journey.”

“Whether we're in treatment or remission, cancer comes at a cost - literally. I cannot express my gratitude for YASU's continued assistance as I get my life back on track. This means the world!”

”



EMPOWERING SURVIVORSHIP

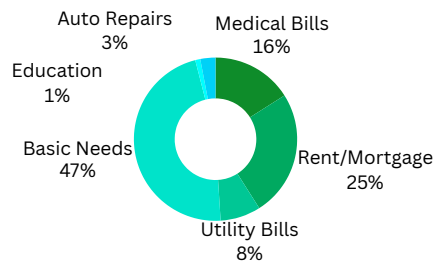
MEETING EMOTIONAL NEEDS

Navigating cancer at an already complex time can be overwhelming. This year, YASU hosted over 100 support groups and monthly Self-Love Workshops, building a peer community to escape daily stresses, share coping strategies, and foster connections. With funding from the Pittsburgh Foundation, we provided an opportunity for **24 YASU members** to access counseling from experts at Calm Pittsburgh.

MEETING FINANCIAL NEEDS

As YA survivors often experience a high burden of financial toxicity, the demand for financial support is unending. In 2023, YASU awarded **\$50,000** to assist individuals in financial distress. Approximately 60% of grants were first-time recipients.

2023 Financial Assistance:



“This program is more than money, it creates hope.”

MEETING SOCIAL NEEDS

Relationships with peers allow young adult cancer survivors to have a shared experience, increase understanding, and foster deep and meaningful friendships. This year we hosted **33 social outings**. Additionally, our first year in our new HQ has given us the opportunity to increase volunteer opportunities and host in-person programs. With support from the Pittsburgh North Regional Chamber, we hosted an Open House in June and a Member Party in July.



"My favorite social event this year has been the walk 'n talk at North Park. Being out in nature and getting to know people more directly and grabbing a bite to eat after was so much fun! Getting out of my apartment with people that have been through similar situations really helps bring in connection and community that I don't necessarily get otherwise."

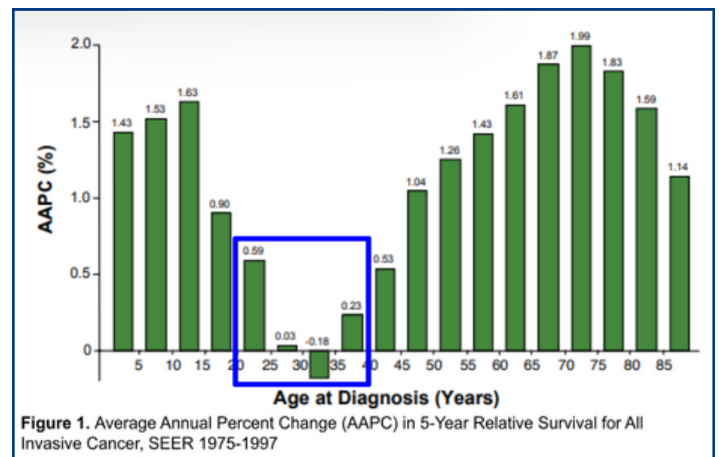




YASU RESEARCH REGISTRY

For many years, young adults (YAs) diagnosed with cancer between 18 and 39 were treated like children or like older adults. But they are neither. A 2006 landmark study found that survival rate for those diagnosed with cancer as YAs had not appreciably improved since the 1970s, despite significant improvements in both younger and older people with cancer (Fig. 1).

Through generous grants from the Staunton Farm Foundation and Hillman Family Foundation, the YASU Research Registry was developed in 2023 to facilitate research efficiency by connecting researchers and YA cancer survivors. With more than 800 members from Western Pennsylvania, across the US, and around the world, we are uniquely positioned to accelerate YA cancer research. YASU recently received independent IRB approval for this registry, allowing us to collaborate with many different institutions. The project is led by Dr. Bethany Nugent, PhD, RN, whose past research includes cancer survivorship research and the development of a database for a hospital-based survivorship program to track outcomes for cancer survivors over time. We aim to use this dataset to help researchers and clinicians improve treatment and change the conversation about behavioral health and cancer.



"I have noticed the need for something like this research registry as I have been reaching out to various cancer centers and support organizations. I'm glad that you are taking on this important endeavor."

**-Colleague from
UNC-Chapel Hill**





ENJOYING THE SMALL MOMENTS



Raelene Lauer was 32 when she passed away on August 3, 2021 from her 10-month battle with breast cancer. To carry on her legacy of enjoying small getaways and relaxing moments, Rae of Hope provides free daylong or overnight respite trips.



"Rae of Hope allowed me to take a minute away from my own crazy life and share it with my sister (a pediatric oncologist) who is familiar, in her own, very real, way with cancer and the toll that it can take on everyone near it. My sister has always been a large part of my life but during treatment, she was also the doctor that fielded the most questions from our close family and friends. She lives in Philadelphia and Rae of Hope allowed me to surprise her with a night in Bedford Springs. It was for me to relax and regroup after a stressful year but also for me to share with her. We had a day to relax, take a breath, get dressed up and enjoy a lovely evening together. Rae of Hope made me feel supported by a community that "gets it" and also allowed me to share the love with someone that supports me and others in the cancer community everyday."

-NEHA



ÍZORA Cosmetic Ink & Academy uplifted YASU members with free microblading or semi-permanent eyeliner services that left them confident and beautiful.



"I'm so happy to just get up and go in the morning without drawing on my brows. They look natural and make me feel good about myself! Thank you, YASU for providing such a fantastic opportunity for survivors!!"



Over Labor Day weekend, 95 young adult cancer patients, survivors, and caregivers convened at YMCA Camp Kon-O-Kwee Spencer to enjoy the respite and camaraderie of our second annual Cancer Camp. Hosted in collaboration with Elephants & Tea, Cancer Camp offers a fun weekend getaway to connect, recharge, and relax with physical and non-physical experiences. In 2023, we hosted individuals from 28 states across the US. Connecting in person is a life-changing experience that empowers them to engage and return each year.



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“I was diagnosed in 2017 with Hodgkin’s Lymphoma. I am finally in long term remission since July 2019 after beating it 3 times. The entire time I was battling through I had no community. Fast forward to 2022. I noticed my wife’s friend post pictures from Cancer Camp. I was all “what is this?!?” She told me about YASU. Everything was out of town so I didn’t follow up. Then when registration for Cancer Camp open for this year she shared it with me. I thought “What the heck? Why not?”

Cancer Camp 2023 completely changed my life! It was the first time since I was diagnosed that I felt like I fit in. I was surrounded by 100 people I have never met in my life. I felt comfortable. On my drive home from camp I did a lot of praying and soul searching. I didn’t realize how unfulfilled I was until then. I found my new passion! Since camp I have attended several YASU events and have kept in touch with many of the wonderful people from camp, my new family!”

-TYLER



Photo credit: Dominique Murray Photography





With the help of local treatment nurses and generous supporters, we have raised over \$10,000 so far, aiming to expand the amount of financial support YASU can provide to our members.

\$10K Pittsburgh Oncology Patient Aid Campaign



In December 2023, we hosted our first blood drive in partnership with Vitalant at our office headquarters in Wexford.

"I lost count of how many blood and platelet transfusions I had to undergo....Transfusions saved my life."



Photo credit: LjReed Photography

Birdsfoot Golf Club hosted the annual YASU golf outing in July of 2023. **144 golfers** played for prizes and entered raffles for donated items from organizations around the Pittsburgh area.

Young Adult Survivors United **Wig Out** PRESENTED BY: 100%

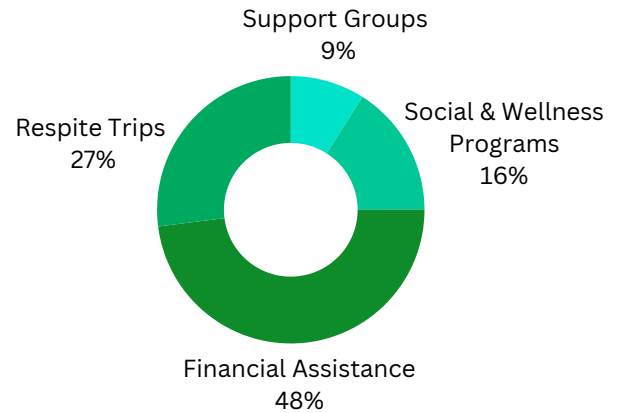
The biggest Halloween party in Pittsburgh was once again held at the Rivers Casino on October 27th. Sold out with **600 attendees**, this night of fun honors our YASU members and provides a place where they can have fun, pause from everyday stressors, and think beyond their treatment. Itchy wigs many cancer patients wear throughout treatment are traded in for colorful, fun wigs as they and the community celebrate, raising funds to benefit their quality of life.

Photos credit: Dominique Murray Photography



PROGRAM EXPENSES

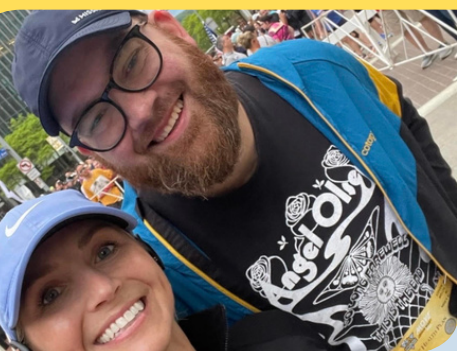
All of YASU's programs directly support the social, emotional, and financial wellbeing of young adult cancer survivors and caregivers/co-survivors. In 2023, program related expenses were distributed in the following key areas: support groups, social & wellness programs, respite trips, and financial assistance.



Everything we do is through your generous *support.*

We are grateful for all our donors, partners, and volunteers!





Vision for 2024

In 2024, we are increasing financial assistance grants up to \$600 per member in need, moving the Wig Out to a bigger venue, allowing us to host 700-750 guests with VIP support for sponsors, launching monthly Distribution Days in collaboration with the Christian Cochran Legacy Fund, welcoming Kelley, our new Administrative Assistant, and Lisa, a new Social Work Intern.

Our office space will help us facilitate IN-PERSON monthly supportive chats. Doing this is how the YA cancer community was built, beginning in 2012. It's beyond incredible to see how far we've come, how much awareness we've raised, and the journey we foresee with our members and supporters.



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