Roberto is taking the opener this month as I’m still feeling the side effects of my treatment. So thanks to Roberto for taking that weight this month.

Can you believe it’s been three years this month?! That’s right, Dallas YACS, had its first event in September 2019 at Social Pie in Dallas with just the idea that UT Southwestern needed a way for young adults to connect with and support each other. We are celebrating our three-year anniversary!

I got a call in June of 2019 from Alex when I was getting treatment and she said, “Do you want to go to a baseball game for cancer patients?” I couldn’t—I was going out of town. Then she said, “Would you be interested in being part of a committee for a young adult cancer group the hospital is starting?” I said, “Sure.”

I knew nothing of the young adult cancer community. I had been in a bubble as I went through chemo and was getting ready to start radiation. Little did I know, that phone call would change my life. Because of Dallas YACS, and one of the first committee members, I learned about the Apple Sandwich rule, which was this: whether it was Stage 1 or 4, everyone’s journey is their own, and you shouldn’t compare yourself to someone else’s story.

In July of 2019, Alex, our fearless leader, met with five young adults who had experienced or were currently undergoing treatment to discuss what would become Dallas YACS. Socials, support groups, and how to include caretakers were some of the things discussed.
For me, personally, I was undergoing treatment, done with chemo, and just starting radiation. I was at a bit of a low point, however, when I met the four other young adults, it felt like a weight had been lifted off my soldiers because I was immediately surrounded by people who knew what I was experiencing. Even now, three years out of treatment, I still get that feeling whenever I’m around the group. After a group event, I always feel like my cup is full.

What started as a group, support groups, and a few socials, has now become a program. Right as we were getting off the ground and gaining momentum in 2019 and early 2020, COVID hit. Despite that, we kept pushing to make sure that we were connected and supporting each other through Skype, Zoom, social media, and, eventually, drive-through events where we were able to socially distance ourselves. We had Fitness Fridays, virtual cooking classes, game nights, a wellness series, outdoor events, and did our best to commemorate the important days of the year with mindfulness activities and meals shared over Zoom.

Your cancer family is the one you love but never wanted to have. With cancer comes love and loss. Since Dallas YACS started, we’ve met some wonderful people, but also lost some as well. Wonderful people that we wouldn’t have met otherwise but feel better for having known them, even if not for a long time. Even though we don’t talk about them all the time, we always remember them and cherish their memory in our hearts thinking about how they touched our lives even if for a moment.

To create Dallas YACS, Alex collaborated with a committee of young adults to help drive the direction of the program and its trajectory. Without her support and passion for the AYA cancer community, none of this would be possible. For everything we see her do and everything she does behind the scenes, we are so fortunate. Through her and the committees’ efforts, we’ve affected lives in the DFW cancer community, and done events with MD Anderson, the Penn State Young Adult Cancer Program, Elephants and Tea, Epic Experience, and the 9474 Foundation.

In summation, this group has grown and evolved so much over the last three years—it’s felt like a whirlwind. It’s hard to believe that’s it been three years because they’ve gone by so fast. It’s hard to believe that, as a
program, we’ve grown so much, and I can’t wait to see what we’ll do in another three years!

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**DALLAS YACS CALENDAR**

**September 17th, Saturday** — Dallas YACS Anniversary Celebration Event, Paddle Boarding | Sign-up: [UTSW & Epic Experience SUP Weekend](https://www.google.com)

**September 23rd, Friday, 6:30pm** — 3rd Anniversary Dinner at Social Pie (5855 Maple Ave, Dallas, TX 75235)

**September 27th, Tuesday, 7:00pm** — September Virtual Support Group

**Future Events to Look Out For**

- Equest in October
- Writing Workshop with Elephants and Tea in November

**Card Committee!**

Volunteer for the Card Committee! Once a month, this group will get together to write cards to young adult patients admitted to Clements hospital. This is a great way to extend our YACS community to patients during such a difficult time. [Email Alex](mailto:alex@yacs.org) if interested.

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**We are here for you!**

Help us recognize your milestones! Do you have an appointment, scan, or cancer-versary coming up? Let us know so we can send you a note of support! Just follow the link below.
Knowing The Group! Featuring Dr. Samantha Dean

This is Dr. Samantha Dean, PhD in Public Policy & Political Economy. She was diagnosed with metastatic melanoma in 2020 at the age of 30. Here's how cancer has affected her life:

"I love being active and am often referred to as a busy-body. Pre-cancer, I woke up early to start my day with a run, always had a spotless home, and was seemingly full of energy and life. I don’t have the same energy level anymore. I’m plagued by fatigue and my immune system has been
I need more submissions!

If you'd like to be featured in a future newsletter—and let's face the facts, if you're reading this, we want to feature you—then send us an email through [THIS LINK](#), bolded so you won't miss it.

As we receive your responses, they're added to our supply and we pull one per month for the newsletter.

Have Some Feedback?

If you have anything you'd like us to know that isn't covered in the survey or milestone link, tell us [here](#).

ROBERTO'S JOKE CORNER

Why doesn't Garmin, the GPS device company, like British boy bands?
ALEX'S MEDITATION MOMENT

There is an old tale about when the sun was first setting. As her distance narrowed to the horizon, the light on earth slowly diminished. This made way for darkness to creep over the land. The people were afraid that when the sun would finally set, darkness would be permanent. “What will happen to us?” they said.

Far, far across the land, in a small hut, a little lantern lifted its wick. It said, “I challenge the darkness. In my small corner, I will not let the darkness settle itself around me.” With this example many other little lanterns in other small huts lifted their wicks to the darkness. And the people watched in amazement as so many little lanterns illuminated the earth, preventing the mask of darkness from taking over.

I came across this Punjabi folktale a few months ago and tucked it away to share in this month’s newsletter. It’s our program’s third anniversary, and this beautiful, light-filled story illustrated what I have observed and heard from so many of you who have found beacons of hope and healing as a community in times of darkness. While grammatically “beacon” is not a verb, I think our group has shown it can and needs to be one. Depending on where you are in your healing (remember, healing is an ongoing process and not a destination), your inner light might be dim or it might be bright. But it’s always there, ready for you to tap into whenever you want. Simply knowing there is always a spark inside your heart can help you face stressful situations and ignite the process of overcoming challenges.

Connecting with your inner light means getting in touch with your inner wisdom, your intuition, and your strength and using these to remind you to love yourself, to be kind to yourself, and to feel worthy. By developing and maintaining a “beaconing in and out” practice, we can expand our capacity to access our inner light and to spread that spark of light to others. Creating a deeper connection with the light inside you will
eventually make you shine so bright that you will radiate your light to others.

What do you practice daily to help you ignite your spark?

How consistent are you with your practice?

And if you don’t have a practice in place, could you create one? What’s one thing you could do today to ignite your spark?

Who do you want to share your light with and how? Who can you bring curiosity, compassion, and joy to in your support system?

The GPS company hates British boy bands because they only go One Direction.

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PROMPT OF THE MONTH

Anxiety. What does it look like to you? Feel like? How would you personify it? How do you handle it?
If you'd like your response featured in next month's newsletter, simply include it in an email to the group's email, dallasyacs@gmail.com.

That's it! You've reached the end of our newsletter. Until next time...

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