

2025 Lights of Hope Story Columns



ALABAMA



Kimberly Alexander

Kimberly Alexander, ACT Lead for Alabama's congressional district 7, was a fierce and inspiring advocate with ACS CAN for seven years while living with stage IV lung cancer. A devoted mother and grandmother, Kimberly helped secure a proclamation for Lung Cancer Awareness Month in Alabama, fought for Medicaid expansion, and enthusiastically supported Lights of Hope. She also worked passionately to advance multi-cancer early detection legislation, which would provide coverage for cancer screening tests to millions of Americans, providing powerful testimony before Congress in 2024. Although Kimberly is gone too soon, her fab-YOU-lous spirit and determination live on.



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ARKANSAS



Susan Rima

An American Cancer Society and ACS CAN volunteer in Hot Springs for over 10 years, Susan Rima fights for family members who have experienced cancer, including her own battle with thyroid cancer. She has served as survivor chair for Relay For Life events and is actively involved with ACS CAN's Cancer Action Day. In her advocacy, Susan prioritizes relationships with lawmakers. Her representative, Bruce Westerman, even invites her on an annual tour of the Capitol. Susan's passion lies in the importance of cancer research funding and access to cures so that everyone can detect, treat, and survive cancer.



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ALASKA



Beverly Wooley

A cancer survivor, caregiver, and retired public health professional, Beverly Wooley knows first-hand that passing good policy is just the beginning. As an ACS CAN volunteer, Bev helped craft and implement telehealth modernization efforts allowing out-of-state cancer centers to support Alaska patients via telehealth and has worked tirelessly with those centers to encourage their participation in the program. Bev's work has not only improved access to care in theory, but also in reality as she fights to ensure that Alaska residents know their rights to telehealth care. Bev won't stop until all Alaskans who need cancer care have true access.



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CALIFORNIA



Shelly & Michael Reinhart

Shelly Reinhart tragically lost her brother, Jeff, to colon cancer when he was just 35 years old. This loss fueled her dedication to fundraising and advocating for cancer cures, focusing on palliative care, tobacco control, and access to care. Inspired by Shelly's commitment, her son Michael became a legislative ambassador for ACS CAN at the young age of 6. Believing everyone can make a difference, Michael advocates by speaking with state and local leaders about tobacco prevention and educating the community about the need for more cancer research, demonstrating his passion for finding cures and supporting patients.



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ARIZONA



Russell Gillard

Russell Gillard was given just 3-5 years to live after his second bout with brain cancer – in 2002. In the time since, Russ has made an indelible impact on his state, building both the advocacy volunteer structure and key relationships with lawmakers. As one of ACS CAN's very first advocacy volunteers, Russ traveled to Relay For Life events across Arizona, talking about the role of advocacy in the fight against cancer and recruiting a statewide advocacy team. Russ is proud to have attended Celebration on the Hill, Leadership Summit and Lobby Day, and almost every Arizona Cancer Action Day.



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COLORADO



Gretchen Testerman

At 43, Gretchen Testerman was diagnosed with ductal and lobular breast cancer—and then, Lynch Syndrome, a genetic condition increasing cancer risk. Drawing on her legal background and family history with cancer, she became her own advocate, researching treatments and navigating complex decisions. Grateful for the care she received, Gretchen gives back through ACS CAN, as ACT Lead for Colorado's congressional district 4 and by supporting Making Strides Against Breast Cancer. Thank you, Gretchen, for transforming personal hardship into purpose and hope for others.



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CONNECTICUT



Betty Berger

Betty Berger has dedicated more than two decades of her life to ACS CAN through advocacy, volunteer leadership, and just being there whenever asked or needed. Since Betty's son was diagnosed with cancer at 13, she has tirelessly advocated for patients, survivors, and their families. From DC to Hartford, Betty has shared her story in support of numerous cancer-fighting measures including increasing the tobacco sale age, establishing the first statewide palliative care advisory council, increasing funding for cancer research and improving access to cancer care innovations. Even 20 years later, with her son happily in remission, Betty continues the fight.



DISTRICT of COLUMBIA



Lawson Brooks

At 47, Lawson Brooks was diagnosed with prostate cancer—a moment that shook his world. Yet over time, what once felt like a death sentence became a story of survival, strength, and purpose. Today, as a two-time cancer survivor, he credits early detection with saving his life and fights back through advocacy. Lawson became a powerful voice in the campaign to pass the Cost-Free Coverage for Prostate Cancer Screening Amendment Act, as he testified before the DC City Council and shared his personal cancer journey with lawmakers. In addition to his advocacy, Lawson is an acclaimed author and writer.



DELAWARE



Matt Wilson

Despite the presence of serious symptoms, it took multiple doctors and a visit to the emergency room for kidney stones to diagnose Matt Wilson's pancreatic cancer. He was 29 years old. Now a 13-year survivor, Matt has spent the past decade advocating for early detection and increased access to cancer care. As a new volunteer with ACS CAN, he played a key role at Delaware's Cancer Action Day and consistently brings his advocacy into his community. Matt's passion lies in lifting up the stories of those who are facing cancer and fighting for new medical research breakthroughs.



FLORIDA



Hannah Groth

Medicaid saved Hannah Groth's life. At just 18, Hannah was diagnosed with Stage 2IIB Hodgkin's Lymphoma, requiring years of treatment. If it weren't for Medicaid, Hannah would not have been treated or would've faced a lifetime of debt. Today, 29 surgeries later, Hannah fearlessly advocates for the protection and expansion of Medicaid as the lead ACS CAN volunteer in her congressional district. In addition to her work on Medicaid expansion, Hannah shares her story and fights for a litany of ACS CAN priorities, including increased funding for cancer research and childhood cancer programs, and improved access to early detection and screening.



GEORGIA



Lee Turner

"I want to be a voice for those who can't fight for themselves." For Lee Turner, advocacy is personal. He is a proud cancer survivor and caregiver, and a committed ACS CAN volunteer since 2008. As former State Lead Ambassador and current ACT Lead, Lee is especially proud of helping lead Georgia's smoke-free campaigns and working alongside other extraordinary volunteers. A recipient of the 2016 ACT Lead of the Year award, Lee treasures attending the Lights of Hope ceremony in Washington, where thousands of bags honor lives touched by cancer—a powerful reminder of the hope Lee works to bring.



GUAM



Tressa Diaz

After losing her father to colorectal cancer, Dr. Tressa Diaz became a passionate advocate for cancer policy and education. Since representing Guam at Leadership Summit & Lobby Day in 2020, she has actively integrated ACS CAN into her work, bringing cancer advocacy to her University of Guam classrooms and inspiring students through grassroots engagement and legislative participation. As a member of the ACS Hawaii-Guam Board, former Chair of the Guam Comprehensive Cancer Control Coalition, and leader of the Community Outreach Core at the Guam Cancer Research Center, Tressa continues to advance cancer prevention, research, and survivorship among Indigenous Pacific Islanders.



HAWAII



Uri Martos

Uri Martos is a two-time metastatic breast cancer survivor and patient whose advocacy is driven by personal experience and a deep love of family in the fight against cancer. As ACT Lead, former State Lead Ambassador, and American Cancer Society area board member, Uri amplifies the voices of patients in rural and AANHPI communities. Whether leading teams, training volunteers, sharing her story through the media, or speaking at events, Uri touches many lives. Her mission: to honor loved ones, uplift survivors, and stop cancer in its tracks. Across Hawai'i and beyond, Uri is a beacon of strength, action, and hope.



IDAHO



Randi LaSalle

"No matter who you are, where you live, or how much you earn, everyone in Idaho deserves to live a healthy and happy life." When Idaho pursued Medicaid unwinding, Randi LaSalle, a single mom of four who worked three jobs, found her family among the roughly 185,000 Idahoans who lost health insurance coverage. Randi fought back, sharing her story in the media and with lawmakers to show that everyone deserves access to quality, affordable, health coverage, including those enrolled in Medicaid. With ACS CAN, Randi advocates to ensure other families never have to choose between food and healthcare.



ILLINOIS



Maggie Powell

To Maggie Powell, hope means "Helping Other People Endure." Maggie is a breast cancer survivor and dedicated volunteer whose passion for advocacy was ignited after attending ACS CAN's second Celebration on the Hill in 2006. After returning home, she began working on both the smoke-free Chicago and smoke-free Illinois campaigns, some of her most rewarding volunteer work. Maggie remains committed to fighting cancer knowing that medical advancements are what saved her life nearly thirty years ago. She chooses to be grateful for her experience with cancer because her survivorship and advocacy ultimately gave her life a greater purpose.



INDIANA



Doug & Karen Kelsey

Doug and Karen Kelsey have been champions and leaders of the American Cancer Society and ACS CAN for over three decades. After losing each of their first spouses to cancer, they found each other and chose to honor their lost loved ones through unwavering support for ACS CAN's mission and their fellow volunteers. Over the years, Doug and Karen have built key relationships with state and federal lawmakers, attended almost every Indiana state lobby day, mentored new volunteers, raised funds through Lights of Hope, and so much more. We are very fortunate to have the Kelseys in the Hoosier state.



IOWA



Morgan Newman

Morgan Newman, a resilient young adult cancer survivor, social worker, and patient advocate, has transformed her personal cancer experience into a powerful force for change. A champion for HPV vaccination and cancer prevention, she works tirelessly to raise awareness and expand access. Morgan partners with community organizations to bring diverse voices to the team, believing everyone deserves a fair chance to prevent, detect, treat, and survive cancer. Her leadership as Iowa's State Lead Ambassador has strengthened the team's inclusivity and impact and thanks to her dedication, more communities are being heard—and more lives protected—through education, screening, and vaccination.



KANSAS



Tami Portela

Tami Portela was 12 when her mother received a terminal brain cancer diagnosis, and Tami became her full-time caregiver at 17 — juggling college, work, and the weight of doing it all alone. With no family support or resources, Tami learned firsthand the heartbreak and resilience that caregiving demands. Later, as cancer touched more family and friends, Tami's fight grew stronger. Today, as ACT Lead for Kansas's congressional district 4, she turns her pain into purpose, sharing stories of her mom, grandparents, uncle, aunt and countless friends passing to terminal cancers, and working to promote policies to benefit all cancer patients.



KENTUCKY



Kim Lindgren

"Your mom has been sick." Kim Lindgren heard these words for the first time the day she lost her mom to metastatic breast cancer. Her mother had kept it secret so that her only child wouldn't worry. She knew cancer would take her life, and didn't want it to shape their moments. Today, Kim works to stop cancer from stealing time from other families. Her advocacy focuses on building close relationships with lawmakers and holding them accountable to cancer patients. As State Lead Ambassador, Kim fights cancer in memory of the greatest woman she'll ever know, her mom, Pat Troupe.



LOUISIANA



Trey Gibson

Trey Gibson's daughter, Emilie, loved unicorns, purple, Harry Potter, and swimming. In 2017, Trey lost Emilie to DIPG, a rare childhood cancer, and he channeled his grief into advocacy and volunteerism. Trey and his family founded the Fight Like Emilie Foundation, and he became an ACS CAN legislative ambassador, traveling annually to Washington for childhood cancer lobby days, and to Baton Rouge to advocate for state level cancer prevention measures. Aware that childhood cancer gets a tiny fraction of federal research dollars, Trey, along with his wife Candi, his son Alex, and great friends, continues the fight in Emilie's memory.



MAINE



Mikala Bousquet

Cancer advocacy is Mikala Bousquet's full-time job in many ways. After losing her mother to breast cancer a decade ago, today Mikala supports her sister through the same diagnosis. During the workday, Mikala is an oncology social worker and in her free time brings invaluable expertise to her role as State Lead Ambassador, most recently sharing her sister's experience with biomarker testing to advocate for insurance coverage of biomarker testing throughout Maine. Whether testifying before the legislature, meeting with lawmakers in Washington, or leading her statewide volunteer team, Mikala is a pillar of strength for patients, family, and fellow advocates.



MARYLAND



Dozetta Lewis

Dozetta Lewis, a three-year breast cancer survivor from Baltimore, has turned personal challenges into advocacy. After undergoing a double mastectomy with reconstruction surgery, she encountered increasingly expensive copayments for essential medications. Rather than staying silent, Dozetta chose to share her story, helping highlight the urgent need for affordable, predictable access to lifesaving treatment. Her advocacy played a key role in the passage of legislation in Maryland ensuring that copay assistance now counts toward patients' out-of-pocket costs. Dozetta's efforts will make treatment more affordable and help protect against medical debt for millions of Marylanders.



MASSACHUSETTS



Marina Watanabe

Marina Watanabe was just nine when her mother, Seiko, developed a persistent cough. After three months of uncertainty, Seiko was diagnosed with aggressive lung cancer that rapidly spread and led to her passing within a year. Marina has dedicated her life to preventing similar suffering for others. She earned her PhD, became a cancer researcher and STEM educator, and led research internships for minoritized students. As the lead ACS CAN volunteer in her congressional district and a leader in the AAPI Volunteer Caucus, Marina proudly shares her mother's story and advocates for cancer care equity and increased cancer research funding.



MICHIGAN



Marcie Paul

Marcie Paul became involved with cancer policy in 2009 after a late-stage ovarian cancer diagnosis. She began volunteering with ACS CAN 10 years later, advocating for oral chemotherapy fairness and access to care. One of Marcie's proudest moments as a volunteer was the passage of state oral chemotherapy parity legislation in 2023, putting a price cap on oral chemotherapy so that all patients in Michigan can afford care. Since surviving her diagnosis is rare, Marcie feels a strong responsibility to continue advocating for advancements in her disease, providing her with a sense of meaning and purpose throughout her cancer journey.



MINNESOTA



Jenn Schultz

Jenn Schultz, a four-time melanoma survivor, is a fierce and passionate advocate and Minnesota's Vice State Lead Ambassador. Since joining ACS CAN in 2022, Jenn has brought new people into the organization both in Minnesota and across the country, while serving as the state's primary storyteller around medical debt. Jenn's powerful voice was pivotal in the successful 2024 campaign to pass the Minnesota Debt Fairness Act, protecting Minnesotans from unfair medical debt collection methods. Jenn recently celebrated being three years cancer-free, but her journey isn't just about having cancer – it's about reclaiming her life, using her voice, and helping others.



MISSISSIPPI



Jane Streets

Jane Streets is no stranger to cancer. Diagnosed in 1995 with breast cancer and in 2024 with lung cancer, Jane never slowed down as an ACS CAN advocate, attending every Mississippi Cancer Action Day for the last 18 years. She served nine years as the State Lead Ambassador, leading statewide smokefree and teen tanning campaigns despite overwhelming opposition and continues her fight against cancer today as a legislative ambassador in her congressional district. "I'm grateful for ACS CAN and the avenue it provides for me to fight back. I'm honored to be a volunteer in this wonderful organization."



MISSOURI



Gerald "Jerry" Neville

Jerry Neville has been an American Cancer Society and ACS CAN volunteer for nearly thirty years. A three-time survivor of stage IV non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, Jerry credits research funded by the Society for saving his life and motivating him to volunteer. He understands the power of advocacy and makes his voice heard at state and federal lobby days as well as at events in his community. Having previously served as both State Lead Ambassador and ACT Lead, Jerry continues to be active with ACS CAN while also supporting his beloved wife, Judy, who is currently dealing with her own cancer journey.



MONTANA



Karen Fairbrother

After losing her beloved husband to melanoma, nurse educator Karen ("Karrie") Fairbrother became a passionate voice for cancer prevention. Karrie is always ready to try a new form of advocacy, testifying before the Montana legislature, calling lawmakers, and providing an active advocacy presence on social media. Her main priorities as a volunteer are clean air and water, women's health, tobacco and tanning bed regulations, and Medicaid expansion. In addition to her work with ACS CAN, Karrie has served as President of the Dermatology Nurses' Association and is a longtime champion of sun safety and skin cancer prevention education.



NEBRASKA



Frank Sierawski

Father of three, Frank Sierawski had never smoked a day in his life. So imagine his surprise when a worsening cough at age 34 led to a stage IV lung cancer diagnosis. The cancer had spread to his lymph nodes, spine and ribs and would eventually reach his brain. Yet thanks to biomarker testing and targeted treatment, Frank is living his life to the fullest, eleven years later. As an ACS CAN volunteer, he lobbies to provide access to biomarker testing for all Nebraskans through meetings with lawmakers, presentations to community groups, and sharing his powerful personal story.



NEVADA



Kristy Burley-Evans

"I'll never forget the call," says Kristy Burley-Evans. What seemed like a normal cold for her young daughter Sadie had developed into pain so bad that Sadie could no longer walk. Just days before her eleventh birthday, Sadie was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia and immediately began aggressive treatment. Fortunately, Sadie is now in maintenance. But it hasn't been easy or affordable, and Kristy relies on Medicaid to manage the immense costs of Sadie's care. Kristy shares Sadie's story to ensure that Medicaid remains a lifeline for families in need, giving all young cancer patients an equal opportunity to thrive.



NEW HAMPSHIRE



Nanci Carney

Nanci Carney lost her husband in 1998, at the age of 38, after a six-month cancer battle. When she joined ACS CAN, it was in his honor. But in 2021, Nanci herself was diagnosed with melanoma; she underwent surgery, and biomarker testing allowed her doctors to predict the likelihood of relapse. Although this information saved Nanci from unnecessary treatment, insurance refused to pay, claiming the testing was not medically necessary. Nanci's decades of volunteerism suddenly became more personal; today she tirelessly shares the role that biomarker testing played in her treatment, and lobbies to provide insurance coverage across the state.



NEW JERSEY



Stephanie Chapelliquen

Stephanie Chapelliquen was a Ph.D. candidate studying pancreatic cancer when she was involved in the car accident that changed her life. An incidental finding of thyroid cancer led to a total thyroidectomy to remove the cancer, and inspired Stephanie to advocacy. Thirteen years later, Stephanie is New Jersey's State Lead Ambassador, leading successful campaigns around medical debt, biomarker testing, and step therapy. Stephanie knows how lucky she was to have caught her cancer early, to have been insured through school, and that others are not as fortunate. She lifts her voice to honor loved ones lost and others still fighting.



NEW MEXICO



Natalie Livingston

Natalie Livingston's experience with cancer goes back decades. For most of her teen and young adult years her grandfather was fighting cancer; eventually they lost him. Eleven years later, while performing a routine endoscopy, doctors were shocked to discover her father's stage IV adenocarcinoma. Although he appeared healthy, her father's body was riddled with cancer, and Natalie promised him that she would advocate for him when he no longer could. Five years after her father's passing, Natalie continues to make good on that promise as a New Mexico ACT Lead, fighting to affect real, systemic changes, particularly in rural communities.



NEW YORK



Pamela Warshavsky

Pamela Warshavsky was a daughter, sister, friend, and tireless advocate. Her cancer journey started at sixteen when her cousin lost his battle. Later on, she would become a caregiver for two relatives suffering from cancer. Those events led to her passion, first as a volunteer for the American Cancer Society, then as an employee and finally as an ACS CAN ACT Lead. Pamela was a diligent fundraiser and mentor to so many. Being taken from us by the very disease she fought so hard against seems cruel, so now we will continue to fight in her honor.



NORTH CAROLINA



DonnaMarie Woodson

DonnaMarie Woodson is a ten-year colon and breast cancer survivor, after a delayed mammogram and colonoscopy in 2015 due to lack of insurance. DonnaMarie credits the Affordable Care Act for covering the screenings that saved her life, and while in treatment, vowed to advocate for other cancer patients and their families. Her letter to the editor opposing ACA repeal caught the attention of ACS CAN, and her advocacy journey was begun. DonnaMarie became an ACT Lead and spent the next decade sharing her story to support Medicaid expansion in North Carolina. More than 650,000 state residents are very grateful.



NORTH DAKOTA



Sue Weston

In 2003, Sue Weston lost her 60-year-old mother to metastatic breast cancer. Twenty years later, at 59, Sue was diagnosed with breast cancer herself. Now cancer-free after surgery, she credits early detection and her mother's experience with saving her life. She pursued genetic testing to help protect her family's health. Inspired by her childhood best friend, the North Dakota State Lead Ambassador, Sue joined the ACS CAN volunteer team. Her story was featured in testimony and the state's campaign to eliminate out-of-pocket costs for diagnostic and supplemental breast imaging—helping expand access to lifesaving care for others across North Dakota.



OHIO



Rosemary Craig

In 2018, Rosemary Craig was diagnosed with lung cancer though she had never smoked or been exposed to secondhand smoke. Thanks to biomarker testing, she started oral targeted therapy and had the joy of watching her six grandchildren grow up, and the birth of her first great-grandchild. She joined ACS CAN as an Ohio ACT Lead because she wanted all cancer patients to have equal access to the testing and treatment that prolonged her life. Unfortunately, in December of 2024, we lost Rosemary. She will be remembered for her brave fight to end cancer as we know it for everyone.



OKLAHOMA



Howie Jackson

Howie Jackson has battled cancer three times; most recently in 2022. Because his treatments have all been made possible by ground-breaking research, Howie and his family know firsthand the importance of cancer research and are passionate about advocating for research dollars. Howie currently serves as an Oklahoma ACT Lead and shares his story with lawmakers to put a human face on the disease, and to underscore their role in the fight to end cancer. "The treatments I've had on my cancer journey weren't even available twenty-five years ago. But because of pioneering research primarily funded by Congress, we're seeing lives saved."



OREGON



Pat Salas

Pat Salas is no stranger to the suffering cancer causes. Her parents passed from cancer caused by smoking, her sister passed away from leukemia, and her husband died after being diagnosed with stage IV pancreatic cancer just five weeks prior. As a grandmother, Pat is determined not to lose any more loved ones to cancer. This is why she advocates for patients and caregivers with ACS CAN on the local, state, and federal levels. Pat's main priorities are supporting Oregon's proposed flavored tobacco ban and advocating for a federal bill to allow Medicare coverage of multicancer early detection screening tests.



PENNSYLVANIA



Brittanny Groover

Brittanny Groover, once a self-proclaimed tanning addict, never wore sunscreen and frequently used indoor tanning devices. Then, at 27, she was diagnosed with stage III melanoma. Thanks to advances in cancer research and Medicaid coverage, Brittanny received excellent treatment, completed immunotherapy, and now undergoes scans to monitor any recurrence. Brittanny, a cancer warrior turned advocate, is dedicated to driving change. She collaborates with lawmakers and fellow advocates to promote awareness and policy improvements, including early detection, screening, research, and access to quality care. Brittanny openly shares her story on social media @beingbrittanny to educate and inspire others.



PUERTO RICO



José Buenaga Ortiz

José Buenaga Ortiz is an American Cancer Society of Puerto Rico volunteer of more than thirty-three years, motivated by the loss of his father to cancer when Jose was just four. Jose co-founded the Society's Puerto Rico pediatric Hope Lodge and is a current Society Board Member. He is a strong and reliable champion of ACS CAN across the island, especially on access to care issues. Every day Jose asks himself, "what else can I do in the fight against cancer?" His love for his wife impacted by cancer drives him to continue to advocate on behalf of ACS CAN.



RHODE ISLAND



Paul Adam

"I'm sorry to hear that, but there's always hope," Paul Adam said when his brother Peter was diagnosed with leukemia at 57. Just a few months later, Peter passed, and Paul began dedicating himself to creating hope for others. As State Lead Ambassador, Paul has helped eliminate copays for colorectal cancer screenings and biomarker testing. He has raised thousands of dollars for ACS CAN. And he has connected with volunteers across the country to exchange knowledge and advice. We honor Paul for his continued commitment to ACS CAN, to Rhode Island, to Peter's memory, and to the fight against cancer.



SOUTH CAROLINA



Jim Weeks

Dr. Jim Weeks is passionate about gardening, the environment, early detection, and cancer prevention. A breast cancer survivor, he chooses to spend his time out of the garden advocating for families and survivors like himself. Beginning as a Relay For Life volunteer, Jim has been an advocate with ACS CAN for fifteen years. He travels across the state to attend Cancer Action Day, policy forums, and roundtables, and routinely meets with his members of Congress in Washington. Jim believes building strong relationships with lawmakers is vital to ACS CAN advocacy, so he helps new volunteers learn to do the same.



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SOUTH DAKOTA



Doris Cardwell

Cancer took a lot from Doris Cardwell. She and her family were uprooted from rural South Dakota to treat her inflammatory breast cancer. She spent over a year in treatment and still pays thousands of dollars out-of-pocket for semiannual imaging and other healthcare needs to ensure her cancer hasn't returned. This is the powerful story Doris shares with lawmakers and the media as she fights to eliminate cost-sharing for diagnostic breast imaging. Her goal is to ensure no one delays critical imaging due to cost. Cancer took a lot from Doris, but not her perseverance or her humanity.



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TENNESSEE



Misty Oblak

After losing her father to lung cancer in 2005, Misty Oblak turned her grief into action and has been an active ACS CAN volunteer ever since. She carries her "why" into every lawmaker meeting: eighteen is better than three. When her father was given just three months to live, a clinical trial gave them eighteen more months together. Misty relentlessly advocates for cancer research funding so that other families can have more time, more hope, and more tomorrows. She started this fight for her father, and she continues it to end cancer as we know it, for everyone.



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TEXAS



Jackie Bush

Jackie Bush was a fierce cancer warrior. She battled cancer for nearly twenty years, while simultaneously fighting and advocating for others. As an ACS CAN volunteer, Jackie played a key role in campaigns to create smoke-free workplaces, raise the tobacco sales age, and ensure annual funding for the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas. She never said no to us, and elected officials had trouble saying no to her. Lawmakers had Jackie on speed dial, fellow volunteers were inspired by her relentless advocacy, and cancer patients across the state remain eternally grateful for the policies she helped to pass.



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UTAH



Catherine Standiford

Catherine Standiford fights cancer in every facet of her life. As her day job, Catherine owns and operates a physical therapy clinic for cancer patients. In her personal life, she has supported her mother through two battles with breast cancer and her sisters as they underwent preventative treatments for the BRCA1 gene. Currently State Lead Ambassador, Catherine has been volunteering with ACS CAN for nearly a decade. The queen of innovative advocacy, Catherine loves encouraging her husband and children to get involved, turning advocacy into a family affair, and has seemingly endless ideas for fundraising, engaging volunteers, and influencing lawmakers.



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VERMONT



Cathy Louttit

True to Cathy Louttit's generous and loving nature to fight for others, her fight against cancer began in support of her sister Nancy, who she lost to breast cancer in 2016. Just two months after saying goodbye to Nancy, Cathy herself was diagnosed with breast cancer, leading to two surgeries, chemotherapy, and radiation. Today Cathy is cancer-free and volunteers her time as one of ACS CAN's most dedicated volunteers. Cathy recruits others into our advocacy movement and actively seeks training and growth opportunities to become the strongest advocate possible. We're extremely lucky to have Cathy on our cancer fighting team.



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VIRGINIA



Kimberly Anderson

Kimberly Anderson is a fifteen-year triple-negative breast cancer warrior and Virginia ACT Lead for ACS CAN. With unwavering dedication, Kimberly has met with lawmakers in Richmond and Washington, spoken at town halls, and been interviewed by multiple news outlets to oppose cuts to Medicaid and increase cancer research funding. Kimberly is a tireless advocate for early breast cancer detection, medical debt protections, and reducing health disparities in underserved communities. She views advocacy as her ministry, ensuring no one walks alone in their cancer journey. Kimberly's lived experience and powerful voice bring urgency and heart to every campaign she supports.



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WASHINGTON



Robin Sparks

When doctors diagnosed Robin Sparks, they needed to act fast. The lump on her neck was non-Hodgkin lymphoma, a blood cancer attacking her immune system. Three months into chemotherapy, they wanted to check her progress, but insurance denied a CT scan. Robin sprang into action. After three denials she got her scan and successful treatment, but she wanted more. "Hope is not something you get; it's something you give. Hope is not possible without a fight," Robin says. She joined ACS CAN to help others avoid delays and advocate for insurance coverage of the biomarker testing that saved her life.



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WEST VIRGINIA



George Blough

George Blough, and her husband Brooke, were longtime ACS CAN volunteers in West Virginia. Despite living with stage IV ovarian cancer for nearly thirty years, George committed the couple to advocacy, as they both believed 'giving back' was a responsibility that accompanied George's survivorship. George was recognized as a 2010 State Lead Ambassador of the Year for ACS CAN, and with the American Cancer Society's St. George Award in 2013. Additionally, the couple was jointly recognized with the Volunteer Award for Excellence in Advocacy in 2019. Sadly, George lost her fight in 2023 – we cherish her memory and fight on.



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WISCONSIN



Melissa Kultgen

Melissa Kultgen was told during her pregnancy that a growing mole above her lip was "nothing to worry about" by doctors. She had the mole removed two weeks after giving birth and was shocked to receive a stage IIC melanoma diagnosis. Melissa's world turned upside down, as cancer treatment was added to her full plate as a new mom and caregiver to her own mother, also battling cancer. Today Melissa is a seven-year survivor and shares these stories to advocate for better postpartum and palliative care. She serves as ACT Lead for congressional district 6, which she calls her "sunflower district."



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WYOMING



Victoria Fry

Coming from the least populated state, Victoria Fry knows first-hand the challenges faced by rural patients and their doctors. After undergoing extensive treatment for HER2-positive breast cancer, Victoria feels grateful for the care she received and a responsibility to give back. As ACT Lead, Victoria shares her story to advocate for better access to cancer care for rural patients. Volunteering with other local groups, she gives generously of her time supporting the newly diagnosed as they navigate the challenges that come with a cancer diagnosis. Victoria is an invaluable resource in connecting organizations, recruiting volunteers, and advancing our cancer-fighting agenda.



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