

2026 Story Column Honorees

ALABAMA



Gary Cornelius

Gary Cornelius is a stage IV Hodgkin lymphoma survivor thanks to a clinical trial funded by the National Institutes of Health and has been an ACS CAN advocate for over a decade. As a former Alabama State Lead Ambassador, he has advocated tirelessly on Capitol Hill for viable federal investments in cancer research. Gary's "why" has always been to be there for moments with his daughter he once feared he'd miss. This purpose came full circle this year as he walked her down the aisle, proving what sustained cancer research funding can make possible.

ALASKA



Penny Palmquist

Back in 1966, when then 18-year-old Penny Palmquist lost her mom to breast cancer, she felt helpless. But when she faced her own battle forty years later, Penny knew she had to do more than just stay quiet and accept it. It was time to speak out. People she may never know were counting on her, and "you have to speak up to be heard." Since then, Penny has used her voice to secure increased cancer research funding and smokefree workplaces, and to mentor new advocates of all ages, passing her wisdom and passion to the next generation.

ARIZONA



Penny Fraley

Penny Fraley's advocacy with ACS CAN is fueled by a deeply personal connection to cancer. Inspired by her mother's 27-year breast cancer survivorship and her father's battle with seven cancers before his passing in 2019, Penny became an advocate in 2018 after sharing her family's story with Arizona lawmakers at Cancer Action Day. Since then, she has served as both ACT Lead and Arizona State Lead Ambassador, championing prevention, early detection, and access to care. Through Leadership Summit & Lobby Day and support for initiatives like the Multi-Cancer Early Detection Act, Penny remains a trusted and passionate Arizona grassroots leader.

ARKANSAS



Stetson Rima

Stetson Rima was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia in September 2025. When not in treatment, he spends his time perfecting his baseball swing, catching air on his dirt bike, and fishing. Stetson has also become a fierce advocate for ACS CAN; alongside his father and grandmother, he advocates for more cancer research funding and better treatment options for kids like himself. He is also helping to plan a new local Lights of Hope display outside the children's hospital to share more about ACS CAN and pediatric cancer with his community. Stetson wants to spread hope for families everywhere facing cancer.

CALIFORNIA



Prairie Park

Prairie Park, a proud Asian American woman, was diagnosed with stage III, triple-positive breast cancer at 36, when her children were just 5 and 3. As she went through eighteen infusions and three surgeries over twenty months, birthdays and milestones passed, and the many hard-hitting side effects of chemotherapy and immunotherapy forced her to slow down. During treatment, Prairie was alarmed by the rising disparate number of Asian American women diagnosed and came to ACS CAN to take action. As a Legislative Ambassador, Prairie has shared her story passionately and eloquently with lawmakers to advocate and speak up for survivors.

COLORADO



Martha Cox

Martha Cox, former State Lead Ambassador and current ACT Lead, has dedicated nearly two decades to volunteer leadership with ACS CAN. Following her colon cancer diagnosis in 2004 and the death of her dear friend Barbara Anshutz, Martha turned her personal experience into advocacy for cancer patients and families by helping secure the passage of Colorado's biomarkers bill and fighting to protect Medicaid and Affordable Care Act tax credits. Known for her compassion and steady leadership, Martha has mentored countless volunteers and, with her resilience and encouragement, serves as the glue of the Colorado advocacy team.

CONNECTICUT



Fahmy Mamuya

Fahmy Mamuya was 24 years old and in the middle of what should have been an exciting summer internship when a sharp, stubborn pain changed his life. Fahmy became a cancer researcher, to learn how tumor cells like his behave in the bloodstream, and an advocate, sharing his experience as a survivor and expertise as a researcher. Whether he's testifying at hearings, speaking to the media, or meeting with lawmakers, Fahmy is a visible presence for ACS CAN in Hartford who played a key role in passage of Connecticut's biomarker testing bill after three years of effort. Thank you, Fahmy.

DELAWARE



Darcy Burbage

Darcy Burbage is an oncology nurse with over thirty years' experience and a published author on numerous oncology topics. She also knows firsthand the profound impact that cancer has on patients and families, having lost her own mother to pancreatic cancer just three weeks post-diagnosis. With advocacy rooted in personal loss and professional experience, Darcy works to advance policies that strengthen cancer research and expand access to biomarker testing, timely, safe and affordable treatment, and palliative care. She advocates because every person affected by cancer deserves hope, dignity, compassionate care, and a future made brighter through action. Thank you, Darcy.

DISTRICT of COLUMBIA



Caroline Maschke

After watching her father battle rectal cancer at only 47 years old, Caroline Maschke made it her life's mission to help others impacted by the disease. A firefighter, iron worker, and most importantly, her hero – Caroline's dad endured chemotherapy, radiation, and two surgeries before being declared cancer-free, though treatment side effects still impact him today. Fighting for other young, healthy parents facing cancer, and determined that other 11-year-olds do not have to face the same fear and anxiety that she did, Caroline founded Students Against Cancer at American University, raising awareness and fundraising for ACS CAN on campus.

FLORIDA



Jacqueline Hoskins

Jacqueline Hoskins is an 11-year cancer survivor and longtime ACS CAN volunteer. As a top fundraiser, recruiter, and advocate on the Florida team, Jackie's tenacity in support of ACS CAN's mission is legendary. When a former lawmaker would not support the Multi-Cancer Early Detection Act, she became a regular presence at his office; when she began to show up at his events, he agreed to cosponsor the bill. Never one to rest on her laurels, today Jackie continues the fight as ACT Lead in her congressional district and has set her sights on getting MedEx on the ballot in 2028.

GEORGIA



Sharon Chicano

Sharon Chicano grew up during a time when "the C word" was taboo and rarely acknowledged. Yet cancer hit hard, including when Sharon's best friend in high school was diagnosed with breast cancer at just 17. Due to family circumstances, Sharon became her caregiver, seeing her through mastectomy, chemo, and radiation. Since then, Sharon has had many family and friends (and two pets) diagnosed with cancer, including her mother in 2010, two weeks before her eightieth birthday. Sharon currently serves as Georgia's Vice State Lead Ambassador, where her steady leadership and compassion continue to strengthen advocacy efforts across the state.

GUAM



Benjamin JF Cruz

Benjamin JF Cruz is a lawyer and politician who rose to Speaker of the Legislature and became one of Guam's leading champions in the fight against tobacco. Cruz authored and passed the landmark Youth Protection Act of 2017, raising the smoking age to 21, closing loopholes in e-cigarette regulation, and pushing for high tobacco taxes, a strategy that reduced one of the nation's highest smoking rates. Cruz's safeguard of the Cancer Trust Fund ensured tobacco revenues were directed to prevention, treatment, and programs. In 2017, Cruz received ACS CAN's National Distinguished Advocacy Award in recognition of his leadership and vision.

HAWAII



Beverly Wong

Beverly Wong personifies volunteer advocacy at ACS CAN Hawai'i. A weekly American Cancer Society volunteer since her retirement in 1994, Beverly discovered ACS CAN in 2006 and was instrumental in redefining the advocacy community and culture in the state. Beverly, or Auntie Bev as she is so fondly called, became a volunteer leader in her congressional district and inspired countless others to follow by participating in every way possible. Now in her 90s, Beverly fights today on behalf of her son Arnold, whose own cancer treatment reflects the impact of the research advances his mother has long championed.

IDAHO



Emily Watkins

A high school educator and stage IV cancer survivor, Emily Watkins was diagnosed with cancer at just 18 months of age. Luckily, her family had access to expert care and a community that refused to give up. Now a 30-year survivor, Emily still feels the lasting effects of treatment, daily reminders of why strong cancer policy matters. As a teacher, mom, and proud Idahoan, Emily advocates to protect access to affordable care, increase federal cancer research funding, and strengthen survivorship policies, to ensure that all families facing cancer are surrounded by the community and care that helped her survive.

ILLINOIS



Roger Crawford

Over a 43-year oncology career, Roger Crawford had a clear-eyed view of the gaps in cancer care. To help fill those gaps, Roger joined the American Cancer Society and then ACS CAN, embedding himself in legislative efforts to increase cancer research funding and improve access to care. He quickly became a leader, serving as ACT Lead and as State Lead Ambassador. Roger is a proud recipient of many well-deserved awards, including Illinois Volunteer of the Year, ACT Lead of the Year, Illinois Ambassador of the Year and the Lane Adams Quality of Life Award. Congratulations and thank you, Roger.

INDIANA



Heather Almager

For beauty professional Heather Almager, the battle against breast cancer wasn't just fought in the doctor's office; it was also fought at the kitchen table over a decade's worth of medical bills. Heather was just 29 and undergoing fertility treatments when a doctor discovered a significant lump. What followed was a whirlwind of biopsies, mastectomy, hysterectomy, and a life-threatening battle with sepsis. Though she had insurance throughout, Heather still found herself with over \$75,000 of medical debt, both a reminder and a motivator. Heather joined ACS CAN, sharing her medical debt story with lawmakers, and bringing hope to fellow Hoosiers.

IOWA



Traci McCausland

Wearer of many hats, ACS CAN State Lead Ambassador, American Cancer Society Iowa Board Chair, breast cancer survivor, and published author Traci McCausland brings focused leadership and purpose to our advocacy agenda. Traci transforms lived experience into effective policy engagement, mobilizing advocates, fundraising, meeting with lawmakers locally and on Capitol Hill, and participating in key efforts, such as the One Voice Against Cancer annual lobby day, to advance cancer prevention and access to care. By sharing her survivor story through advocacy, Traci demonstrates the power of personal voices to shape policy and inspire action in others.

KANSAS



Pat Doran

Like millions of Americans, cancer for Pat Doran is personal. As a survivor of high-risk prostate cancer, Pat knows firsthand how vital cancer prevention, research, and early detection are. After eight and a half weeks of radiation, and pre- and post-radiation hormone therapy, doctors determined his cancer was in remission in 2020, but Pat credits his survival to advancements in cancer screening and his access to quality health care. As ACS CAN ACT Lead, Pat shares his story with lawmakers to advocate for public policies that will ensure everyone has access to affordable, quality health care, just as he did.

KENTUCKY



Remy Kennedy

Remy Kennedy has become a prominent voice in cancer prevention and policy, with advocacy deeply rooted in the loss of her father Dale to pancreatic cancer in 2013. This experience transformed Remy, then a college sophomore, into a passionate campaigner for early detection. In 2020, Remy joined ACS CAN and took her story to Washington, advocating for cancer patients and their families. Remy helped push for the successful passage of the Multi-Cancer Early Detection Screening Coverage Act and stands as a powerful example of love turned into action, speaking for those lost and offering hope to those who remain.

LOUISIANA



Courtney Fournet

Baton Rouge resident Courtney Fournet has a new outlook on life after surviving acute lymphoblastic leukemia at 27. Describing a cancer diagnosis as an event that "kind of just makes your world stop," Courtney understands that twenty years ago, patients like her were given just months to live. In remission since 2022, Courtney credits a clinical trial with saving her life and gives back in her role as ACT Lead with ACS CAN, lobbying for the cancer research that saved her life, and in support of policies to reduce the crippling medical debt that too often comes with surviving cancer.

MAINE



Peter Bridgman

Dr. Peter Bridgman, a retired neurologist diagnosed with multiple myeloma in 2013, is a man on a mission when it comes to cancer research funding. Grateful for the treatments that keep him alive and deeply concerned about the future of cancer research, Peter advocates for friends and neighbors facing cancer by going door to door soliciting petition signatures and speaking directly with lawmakers to restore funding to previous levels. "I've learned not to be disappointed if a bill doesn't pass. There's always next year! If you decide not to play the game after a defeat, you will certainly never win."

MARYLAND



Jennifer McKee

As a stage III breast cancer survivor, and the daughter, niece and granddaughter of breast cancer survivors, Jennifer McKee clearly understands the uncertainty and fear that patients and caregivers experience. This is the basis for her deep commitment to improving patient outcomes as both a formally trained Patient Mentor and as Vice SLA. During her time as a volunteer, Jen is proud to have helped secure funding to assist Maryland cancer patients through the Breast and Cervical Cancer Diagnosis and Treatment Program. Jen is honored to bring impactful change through ACS CAN and is continually inspired by the passion of her fellow volunteers.

MASSACHUSETTS



Patti Morris

Patti Morris has been involved with the American Cancer Society for decades. After attending her first Relay, Patti joined the planning committee, became Advocacy Chair, and eventually rose to State Lead Ambassador. "It took on a whole new life and I've never looked back." Under Patti's leadership, the Massachusetts team received ACS CAN's Team of the Year award for passing a statewide flavored tobacco ban, fittingly signed into law on Patti's birthday. Today Patti advocates for dozens of family members and friends diagnosed with cancer, using her voice to impact policy to improve and save lives for generations to come.

MICHIGAN



Nan Whitmore

A cancer survivor, caregiver, and advocacy volunteer for over 20 years, Nan Whitmore brings personal experience and deep compassion to her work with ACS CAN. As a proud member of the LGBTQIA+ & Allies Affinity Group, she is committed to ensuring every voice is heard in the fight against cancer. She is a visible force in her community through her volunteer work as an ACT Lead, Road to Recovery driver, and Advocacy Lead for Michigan's largest Relay For Life event. Whether in her hometown or meeting with lawmakers, Nan shows up—advancing policies that strengthen access to care for all.

MINNESOTA



Lois Conn

Lois Conn has been an advocate with ACS CAN since its inception. As a caregiver, Lois knows all too well how cancer impacts families. She fights back by sharing her story with lawmakers, fundraising to fuel the mission, and serving as a trusted mentor to fellow volunteers. She lovingly takes new folks under her wing, helping them understand our work, and teaching them to use their voices to drive change. Lois has contributed to numerous state policy wins, and equally important, helped shape the future of our Minnesota team, setting us up for success for decades to come.

MISSISSIPPI



Ashleigh Parker

Olive Branch resident Ashleigh Parker has become a prominent advocate for cancer research funding and biomarker testing access. Diagnosed in August 2019 with stage IV colorectal cancer that had spread to her liver and lymph nodes, Ashleigh credits biomarker testing with guiding her treatment and detecting a recurrence early, which allowed for less invasive treatment. Seven years later, Ashleigh remains in remission and has traveled across the state and nation to share her story, pushing for more funding and research, and playing a key role in the passage of "Jill's Law," mandating insurance coverage for biomarker testing for all Mississippians.

MISSOURI



Allison Johnson

At 19, Allison Johnson was diagnosed with Ewing sarcoma, a childhood cancer that affects bones and surrounding tissue. She was about to start her sophomore year at the University of Missouri but returned home to receive treatment at St. Louis Children's Hospital. When Allison returned to Mizzou, she joined ACS CAN as a way to fight back. While still in college, Allison made her first trip to Washington, sharing her cancer story and highlighting the need for childhood cancer research. Today Allison continues as an ACS CAN volunteer, promoting our cancer fighting agenda with lawmakers in Jefferson City and Washington.

MONTANA



Keri Yoder

Keri Yoder, an advocate, caregiver, and former State Lead Ambassador, joined ACS CAN in 2016 after her mom was diagnosed with cancer. Keri began advocating for cancer patients and their families throughout the legislative session in 2017 and at Leadership Summit & Lobby Day, traveling to Washington six months pregnant. As a mother, Keri's fondest memories are addressing the legislature while holding her son. She is a member of the LGBTQIA+ & Allies Engagement Group and the Montana volunteer leadership team, advocating on behalf of those affected by cancer who aren't able to speak up about policies impacting their care.

NEBRASKA



Steve Jackson

Steve Jackson became a volunteer after losing his two-year-old grandson, Ryder, to rhabdomyosarcoma, a rare soft tissue cancer. Despite losing the ability to speak, Ryder showed strength and compassion, and left a lasting impact on Steve, who began volunteering with ACS CAN in 2015. Steve joined the Black Volunteer Caucus and the LGBTQIA+ & Allies Engagement Group, where he ensures his communities are represented in the fight for cancer research and funding. One of Steve's proudest moments was helping share Ryder's story while advocating for the type of palliative care support that proved critical to Ryder's parents during his illness.

NEVADA



Patricia Kellerhouse

Patricia Kellerhouse is a two-time breast cancer survivor who credits biomarker testing and precision medicine with saving her life. As ACT Lead, Patti fights back through advocacy and engagement in Cancer Votes. Patti's personal experience is tied closely to this advocacy. As an oncology researcher, she was working on a metastatic cancer drug with a pharmaceutical company when she was diagnosed with cancer. The drug received FDA approval the same month she got her diagnosis, a coincidence that fuels her commitment and resolve. Today Patti pays it forward, urging voters to push candidates and lawmakers to support cancer fighting policies.



NEW HAMPSHIRE



Bethany Ross

For ACT Lead Bethany Ross, cancer changed literally everything. Diagnosed with stage IV neuroendocrine cancer at 30, Bethany's world was thrown into chaos. Nearly eight years later, she's gone rock climbing in the Gunks and jumped out of airplanes. She's taken risks she never would have previously considered. And she's actively embraced cancer advocacy to make meaning of the crazy thing that happened to her: Her passion lies in helping young adult survivors (she calls them cancer badassess) and other metastatic survivors. In her own words, "Cancer will make you do things you never thought were possible...in a good way."

NEW JERSEY



Grisel Espinosa

Grisel Espinosa was diagnosed with stage IV metastatic breast cancer in 2018, a devastating moment eased only by access to a newly approved treatment that offered real hope. That breakthrough, made possible by federal investment in cancer research, gave her the chance to keep living and thriving. Today, Grisel channels that experience into action as an ACS CAN legislative ambassador. Through Making Strides, Cancer Action Week, and Lights of Hope, Grisel advocates for sustained cancer research funding and policies that expand access to lifesaving treatments, so that every patient has the same opportunity that she had for hope and survival.

NEW MEXICO



Clare Gonzales

Clare Gonzales' cancer journey, from diagnosis to treatment and now recovery, has been challenging. Receiving the treatment she needed required traveling repeatedly across multiple states; but her journey also connected her to ACS CAN, and for that we are incredibly grateful. In her first year as an ACT Lead, Clare was recognized as the state's largest first-year fundraiser. Now a survivor, she has received awards for outstanding leadership and team support, and for her collaborative work with national labs and cancer research groups. Clare has been featured in news stories for ACS CAN and currently serves with distinction as Vice SLA.

NEW YORK



Marcia Earle

An ovarian cancer survivor and native of New York's rural communities, Marcia Earle understands the importance of early detection and access to care. That's what motivates her to keep returning to Albany on behalf of policy changes to reduce the burden of cancer for everyone. She also understands the importance of a robust volunteer team and has spent the past decade working to improve the volunteer experience for New York's cancer fighters. Marcia has been an ACT Lead, a State Lead Ambassador, and recently worked to form an ACS CAN rural volunteer caucus, giving a voice to an underserved rural population.

NORTH CAROLINA NORTH DAKOTA



John Tramontin

Cary resident, John Tramontin, is a longtime cancer-fighting advocate and former State Lead Ambassador who was named SLA of the Year in 2020 for his exemplary leadership and dedication. Hard working, empathetic, and thoughtful, John played a key role in North Carolina's Medicaid expansion campaign, driving hundreds of miles across the state to collect stories and build the volunteer base. His efforts finally paid off in 2023, when John was honored to attend the Governor's bill signing. Currently serving on the National Ambassador Team, John has made a significant impact on the cancer burden in North Carolina and beyond.



Eniola Soetan

Eniola Soetan, Vice SLA and first year medical student, advocates for cancer patients with a commitment that is deeply personal. Eniola has watched her mother, classmates, and close friends battle cancer. Her advocacy is also inspired by her father, who raised his family while caring for her mother during her illness. After her mother's passing, he completed his doctorate in Higher Educational Leadership. Now, while balancing classes and advocacy, Eniola hopes others realize they can join the fight. "Cancer has touched so many lives. It means so much to be part of something that joins people in hope."

OHIO



Barb Diver

Barb Diver, a cancer survivor from Brecksville, has dedicated over three decades to fighting back against cancer. Diagnosed with breast cancer in 1991, she credits early detection with catching her cancer at its most treatable stage. Barb's advocacy began in Pennsylvania, where she helped pass statewide smokefree laws, and later continued in Ohio, where she began as a leadership volunteer in her congressional district. Barb has been a State Lead Ambassador, recognized nationally for top fundraising for Lights of Hope, and lobbied extensively for cancer research funding, oral chemotherapy parity, and Medicaid coverage for multi-cancer early detection tests.

OKLAHOMA



Shagah Zakerion

Shagah Zakerion is a 21-year blood cancer survivor from Tulsa who has endured three bone marrow transplants and more than 200 blood transfusions since being diagnosed with myelodysplastic syndrome (MDS) at age 18. A strategist and independent consultant, Shagah leverages her communications expertise to bridge the gap between patient experience and legislative action. As an ACS CAN volunteer, Shagah routinely represents Oklahoma at the state and federal levels to champion equitable access to care and cancer research funding. Her journey from St. Jude to the halls of government underscores how advocacy rooted in lived experience can truly change lives.

OREGON



Missie Kallunki

Missie Kallunki's cancer journey began in 2011 with a stage zero breast cancer diagnosis that changed her life. Ten years later, cancer returned and spread to her bones, an ongoing battle she faces with resilience, courage, and heart. Guided by love for family and friends affected by cancer, Missie found purpose through the American Cancer Society and ACS CAN. After losing her father to lung cancer, she turned grief into action, serving as ACT Lead and standing up against Big Tobacco. Missie continues to volunteer because cancer touches everyone, and because she believes in a future where hope wins.

PENNSYLVANIA



Pat Boyle

As a breast cancer survivor, Pat Boyle sees the impact of cancer-fighting policies everywhere. She sees fellow support group members struggling to receive care or waiting for a new treatment to extend their lives. She sees lawmakers making decisions impacting our ability to prevent and treat cancer. And she sees herself, every day, able to expand her advocacy efforts because of the genetic testing that gave her personalized and effective treatment options. Pat bravely shared her story in support of Pennsylvania's first-of-its-kind breast cancer screening bill and continues to fight for better access to screening and genetic testing for everyone.

PUERTO RICO



Migneri Ramos

Migneri Ramos is an ACS CAN volunteer and passionate advocate, inspired to use her voice on behalf of her friend Alejandro, who was diagnosed with cancer, and others like him. Migneri started her volunteer journey as a college student, participating in ACS CAN community events and educating the public on legislative priorities in Puerto Rico, encouraging others to join the ACS CAN mission. At last year's Puerto Rico Lights of Hope display at Hope Lodge, Migneri brought her friend Alejandro, who watched as she spoke about the importance of advocacy and how it impacts the people of Puerto Rico.

RHODE ISLAND



Denise Berard

After losing her brother Peter to leukemia in 2020, Manville native Denise Berard, a two-time breast cancer survivor, has become a fierce advocate for cancer-fighting public policy at the state and federal level. In the twenty years between her first and second diagnoses, Denise benefited from earlier detection and a much more personalized treatment plan the second time around. Now entering her fifth year as an ACT Lead, Denise shares this firsthand experience with research and treatment developments with lawmakers in Providence and Washington. She fights to continue the forward progress, with kindness, resilience, and unwavering commitment to helping others.



SOUTH CAROLINA SOUTH DAKOTA



Richard Riley

Former Governor Richard Riley stepped away from politics long ago, but public service keeps pulling him back. Known for his gentlemanly approach, Governor Riley appreciates his unique opportunity to make an impact. As his late wife battled breast cancer, they were proud advocates and spokespersons for early detection and prevention, working to ensure underinsured women in South Carolina could receive breast cancer screenings. Governor Riley continues to support ACS CAN's mission at age 93, honoring his late wife through the Ann Riley Pink Tea, an annual event that raises funds and promotes policy solutions to reduce the burden of cancer.



Sara Alhasnawi

State Lead Ambassador Sara Alhasnawi is now a medical student and research fellow at the University of South Dakota, but Sara's first introduction to advocacy was during her time as an undergraduate, when some "just for fun" political science classes included a trip to the state capitol. Today, Sara's volunteerism is informed by her own biomedical research experience, as she sees first-hand how limited funding can slow treatment development. Whether advocating for increased research funding or against Big Tobacco, Sara is a multi-dimensional cancer fighter, bringing her own policy, research, and patient care experience to bear for all South Dakotans.

TENNESSEE



Darlene Smith

Darlene Smith is a mother, grandmother, and fierce advocate whose stage IIIB breast cancer diagnosis in 2003 inspired a lifelong commitment to improving cancer care. After fighting to join an NIH-funded clinical trial, she dedicated herself to expanding access to quality cancer care and research. She has built relationships with policymakers, helped secure increased NIH funding, and built partnerships instrumental in passing biomarker legislation. She advocates to ensure patients' voices are heard in policy decisions: "I want lawmakers to see me when they vote on cancer bills." Her survivorship brings credibility, compassion, and urgency to that work.

TEXAS



Eugenia Posada

Eugenia "Gina" Posada is a breast cancer survivor whose bilingual advocacy brings essential representation to Hispanic and non-English speaking communities. Since 2018, Gina has helped advance policies that expand access to care and accelerate cancer research. In 2023, Gina made ACS CAN history by delivering the first Spanish language ask to her congresswoman, ensuring her community's voice reached national decision-makers. She has led Spanish language media outreach and is a founding member of ACSi Se Puede, strengthening Hispanic volunteer leadership. A proud mother and grandmother, Gina advocates so that future generations can live free from the fear of cancer.

UTAH



Lorenzo Smith

Lorenzo Smith is a cancer researcher at Huntsman Cancer Institute and a dedicated cancer advocate. Driven by a commitment to improve lives, his research focuses on advancing new treatments for adrenocortical carcinoma - a rare, yet highly aggressive cancer that arises in the adrenal cortex. Lorenzo knows that failure to invest in cancer research will not only slow overall progress, but will also lead to deprioritizing and perhaps completely neglecting rare cancer research. Lorenzo lobbies Congress for sustained federal funding increases to create a future where a rare cancer diagnosis is not a death sentence, but a conquerable battle.

VERMONT



Jason Kirchick

As a nurse and elected local official, Jason Kirchick knows change doesn't happen in silos. Cancer is personal to Jason. He has lost his father, sister, friends and colleagues to the disease, and his mother was a cancer survivor. With ACS CAN, and motivated by this personal experience, Jason has united oncology nurses, nursing students, and advocates across Vermont to push for biomarker coverage, palliative care, and insurance protections. "If you're not at the table, you're on the menu." Jason is proud to serve as an ACS CAN ACT Lead, understanding that advocacy is how we'll turn loss into hope.

VIRGINIA



Elisabeth Drabkin

A wife, mother, daughter, sister, and friend, Elisabeth Drabkin was diagnosed with advanced adrenocortical carcinoma (ACC) in 2020. As a survivor of this rare and aggressive cancer, Elisabeth became determined to raise awareness of ACC and all cancers. What began as private updates to friends and family detailing her experiences soon expanded to broader purpose-driven advocacy. Engaging with lawmakers, fundraising for Lights of Hope, and speaking as a patient advocate and Voice of Hope, Elisabeth is committed to advocating for increased funding, research, and understanding of ACC and all cancers, striving to "end cancer as we know it, for everyone."

WASHINGTON



Eunice Hostetter

Eunice Hostetter, a 23-year cancer survivor, joined ACS CAN in 2006 at Celebration on the Hill. Denied access to a Herceptin clinical trial, the first targeted treatment for HER2 breast cancer, Eunice is a passionate advocate for cancer research, early detection, clinical trials and access to quality care. Her leadership roles have included ACT Lead, State Lead, and National Ambassador Team member. Eunice has chaired ACS CAN's Washington Research Breakfast and in 2016 was appointed by Governor Inslee to Washington's Cancer Research Endowment Board. In 2017, she was named SLA of the Year for her exemplary leadership in cancer advocacy.

WEST VIRGINIA



Jessica Carter Summers

Breast cancer survivor Jessica Carter Summers is living proof that research saves lives. Crediting her survivorship to 21st Century Cures Act funding, Jessica shares her story with lawmakers, the media, and the public, including thousands during a recent West Virginia townhall. As State Lead Ambassador, Jessica simultaneously lobbies Congress and builds the coalition, engaging others with similar stories, including the Radiant Resilience Collective, a support group for women facing cancer. Whether she is cracking jokes, practicing law, or spending time with family, Jessica's love for life and others is contagious. Her courage invites us to believe, engage, and act.

WISCONSIN



Jennifer Gerrits

When Jennifer Gerrits was diagnosed with stage IV triple-negative breast cancer, she received the prognosis of six months to two years to live. Six years later, she's still here, holding onto hope through her "chemo cocktails," umbrella and all, thanks to advances in cancer research and innovations like immunotherapy. Today Jennifer proudly serves as an ACS CAN ACT Lead, sharing her story and fighting for policies to increase access to care for other cancer patients and survivors. In 2026, Jennifer helped advocate for the successful passage of Gail's Law, eliminating cost sharing for follow-up breast exams for women across Wisconsin.

WYOMING



Jessica Sayers

In 2022, Jessica Sayers was diagnosed with stage I triple-negative breast cancer. What followed was eight months of intense, life-changing treatment: chemotherapy, surgery, and radiation. By 2024, Jessica had reached the point where she finally began to feel like a survivor. And then disaster struck again, metastatic breast cancer. In the two years since, Jessica has faced multiple metastases and has become a passionate advocate for women walking the same path. Today she serves as an ACT Lead in her congressional district, regularly meeting with lawmakers to advocate for policies strengthening cancer care, survivor support, and access to essential healthcare services.