



## California March 2025 Quarterly Newsletter



Wildfires, new immigration policies creating barriers to healthcare access, anticipated setbacks to cancer research funding, and drastic cuts to health agencies – **California has been hit hard this year, making our advocacy more critical than ever.**

Yet, in the face of these crises, our recent ACS CAN California Ambassador Summit, **Together We Thrive: Building Hope and Community**, served as a powerful reminder of the magic that happens when we unite as a community. We honored newly retired leader Jim Knox's 20 years of ACS CAN service and welcomed Laura LaRose as our new Vice SLA. We celebrated and recognized a handful of volunteers who went above and beyond this year, and we were inspired by 10-year-old junior ambassadors Michael Reinhart and Lorenzo Escoto. Nearly 200 volunteers and staff—from seasoned advocates with decades of ACS CAN wisdom to a growing number of passionate youth—came together, each bringing their unique talents and perspectives. The uplifting energy throughout the day was palpable, as we reflected on how, together, we can leverage our individual strengths to build a stronger community and contribute to ending cancer as we know it, for everyone.

You have a voice in our government. WE have a voice. And ACS CAN, our 24-year-old organization, is built to amplify it. **Together, we raise the voices of patients**

denied access to clinical trials, patients facing deportation while undergoing treatment. These stories, our stories, are critical now. And it's more important than ever to remind legislators of their importance.

So, I ask you: What ripple will you create, and who will you create it with? Will you plan outreach to lawmakers, partnering with others to utilize Direct Action Organizing? Will you organize local meetups to strategize on advocacy efforts? Will you kickstart your fundraising and inspire others? Will you invite someone new to ACS CAN and mentor them? Will you join forces for a tweet storm or develop a powerful social media strategy?

**Every action creates a ripple. Working together, across generations and experiences, our ripples become waves.**

I know this will probably be our hardest year yet, but I can't imagine being on this journey with anyone else.

In Gratitude,

*Your State Lead Ambassador, Jamie Escoto*



This newsletter features:

- **Lights of Hope:** Is LIVE and resources are available!
- **Summit Highlights:** Farewell to Jim, Award Winners and More

- **2025 State Priorities:** Find out what's in store for the coming year

**Please join us on Wednesday, March 12th at 5:00 pm for the Spring Quarterly Ambassador Call - link below in the "Key Dates" section.**

## KEY DATES

March 12, 5:00 pm, **Spring Quarterly Ambassador Call**  
[RSVP here to receive Zoom link!](#)

March 26th, 5:30-6:30pm **Cancer Action Day Prep Call**

April 9, 9am-4:30pm, **Cancer Action Day in Sacramento**

## USEFUL LINKS

[2025 Call Calendar](#)  
[California Ambassador Hub](#)  
[National Volunteer Home Page](#)  
[CA Society of Emerging Leaders](#)  
 \*\* [Volunteer Report Back Form](#)

Please report all actions taken!

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION

- Medicaid is in danger. **Urge our California Senators** to Vote NO on the cuts to Medicaid, including cuts to cancer patients. [Act now!](#)
- Cancer progress is at risk. [More urgently than ever send a message to your member of Congress prioritizing funding for Cancer Research.](#) Cancer does not discriminate.
- Feedback, Ideas for the Newsletter, Letters to the Editor? Send them to Stephanie Gordon-Rivera CD12 [stephanie.grivera@gmail.com](mailto:stephanie.grivera@gmail.com) or Tina Tankka CD10 [tinykung74@gmail.com](mailto:tinykung74@gmail.com)

## A Fond Farewell.....

Jim Knox, our warrior and leader for more than 20 years bid his final farewell on Sunday February 23 to a cheering ovation at California Ambassador Summit. Jim, "There are big shoes to fill. We can't wait to hear stories about your next adventures." We'll be here right where you left us, just in case you need a little shot of advocacy!







Pictured above, Jim Knox watching the slide show featuring 20 years of accomplishments, volunteers displaying their best Jim Knox faces, and pictured right, with Guam and Hawai'i ACS CAN staff, Cynthia Au.



## LIGHTS OF HOPE IS LIVE

It's never too early. The first Lights of Hope pages are up and running. An email went to everyone who had pages set up in 2024. You can now set up your personal page and state page. You can also begin encouraging your volunteers to set up their 2025 page. Over 85 people have already set up their pages!

### Resources:

The [2025 volunteer fundraising toolkit](#) is ready to be shared.

The [2025 Lights of Hope sponsorship packet](#) and the [Spanish sponsor packet](#) are both available. The official volunteer launch will be after SLA Summit (as usual) on *May 6th*.

## FEBRUARY HIGHLIGHTS

**February IS Black History Month-** ACSCAN joins The Library of Congress, National Archives and Records Administration, National Endowment for the Humanities, National Gallery of Art, National Park Service, Smithsonian Institution and United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in recognizing the immense struggle African Americans faced fighting for their right to full citizenship in our society. The fight continues.... together!

**Voices of Black Women** is a study and a collective commitment to improving the health of Black women across the nation. Let your VOICE be heard. [Learn more about the study and find out if you're eligible to join here.](#)



**[“In Due Season”](#)** - click on the title to learn more about this 30 minute documentary created by Ashley O’Shea in partnership with ACS. Visceral and raw it follows 3 individuals caught in the Medicaid Gap.

**February was also Cancer Prevention Month** - Preventative action is the first action towards a cure. Start with healthy everything and HPV vaccinations. HPV vaccinations can prevent 90% of HPV cancers. Learn more at [cancer.org/hpv](https://cancer.org/hpv).

## CALIFORNIA AMBASSADOR SUMMIT

### ***Together We Thrive: Building Hope and Community***

What a much needed gathering it was. With endless hugs and greetings, old friends and new friends caught up and got down to advocacy business.

Our ever shining star **Laura LaRose** was introduced as our new Vice State Lead and upcoming State Lead Ambassador 2026. Laura, “Your initiation has only yet begun. We promise to support, harass and call you at all hours of the day just to ask one minor question.”

### **Awards were presented to:**

- **Claudia Perez Favela** - *Pete Cala Effective Storyteller*
- **Logan Mitchell** - *Fundraising*
- **Kira Sano** - *Local Advocacy*
- **Ashton Havens** - *Local Advocacy*
- **Sabrina Toor** - *Rising Star*
- **Tina Tankka** - *Star Ambassador*

## GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS

### ***From Bench to Bedside:***

*Translating Scientific Discoveries from a laboratory setting into patient care.*

- **Cesar Gonzalez:** Moderator & PhD candidate, City of Hope
- **Reena Thomas:** MD, PhD, Stanford
- **Nicholas Graham:** PhD, USC
- **Marie Kennedy:** Parent & ACT Lead, CD6

The emphasis was on the intersection of research and patient care and the recognition that cancer care is a team sport, a collaboration between scientists,

technologies, frontline nurses, doctors and clinicians. Cancer - multifaceted, multi disease, with many pathways to a cure.

It was amazing to see our next generation in full force at Summit AND as an added extra bonus we had 2 members of the next, next generation guiding us on our future moves! Michael Reinhart and Lorenzo Escoto, both 10, you humble us with your insights! Goes to show it's never too early!

Thank you to our 2025 Ambassador Summit Committee - **Jamie Escoto, Laura LaRose, Juan Villalobos, Ana Reyes, Cesar Gonzalez, Kathy Flaherty, and Philip Nguyen**

Check out more on Summit [here](#).





## NEW AMBASSADORS

Let's give a warm welcome to our new volunteers!

- Adithi Balaji - CD 10
- Adaku Okorie - CD 40
- Arleen Kagan - CD 51
- Ashlen Bullock - CD 41
- Ellen Wu - CD 50
- Eric Pierce - CD 37
- Gary Sakamoto - CD 46
- Grace Osuna - CD 41
- Harnoor Kaur Brar - CD 13
- Jadyn Grace Tunnell - CD 50
- Jenelle Brinnenman - CD 48
- Karina Villanueva - CD 34
- Keely Morris - CD 7
- Kristen Egelhoff - CD 22
- Kush Rathor CD 14
- Lashawna Lee - CD 20
- Mary Meihaus - CD 2
- Dr. Ruhani Sagar - CD 17
- Srdjan Stakic - CD 16
- Sydney Weaver - CD 12
- Tarini Sajja - CD 14
- Yleia Sanchez - CD 36

## 2025 CALIFORNIA LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

### State Priorities One-Pager

#### 2025 Cancer Action Day Priorities

1. **AB 573 (Rogers) CDTFA Tobacco Retail License Fee-** A bill to increase the tobacco retail licensing fee to expand reach of annual inspections and increase capacity to seize illegal flavored tobacco from stores.
2. **AB 957 (Ortega) Tobacco Free Pharmacies-** A bill to end the sale of cigarettes or tobacco products in pharmacies.
3. **AB 703 (Lee) Childhood Cancer Research Tax Checkoff-** A bill to initiate a



Childhood Cancer Research Fund through voluntary tax contributions.

## SOCIETY OF EMERGING LEADERS REQUEST SUPPORT

*The Society of Emerging Leaders (SEL) is seeking support for its health education curriculum initiative! SEL members Logan Mitchell [loganmitchell2211@gmail.com](mailto:loganmitchell2211@gmail.com) and Sim Sidhu [simsidhu64@gmail.com](mailto:simsidhu64@gmail.com) have developed a **cancer prevention lesson plan** designed for high school students, aligned with the **California Health Education Standards**.*

*So far, SEL has successfully implemented this lesson in **seven high schools**, but we aim to expand our reach. If you have connections with any **California high schools or school districts**—whether as a **teacher, former teacher, administrator, school board member, or in any other capacity**—we would love to hear from you!*

*Please reach out to the emails above if you can help. **Thank you!***



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