Editor's correction from last month: The opener was from Candace Hupp, not Candance Happ. I knew this, you probably knew it, but my fingers did not. My fingers are very remorseful after I informed them of their mistake. This month, Candace Hupp has returned for another informative opener. Thanks, Candace!

Happy February everyone! Don’t hate us, but we have been praying for snow in the Hupp house. I hope everyone is staying safe and warm.

I had the honor of writing the opener last month, and here I am again—lucky you! Don’t worry, this one won’t be quite as long. If you were able to get through my novel in the January Newsletter, you will remember that I was diagnosed with cancer at a young age, 26. It was perplexing to everyone—including all 47 doctors/specialists who misdiagnosed me with IBS (LOL)—especially since I was in excellent shape and had a pretty healthy diet and lifestyle.

After the pathology results confirmed the cancer, my oncologist insisted I do some genetic testing to see if it could be something hereditary. The results of the genetic testing confirmed I had something called Lynch syndrome.

Lynch syndrome is a genetic condition that increases your risk of developing cancer. People diagnosed with Lynch syndrome are more likely to get cancer before 50 years of age; the condition affects approximately 1 in 279 individuals in the United States. The disorder is specifically caused by a genetic mutation in one of five genes that
are responsible for fixing errors in DNA (MLHL, MSH2, MSH6, PMS2, and EPCAM).

The geneticists I talked with admitted that a lot of it was complicated to understand, but they used the following example:

My PMS2 gene was responsible for constantly “spell checking” all the cells in my body that are continually being generated as old cells die. Turns out that our cells can make initial mistakes, but usually those are caught and corrected by one of the 5 genes previously mentioned. Unfortunately, my PMS2 gene sometimes decided to take the day off, which resulted in some cells not being correct. Eventually, that led to cancer. For a more thorough and scientific definition, please use our friend and foe, Google.

If I had known about this condition when my initial symptoms started, I would have been able to let all my doctors know and we probably would have been able to narrow down the problem a LOT sooner. Instead, it took over 6 months of horrific pain, emergency surgery, and then pathology results before we were able to determine what in the actual heck was going on. Luckily, my entire family got tested for Lynch. It turns out my younger brother also has it, and we inherited it from my dad.

Of course, my father was devastated to learn that he had passed us this gene, but the good news for everyone was that now we could proactively do something about it. Every year my brother, my dad, and I get a colonoscopy and an endoscopy as part of ongoing monitoring to make sure those dang genes are doing their job.

February is “National Cancer Prevention” month. While I know that many of us could have done absolutely nothing to prevent our cancer, I do think awareness and early diagnoses around something like Lynch syndrome could only have helped me (and possibly many others) in a similar situation.
CALL FOR MORE NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE MEMBERS

We need more members to help put this growing and changing publication together. The committee is still in its infancy and finding its feet. We're looking for members that can stick around long-term. Quite simply, the more people we have, the simpler it becomes to put the newsletter together. Ideally, you'd have one section a month and/or come up with some new ideas.

If interested, email us here.

DALLAS YACS CALENDAR

Tuesday, February 21st, 3-4 p.m. — Mindful Movement Series | This series invites us to strengthen our mind-body connection using yoga and movement, breathing techniques, and mindfulness practices. This is open to all patients and caregivers.

Tuesday, February 21st, 7 p.m. — Support Group on Zoom or In-Person

Tuesday, February 28th — YACS Night at the Mavericks!!!

(We have currently reached our capacity for the Mavericks game. However, you can still contact Alex to get added to the waitlist.)

Friday, March 31st - Sunday, April 2nd — Two-Night Retreat at Latham Springs in Aquilla, Texas

WE WANT TO SUPPORT YOUR PARTNER

We want YACS to be a place of support for patients and their partners. We are starting a Facebook group for partners and
spouses to connect with each other. We hope to grow this into future activities like meetups and support meetings. Please encourage the very significant people in your lives to join!

https://www.facebook.com/groups/619102049902713/

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**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 if interested.

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**The Dallas YACS Retreat Update!**

As you may have noticed, the retreat is finally in the calendar. We are excited to offer this, our first overnight YACS retreat at Camp Latham Springs in Aquilla, TX. We have a wonderful weekend of restoration and connection planned with yoga, chair massage, rock climbing, music therapy, fireside chats (with s’mores of course), and maybe even fly fishing. We have 20 spots, so as with the Mavs game, please RSVP early!

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**Knowing the Group! Featuring AJ Aguirre**
Pictured above is AJ Aguirre. He was diagnosed with stage 4 Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma in 2021 at the age of 34.

When asked to share about himself, this was his response:

"On paper, I'm a small business owner. Some call me an entrepreneur, but I don't necessarily identify with that. I'm in the healthcare management field. Started Aguirre Medical in 2017-18ish. It's a Physician Practice Association (PPA) with twelve employees that focuses on Pediatric outpatient care. Benignus is a new PPA that is currently marketing nationwide for more Pediatric partnerships.

It's affected my life in the sense that it viscerally taught me that life is, in fact, finite. I've always understood the concept, but feeling it took me a new direction in life. It's made me question/explore what I ought to do in business, in relationships, in residence, and so on. Mark Twain suggested, 'The two most important days of your life are the day you're born and the day you find out why.' I'm closer now, given my condition, to understanding the 'why I was born' part."

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We 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.

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**Taylor's Comedic Turf**

This month's submission from Taylor lacks any taste on a good day and is honestly pretty bland, but we're going with the flow this month.

Find out what it is at the end of the newsletter...

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**Alex's Meditation Moment**

I recently had an opportunity to travel to a city and country I've always wanted to see. Before I left, I talked to so many people who shared their travel stories and helped paint a picture as to what I was about to experience—the food, the buzz of the traffic, the views. I began to form a specific image in my mind of the various sites I planned to visit, and even added in detail—where I would stand, who would be with me seeing the same thing, what the cold and rainy temperatures may feel like on my face as I walked between locations, what emotions I'd feel as this dream came true. When I finally arrived with my itinerary top of mind and made it to the first spot, I was in awe—what I was seeing fit the picture I had formed in my mind.

If seeing is believing, then visualizing is a practice for getting closer to where you want to be in life. Visualization is a tool that allows us to tap into our cognitive processes, including attention, perception, planning, memory, and even motor control. Studies have found that
mental practices like this are almost as effective as true physical practice, and the results can actually last longer. Through visualization exercises, we can prime the brain for what’s about to come, which impacts our motivation, increases our confidence and self-efficacy, and generates a flow state between our thoughts and behaviors. When we can bring as much detail to the practice as possible by engaging our five senses and adding an affirmation (for example, mine was “I’m so grateful to be here.”), we enhance our experience even more.

This month, I bring you a peaceful place visualization script with the purpose of relaxing your mind and guiding you to imagine your own soft and safe place. This place will be an image that you can visualize repeatedly in order to help calm and relax your mind when you are feeling stressed.

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*Begin by setting aside a few minutes so that you can relax without having anything else you need to focus on. Find a comfortable position.*

*For the next few moments, focus on calming your mind by focusing on your breathing. Allow your breathing to center and relax you. Breathe in... and out.*

*Continue to breathe slowly and peacefully as you allow the tension to start leaving your body.*

*Release the areas of tension—feeling your muscles relax and become more comfortable with each breath.*

*Continue to let your breathing relax you...*

*Let the rate of your breathing become gradually slower as your body relaxes.*

*Now, begin to create a picture in your mind of a place where you can completely relax. Imagine what this place needs to be like in order for*
you to feel calm and relaxed.

Start with the physical layout of the place you are imagining... where is this peaceful place? You might envision somewhere outdoors... or indoors... it may be a small place or large one... create an image of this place.

Now picture some more details about your peaceful place. Who is in this place? Are you alone? Or perhaps you are with someone else? Are there other people present? Animals? Birds? Imagine who is at your place; whether it is you only or if you have company.

Imagine even more detail about your surroundings. Focus now on the relaxing sounds around you in your peaceful place.

Now imagine any tastes and smells your place has to offer.

Imagine the sensations of touch... including the temperature, any breeze that may be present, the surface you are on... imagine the details of this calming place in your mind.

Focus now on the sights of your place—colors, shapes... objects... plants... water... all of the beautiful things that make your place enjoyable.

To add further detail to this relaxing scene, imagine yourself there. What would you be doing in this calming place? Perhaps you are just sitting, enjoying this place, relaxing. Maybe you imagine walking around... or doing any other variety of activities.

Picture yourself in this peaceful place. Imagine a feeling of calm... of peace... a place where you have no worries, cares, or concerns... a place where you can simply rejuvenate, relax, and enjoy just being.

Enjoy your peaceful place for a few moments more. Memorize the sights, sounds, and sensations around you. Know that you can return to this place in your mind whenever you need a break. You can take a mental vacation, allowing yourself to relax and regroup before returning to your regular roles.
In these last few moments of relaxation, create a picture in your mind that you will return to the next time you need a quick relaxation break. Picture yourself in your peaceful place. This moment you are imagining now, you can picture again the next time you need to relax.

When you are ready to return to your day, file away the imaginary place in your mind, waiting for you the next time you need it.

Turn your attention back to the present. Notice your surroundings as your body and mind return to their usual level of alertness and wakefulness.

Keep with you the feeling of calm from your peaceful place as you return to your everyday life.

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**Prompt of the Month**

Working from the Mark Twain quote provided by AJ, where do you rank on the "born" to "why you were born" spectrum? Or do you take a different philosophy in life?

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If you’d like your response featured in next month's newsletter, simply include it in an email to the group's email, dallasyacsalot@gmail.com.

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Water.
Feedback?

If you have anything you'd like us to know that isn't covered in the newsletter, tell us here.

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