



The AYJ Fund smiles ... connections ... cures

The AYJ Fund was created in honor of Anna Yan Ji Arabia, who was diagnosed at age 13 with gliomatosis cerebri (GC), a rare brain tumor. At the time of Anna's diagnosis, there was no research being done on this type of cancer. We are committed to supporting new research now being conducted to find effective treatments and a cure for this devastating disease.



The mission of the AYJ Fund is to bring smiles to kids with cancer, to keep them connected to friends and school through technology, and to support the research of gliomatosis cerebri and other brain cancers to find a cure.

AN EXCITING 2024

Once again you, our AYJ Fund supporters, opened your hearts as we recognized September as Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, and held our AYJ GOLDEN SMILES campaign. We thank you for helping us exceed our goal and raise over \$17,000 to support children with cancer. These funds will support many children with cancer, and support research which will one day lead to new drugs in the clinics to make a positive difference for these deserving kids.

In this newsletter, you will meet more of our AYJ SMILES recipients, and hear about both our visit to the Filbin Lab and a conference we attended in Washington, D.C., where we heard about exciting developments in research.

Before we know it the holidays will be here, and we will be ready once again for our AYJ HOLIDAY SMILES, through which we send over 200 gifts to children with cancer in clinics throughout New England and beyond. We invite you to consider sponsoring a Holiday SMILE for a child. You will find more information on page 7.



Kathy + Joe



SUNFLOWERS

Our friends Dale and Bob Balawender have been growing beautiful sunflowers and delivering us a big bright bouquet each September to recognize Childhood Cancer Month. Last year, they also sold their flowers and donated the funds to AYJ Fund.



This year they took it to a whole new level, selling hundreds of individual bouquets. They also set up a table at the Cheshire Cruz Night, and although they brought hundreds of flowers, they completely sold out. We are so grateful for their love and support and also for all of the wonderful helpers who cut, carried, sold and delivered sunflowers to make this such a success. The photo below is of their beautiful field of sunflowers in Cheshire, MA. This project raised over \$1,750 for the AYJ Fund, and spread love, sunshine and beautiful flowers throughout Berkshire County to support children who are fighting cancer.

We are also grateful to Jake Tullo, who 3D-printed this beautiful pair of sunflower earrings and raised \$657 to benefit Carrigan Nelson, his fellow osteosarcoma warrior, who is now fighting her 5th battle with cancer.

Sunflower Earring Raffle

3D printed by Jacob Tullo
#JETpack
to benefit Carrigan Nelson

**\$5 per entry
3 for \$10**

Carrigan is facing her 5th battle with osteosarcoma and is undergoing a tough treatment to help get her to a clinical trial in North Carolina. She faces a difficult road and lots of expenses.

All proceeds support Carrigan's Cancer Journey

Earrings 3D printed by #JETpack for his fellow osteosarcoma warrior

purchase tickets at AYJfund.org

AYJ SMILES

ELI



Eli's Mom shared that Eli has been struggling a little through his hardest phase of his leukemia treatment. Eli's AYJ SMILES pack helped to brighten his day and find his smile. Exactly what we were hoping for! This bright 9-year-old is staying strong and is a great big brother to his sister.

WESTON



After bravely finishing his cancer treatment, Weston's family never expected that he would not make it to his first scan before he relapsed with Ewing Sarcoma. This is what every family dreads as

they await each and every follow-up scan. Weston is now back in treatment and facing a very difficult road. Many cancers are so much more difficult to treat after a relapse, especially in children. We are keeping Weston in our thoughts and are standing behind him.

LUCAS

"Lucas has loved all his packages from the AYJ Fund as well!! He isn't great at posing for pictures, but he IS great at zooming his Blippi cars around! You guys are the best and the cards are a great pick me up for he and I both!"

Lucas's Mom



MEL

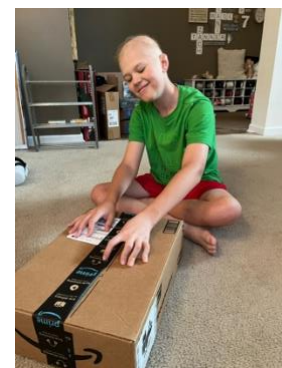


Mel is in her senior year of high school and loves hockey, field hockey and equestrian. What she did not expect this year was to receive a diagnosis of B-Cell Lymphoma, which is impacting her heart. She now has to fit in a full schedule of chemotherapy and medical treatments and appointments, instead of competing in sports, hanging out with friends, and enjoying her senior year. An AYJ SMILES pack is on its way.



TANNER

Tanner is starting 8th grade and loves golf and playing for his school's golf team. He was diagnosed this spring with Childhood Burkitt's Lymphoma. He is homeschooled and his Chromebook stopped working. Our AYJ Connections program was able to provide him a new Chromebook, so he could continue school, and stay connected to friends and family during his treatment.



ELLIETTE



This spring Elliette was diagnosed with cancer and started her 2½ year plan of treatment. As she moves through each phase of treatment, the burden is lightened by the support she is given. We are happy we have been able to help her find her beautiful smile.

"Elliette has been through so much this year, more than any 9yo should ever have to go through. We are grateful for the beautiful box of cheer. I couldn't fit it all in the photo, but it was a great lift to her spirits. Thank you!"

The Long Family

AYJ 4th SMILES

The Jimmy Fund Clinic's therapeutic dog Opry, and all of the teens receiving cancer treatment and testing over the July 4th holiday, enjoyed our AYJ SMILES gifts we sent to brighten their day. A patriotic star pillow, balls, jewelry, sunglasses and more added a little distraction and fun to their holiday.



CAMPUS WHEELS



A couple of falls, balance issues and increased pain from late effects of cancer surgery and treatment were causing Jake to have trouble navigating the University of Hartford Campus to get to class. As a typical teenage resident student on campus, he did not want to use a wheelchair or other medical device. When he located this e-bike, AYJ

jumped in to help support his campus navigation and very cool transportation device.

THINKING OF OTHERS

Some of the kindest and most thoughtful people we have met have been young cancer fighters. In a recent AYJ SMILES application, a Mom wrote "He is passionate about helping other pediatric cancer patients. Recently



all he has been talking about is learning to fundraise to buy ... paint by number kits for cancer patients back in Korea." This reminded us of when Anna was in treatment and

used her donations to purchase bald Bratz dolls to give to other children who had lost their hair to cancer treatments. How could we not fulfill this AYJ SMILES wish? We know Seungheon's friends in his cancer patient group at home will be so happy with these paint by number kits and by his generosity.

A WEEKEND OF FUN



AYJ Fund was happy to be a sponsor of Our Amazing Fighters New England Overnight Experience at Great Wolf Lodge in Fitchburg, MA. We sponsored 4 families whose children were able to enjoy fun in the water park and spending time together just being kids. Parents were able to relax and also share their experiences with other childhood cancer families, who understand so well the journey they are on. We also covered an additional night for a local family with four children, so they could have a little extra fun time together.



MAKING BIRTHDAYS SPECIAL



When a local little girl was about to celebrate her 3rd birthday, her Mom reached out to the AYJ Fund to see if we could find a princess to make her day special. These four AYJ Fund young ladies all

volunteered to attend the party and make her day one that any 3-year-old would dream of. Thank you to Haley Wood, Haley Catalano, Madison Catalano and Hailey Loynes, and to Mom who made a donation to the AYJ Fund.



CHILDHOOD CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

September was Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, and the AYJ Fund committed to GOING GOLD every day. Although gold ribbons for childhood cancer are not as well recognized as pink ribbons for breast cancer, each year we raise awareness to recognize our warriors, survivors and angels and to advance research so one day no other child has to endure what these brave souls and their families do every day.

We were honored to attend our City Council meeting, where North Adams Mayor Jennifer Macksey presented a proclamation recognizing September as Childhood Cancer Awareness Month in the city of North Adams.



If you looked up at her corner office in the evenings, you may also have seen her lights glowing gold to honor children with cancer.

Each day of the month, we honored one of our childhood heroes with social media posts that highlighted each one with a photo. We included a childhood cancer fact and a way you can help to make a difference for these kids. September 1 was for Anna.



Childhood Cancer Awareness facts included:

- ♥ Five children die each day in the US from childhood cancer.
- ♥ Childhood cancer is the #1 cause of death by disease in the US, and brain tumors are the leading cause of cancer-related death.
- ♥ Somewhere in the world, a child is diagnosed with cancer every two minutes.
- ♥ Every day, 42 kids are diagnosed with cancer in the US.
- ♥ Childhood cancer is drastically underfunded.



In recognition of Childhood Cancer Awareness Month each year, Talia's Legacy Children's Cancer Foundation of Florida works with the city of Orlando to post the names of childhood cancer angels on the Lake Nona Beacon, a six-story art installation.

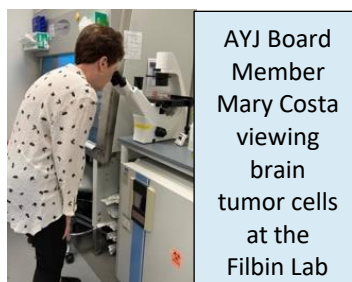
Each year we watch as hundreds of names are displayed virtually to see Anna's name. Our hearts were full as we saw Anna's name beamed across the beacon.



Kathy was proud to volunteer for the National Brain Tumor Society to advocate for our brain tumor

patients and survivors with our US Congress members. We participated in five Zoom calls with both of our MA Senators and three of our Representatives' congressional offices to advocate for the Bolstering Research and Innovation Now (BRAIN) Act. This legislation advances the quest to defeat brain tumors by increasing research funding, fostering collaboration, promoting clinical trials and biomarker testing and improving access to care.

AYJ SIGHTINGS



AYJ Board Member Mary Costa viewing brain tumor cells at the Filbin Lab



AYJ at the White House in Washington D.C.



BURCS T Shirt sported by BURCs coordinator Benn Griffin's Dad



AYJ VISIT TO DANA-FARBER CANCER INSTITUTE

It was research day for the AYJ Fund as a group of us visited both the Bandopadhyay and the Filbin Labs at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston. We met first with Dr. Mimi Bandopadhyay, who updated us on work that her lab is doing on both gliomas and ATRT (another devastating brain tumor). She welcomed us with open arms, and we greeted her growing number of lab members and discussed their research work. It was great to see some lab friends we have met when they attended our AYJ Fund events.



Bandopadhyay Lab Team with Dr Mimi, right front in orange.

Next we visited Mariella Filbin's Lab, where research on gliomatosis cerebri, funded by the AYJ Fund, is moving forward. During this meeting, we received details on the research work to date and plans for the coming year. The first GC patient has been enrolled into the new maximized therapy protocol, where a patient's tumor samples from different sections of the brain tumor are received right from the OR. The Filbin Lab then conducts single cell RNA sequencing, multi-omics and spatial transcriptomics on the samples. This allows the team to compare how the tumor cells grow differently in different parts of the tumor, and in different parts of the brain. This information goes to the molecular tumor board and the best personalized treatments are identified based on individual results.

"This is the first time a patient's tumor has been studied at this depth and we could not have done this without your tremendous support"

Mariella Filbin, MD, PhD



AYJ Fund with Dr. Mariella Filbin, second from right.

ADAMS COMMUNITY BANK DONATION



AYJ Fund is so grateful to Adams Community Bank for its ongoing support of children with cancer in the Berkshire Community. We

were presented with a check for \$13,970 through the generosity of staff, individuals and businesses throughout the county who supported all of the exciting events that the bank held the first half of this year.

BERKSHIRE ULTRA RUNNING COMMUNITY for SERVICE (BURCS)

This amazing group of ultra runners outdid themselves again this year, as they hosted the Sweltering Summer Ultra Marathon & 5K at Clapp Park in Pittsfield. For 8 hours they ran, walked and sweated around the loop to raise funds for

AYJ Fund to support children with cancer. Lila Gaudrault ran a whopping 53.6 miles as music blared and "Wally the Watermelon"

was carried around the course as a challenge to raise even more funds. This year, they posted signs with information on the AYJ Fund and childhood cancer around the course to inform runners. We love this group!



AYJ FUND MEMORIALS

We are grateful to the families of these loved ones who named AYJ Fund to receive memorial gifts.



Barbara Coury was "Situ" to Anna's friend Cori Ghidotti, and could always be seen at their school events. Barbara and her husband ran the Coury's Drive-In Theatre in North Adams and were very active in the community.



Wayne Sargent honored his great nephew Josh Sargent of North Adams, who was a friend of AYJ and died too young of cancer. Wayne had relocated to Maryland from North Adams.

BRAINSTORM SUMMIT



Kathy and Joe represented the AYJ Fund in Washington D.C. at the BrainStorm Summit, a conference focused on working

together to advance brain tumor research, to make a difference for brain tumor warriors in the fight and to recognize the angels and support families with their grief. It was an informative and empowering two and a half days together.



The AYJ Fund was proud to be a Bronze Sponsor for the BrainStorm Summit. The program included multiple tracks with sessions focused on research, nonprofit work, quality of life

sessions, bereavement support, and programs for teens and young adults as well as young children.

We attended the research sessions, including Advanced Topics in Cell Metabolism, Immunotherapy Going Viral, Advances in Drug Delivery, New Compounds of Discovery, Advanced Topics in Detection and Monitoring Techniques, and using AI for New Discoveries in Pediatric Brain Cancer. These sessions provided us with information on advances

being made in treatments available through clinical trials and the advances in research in the lab that are still in development. There is exciting work being done in the CAR-T Cell immunotherapy area, where a patient's own cells are collected and treated in a lab with agents which, when reintroduced back into the body, will attack the patients tumor in a more personalized, focused way. We heard of advances in oncolytic

immunovirotherapy, where a virus is injected directly into a patient's tumor to cause a response that attacks the tumor, and also advances in the use of focused ultrasound to assist in getting the drug to the tumor cells in order to kill them.

There was a presentation on active clinical trials involving liquid biopsies (blood and central nervous system fluids), which provide early identification of



cancer cells demonstrating effectiveness of treatment or to give early notice of a recurrence. It was wonderful to see specialists we know from our GC work presenting on these exciting advances.

There were a number of children present, both fighters and siblings who enjoyed special kid-friendly



programing and creative fun activities. Puppy visits, gaming stations and craft stations kept the children busy. AYJ Fund provided Magic Yarn Project wigs and beanies and super hero cookies made by Lisa Boyer.



The last morning included a breakfast celebration, a poster display, of fighters and

angels, along with speakers. It was special for us to have Anna and others surrounding us.



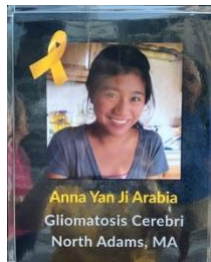
CUREFEST

The following two days in Washington, D.C., we spent at CureFest, another impactful, inspiring and emotional program. CureFest is the largest US gathering of Childhood Cancer Organizations to celebrate all fighters, survivors and angels. We were thrilled that the first people we ran into were Carrigan



Nelson and her parents from Rhode Island. Five-time cancer fighter, recently enduring lung surgery, radiation and tough chemo rounds, she was determined to fill her role as co-host along with other cancer fighters and even sang so beautifully on stage.

Another special moment at CureFest was finding Anna's photo on the Angel Wall. The impact of seeing a wall of hundreds of childhood cancer angels was overwhelming. Each photo representing a beautiful life cut short, and a family changed forever due to this devastating disease. It's the reason we continue to fight each day for effective treatments.



There were many moments to celebrate, as cancer fighters and their supporters sang, danced and honored those no longer with us. We spoke our angels' names from the stage, and the next day rallied to the Capitol.

We participated in the Shoe Memorial at the Washington Monument, a profound display



of 1,800 children's shoes representing lives lost too soon. Anna's favorite shoes were among sneakers, booties, boots and shoes in all colors and sizes, spread across the lawn under the monument and flags, a very special way to signify the children lost to cancer annually.

2024 HOLIDAY SMILES

It is hard to believe that we are talking about the holidays already, but if you have been out in the stores, you know they will be here before we know it. We will once again be providing over 200 filled string backpacks, gifts and gift cards to children spending their holidays undergoing difficult cancer treatments and tests and multiple medical appointments.

If you wonder how you can make a difference and brighten the holidays for these brave fighters, this is it: You can sponsor a backpack. We will take care of the details and do the shopping for you. We then send or deliver these gifts to the Jimmy Fund Clinic at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston, Baystate Children's Hospital in Springfield, MA, Weill Cornell Medicine in NYC, and Dartmouth Children's Hospital. We will send gift cards to children at Children's Hospital of Los Angeles. We will send additional AYJ HOLIDAY SMILES packages to a number of children who we have connected with individually and who are spending much of their holidays enduring testing and treatments or battling side effects of their cancer treatments.

The clinic staff at these centers, and children's parents share with us priceless stories of the children who we help to find a reason to smile during a difficult holiday season. We are so grateful for all of the sponsorships we receive, which help us to reach more children and spread more joy and smiles throughout the holiday season. Please help us to make this a special holiday season for these children who deserve so much.

Kathy + Joe



SPONSOR A HOLIDAY SMILE



Make checks payable to **AYJ Fund**

I would like to sponsor _____ HOLIDAY SMILES at \$25.00 each.

Total donation: \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

Mail to AYJ Fund 201 Eagle Street North Adams, MA 01247

Or donate online at www.AYJfund.org or AYJ Fund on Venmo



AYJ Fund
@AYJFund



venmo

All donations are tax-deductible.

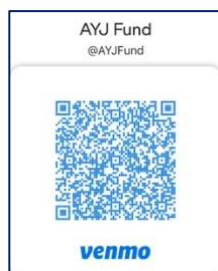
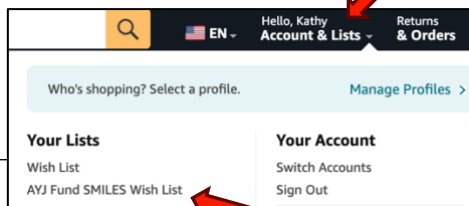
AYJ FUND SMILES WISH LIST on AMAZON

AYJ Fund now has a Wish List on Amazon. If you are shopping on Amazon and can fit something more in your cart, select one of the items on our list and it will be sent directly to AYJ Fund's address and included as one of our AYJ SMILES for a little one.



Go to Amazon.com

- Accounts & Lists
- Select AYJ Fund SMILES Wish List
- Select any item from the list



AYJ Fund on VENMO

Did you know you can find AYJ on Venmo for an easy way to make your donation?

AYJ FUND CALENDAR



November

- ♥ LUMINAMA – Holiday window display on Main Street, North Adams

December

- ♥ Holiday SMILES Project – sponsor a holiday gift for a child with cancer

2025

Watch for announcements of our Wine, Chocolate and Craft Beer Tasting in North Adams and more events coming in early spring!

