



California February 2024 Quarterly Newsletter



Greetings, Cancer Change Makers! What a year it's been already... Despite a massive California rainstorm, we gathered in San Francisco to **Celebrate, Appreciate, and Elevate** our magical team of ambassadors during our annual Volunteer Summit.

As you read this newsletter, we invite you to reflect on your journey as an Ambassador: Where has it led you? How has it changed you? What do you want to achieve this year? **Your voice is vital**, especially in this election year. We will continue to advocate for increases in cancer research funding, the Medicare Multi-Cancer Early Detection Screening & Coverage Act, and the PSA for HIM Act.

How do you want to [reimagine your story in a memorable and impactful way?](#)

This newsletter features:

- **Volunteer Summit Highlights:** Relive the energy (or if you were not able to join us get a full re-cap of the day), learn from advocates, and stay inspired.
- **Actionable Steps:** Discover opportunities to raise awareness, contact lawmakers, and contribute to our shared goals.
- **Volunteer Spotlights:** Celebrate fellow changemakers and find inspiration for your journey.

Each of your stories are powerful — and it's exciting to think about how we can unleash our voices to make an even bigger impact this year... Thank you so much for all you do! We truly are a magical team.

Please join us on Wednesday, March 20th at 5:00 pm for the Quarterly Ambassador Call - link below in the "Key Dates" section.

KEY DATES

February 21st, all day
Menthol Tweetstorm
#ProhibitMenthol

March 20th, 5-6 pm, ***Spring Quarterly Ambassador Call***: [Zoom link here](#).

April 10th, ***California Cancer Action Day***, Sacramento State Capitol (*by invite only*)

USEFUL LINKS

[2024 Call Calendar](#)

[ACS CAN California Website](#)

[National Volunteer Home Page](#)

[CA Society of Emerging Leaders](#)

** [Volunteer Report Back Form](#) Please report all actions taken!

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION

- [PSA for HIM Postcard Activity](#): Please write and send a post card to each of our California Senators to encourage them to support the PSA for Him ACT to help more high-risk men get screened for prostate cancer. Mail your postcards to SLA Jamie Escoto who will hand deliver them to the Senator's office in Los Angeles:

Senator Name
Care of Jamie Escoto
8211 Creighton Ave
Los Angeles, CA 90045

Be sure to report your actions [here](#) for each postcard!

- Learn about our [#storiesofhope initiative](#) and [represent your cancer journey using this worksheet](#), take a photo or video, and tag [@acscanstoriesofhope](#) on Instagram or email [Jamie Escoto](#).
- Cancer Votes is LIVE! Please see below for more info on ways you can support.
- Participate in the **President's Day Recess activities** to ensure Congress prioritizes **cancer research funding**, as cuts to cancer cures would have catastrophic consequences on our

VOLUNTEER SUMMIT: Celebrate!

Congratulations to this year's awardees!

Pete Cala Effective
Storyteller: **Punita
Khanna** and **Cesar Serrano**

Local Advocate: **Jessica
Garcia** and,
posthumously, **Patsy Romero**

Fundraising: **Kathy
Flaherty** and **Margo
Connolly**

Rising Star: **Kira Sano**

Star Ambassador: **Laura
LaRose**

nation's ability to end cancer as we know it, for everyone. If you did not receive this email on Monday from your Grassroots Manager, please reach out to them directly.

- If you know someone between the ages of 18-35 who would be a good candidate for the [California Society of Emerging Leaders](#) (SEL), please contact [Kira Sano](#).
- Got feedback or ideas for the newsletter? Please send them to ACT! Lead for Congressional District 10 [Tina Tankka](#) and Communications Chair of the SEL [Melody McBride](#).

VOLUNTEER SUMMIT: Appreciate!

Gratitude to our ACS CAN volunteers who rolled up their sleeves and made our Summit at the San Francisco LGBT Center a great success by serving on the Volunteer Planning

Committee: Virginia Escamilla, Jamie Escoto, Stephanie Fajuri, Bob Gordon, Laura LaRose, Lucina Tonoyan, Juan Villalobos, and Anthony Volkar

A big acknowledgement to:

Juan Villalobos provided the photo booth, documenting the friendships and camaraderie at ACS CAN, and Margo Connolly, who got coffee donated from Peet's.



Pictured from left to right is keynote, Michael Balaoing, CELC Executive Chair, Kira Sano, and SLA, Jamie Escoto

Thank you also to those who led our breakout sessions:

Gladys Arias, Lynda Barbour, Priscilla Cabral-Perez, Rachael Eerdmans, Leslie Ferreira, Jen Grand-Lejano, Chakoma Haidari, Calyn Kelley, Laura LaRose, Dr. Laura Nathan, Autumn Ogden-Smith, Robert Park, Ananya Pinnamaneni, Harshita Pinneboina, Jose Ramos, Lucina Tonoyan, and Steve Weldon

Last but not least The Hospitality Committee - aka “the rough crowd”, who made it an indisputably ACSCAN event! Dave Bonfilio, Lamarr Daniels, Shelly and Michael Reinhart, Nancy Millet and Candy Williams



Pictured above breakout session led by San Francisco Tobacco Coalition Co-Chairs Calyn Kelley and Chakoma Haidari

VOLUNTEER SUMMIT: Elevate!



What are our 2024 Goals?

1. To demonstrate the **power of ACS CAN California Ambassadors** by engaging 100 different volunteers in completing and reporting 500 distinct actions to move our lawmakers.

Progress to date: 21 of 500 actions have been submitted (4% toward our goal) and 9 of 100 volunteers have used the report-back form to share actions taken (9% toward our goal).

2. To demonstrate the **support behind our mission - to end cancer as we know it for everyone** - by raising \$115,000 through volunteer fundraising and Lights of Hope.

Progress to date: Lights of Hope fundraising will officially kickoff in May, but those of you eager to get started can set up your fundraising page now [here!](#)

3. To build a collection of **your powerful cancer journeys** to inspire action against cancer. These stories will be featured on our Instagram Hub [@acscanstoriesofhope](#) in either images accompanied by written word or videos.

Progress to date: 2 of 100 journeys

are currently featured in the Instagram Hub (2% toward our goal).

VOLUNTEER SUMMIT HIGHLIGHTS



2024 California Ambassador Summit was a fabulous success! We stepped out of our LA comfort zone and moved the event to the Bay Area in the new San Francisco LGBT Center. Thank you to all who made the trek up and down the coast and across the state to attend. Catching up with old friends, meeting new friends, and enjoying a coffee from Peet's and quick breakfast from Bi-Rite Catering, the day's agenda began with a warm salutation from our new State Lead Ambassador, Jamie Escoto.

Speakers

Opening Remarks - Senator Scott Wiener, CA State Senate District 11
Advocacy made way for the expansion of healthcare access and MediCal in our state. Leading the charge towards health care not being employer based, pressuring insurance companies to cover mental health, addiction treatments and specialty medications and working with the CA Dept of Public Health to improve data collection.

Keynote Speaker - Michael Balaoing, founder and CEO of Candlelion LLC
Engaging our spiritual superpower, from an ACSCANer to a volunteer-in-waiting, "Imagine you can change the world."

Strategies in the Clinic for Mitigating Financial Toxicity Among Cancer Patients
Dr. Erqi Pollom, radiation oncologist at Stanford Health Care

Committed to mitigating financial toxicity/time burden in cancer patients. Studies have found that inadequate insurance leave many to have to make difficult and compromising medical choices. Clinical trial logistics - transportation, lodging, lost wages and decentralization - are being addressed on federal level and FDA. A much needed light on the embarrassing topic of financial insolvency due to illness. [erqiliu@stanford.edu]

Medical Debt & Cancer

Gladys Arias, Health Equity Policy Analysis & Leg. Support ACS CAN

Medical debt affects Black Americans, Hispanic Americans, women, young Americans, low income and states without Medicare expansion more. A Kaiser investigation on the UVA hospital system uncovered aggressive collection tactics by their hospitals. NPR series *Diagnosis: Debt, inside America's most urgent health care crisis*. Outcome of these investigations in March 2022 credit bureaus removed medical debt from credit reports.

The Power of C.A.R.E. - Kira Sano, California Emerging Leaders Council Executive Chair

Shared her story of her mom's battle with the C word. Community, hope and Relay for Life are her mantra. Covid 19 brought obstacles to fundraising. She took this opportunity to bring fundraising to a virtual platform, tapping into the gaming culture using a Minecraft server setting a precedent for online donations nationwide. "The youth are not only the future in the fight against cancer but the present."

State of Federal ACS CAN & 2024 Federal Priorities - Leslie Ferreira

- Urging Congress to fund the National Breast Cancer and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program for all women with or without insurance and with low incomes.
- Ensuring that The DIVERSE Trials Act, supported by ACSCAN, and the Henrietta Lacks Enhancing Cancer Research Act works as intended: remove barriers to participation in under-represented communities.
- The public health community is urging the White House to finalize the rules to eliminate the sale of menthol cigarettes and flavored cigars.
- PSA for Him Act
- MCED Legislation
- Pushing for fiscal '24 bills across the finish line. Looking to start the fiscal '25 process.

State of California ACS CAN & 2024 State Priorities - Jim Knox

- \$38 billion budget shortfall means delays in implementation of laws, includes Biomarkers Bill and modernizing CCR.

- Working with the AG's Office & the CA Dept of Tax & Fee Admin on tightening up enforcement of flavored tobacco law in the face of fairly widespread non-compliance.
- Expand access to breast/cervical cancer screening/treatment program for low income women by extending eligibility to 300%.
- Continue to fend off cannabis lounges' food and beverage push.
- Smoke free multi-unit housing, tobacco free pharmacies, smoke free outdoors
- New Endeavors and Continued Work
- UC Davis Tobacco Cessation Policy Research Center
- Diverse Communities in Reducing Tobacco-Related
- [VIVE project](#)
- [VIVA project](#)
- ["Rooted in Community Empowerment" \(or RICE\) project](#)
- Stanislaus Tobacco Prevention Action Team

Value of Teamwork & the Written Word - Mary Kemp

Sensing an aura of sadness, a stranger sitting next to Mary hands her a note. They become temporary pen pals writing messages on sticky notes. This is what HOPE feels like. Everyone's contributions on this team are valuable and magical. We as caregivers, patients, and messengers are inextricably woven together as elements of appreciation, celebration, and elevation. Whether we go fast or slow, we are going together. Dr. Martin Luther King, "Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?'"

Create, Carry & Connect: Embarking on Your Touchstone Journey - Jamie Escoto

Sharing her Dad's cancer story, her battle with smoking, the constant reminder to her kids of the memory of their Papa Jimmy, a man they did not meet but part of their real and spiritual lives forever. She impressed on us the intersection of art and messaging. "The stories of resilience which gave me strength in my moments of weakness. They taught me about the kind of person I wanted to become."

The story of Save Quintin Jones with Suleika Jaouad, author of "Between Two Kingdoms", embarking on this rescue mission while dealing with her own cancer journey humbled us.

Thank you, Jamie, for leading us into a new Lights of Hope year. We are so very lucky to have you as our guide.

For your one-stop shop for all things Summit, please visit [here](#).

BLACK HISTORY MONTH



Black History Month is a crucial time to recognize the rich culture of African American communities and their contribution to the United States. Additionally, it is a time to remember the hardships faced by African Americans and work towards eliminating disparities.

ACS CAN's Black Volunteer Caucus (BVC) was the first affinity group started in ACS CAN. This powerful group of 16 members does outstanding work reducing health disparities in the Black community.

This month, the BVC focused on raising awareness for prostate cancer, a cancer that disproportionately affects Black men. Black men are nearly twice as likely to be diagnosed with prostate cancer compared to their White counterparts.

A [Virtual Postcard Party](#) was held to discuss the Prostate Specific Antigen for High-Risk Insured Men (PSA for HIM) Act. In this event, participants created postcards to send to their representatives asking them to cosponsor this pivotal bill.

Additionally, the BVC hosts Fireside Chats, like [“Let’s Hear From the Ladies: How Black Women are Fighting Prostate Cancer Disparities”](#) and [“Prostate Cancer’s Unequal Burden in the Black Community: Saving Ourselves through Patient-Centered Solutions,”](#) providing a space to discuss and learn about disparities in healthcare.

A huge thank you to the BVC for all their hard work in the fight against cancer!

Important Information

Check out [our feature](#) on ACS CAN's Instagram!

Interested in learning more about the Black Volunteer Caucus? Please visit [their website](#).

Have questions or comments for the BVC? Reach out using [this form](#).

QUARTERLY SPOTLIGHT: LUCINA TONOYAN



Lucina Tonoyan (right) with her grandmother

Meet **Lucina Tonoyan**, a senior at Mission San Jose High School who has volunteered with ACS CAN for 2 years. Read more about her involvement and story below:

“In sophomore year of high school, my grandma moved in to our home

Over the next 6 months of her eventual recovery, I felt devoted to her journey and the most fulfilling thing I could do was fundraise. I spent hours after school fundraising for Relay for Life, eventually devoting 40 hours of my week to leading it in my junior year. After exploring numerous opportunities like the National Campus Youth Engagement Team of ACS, building relations with ACS Staff, and attending the Top Performer's Conference, I felt I wanted to bring back my passion for the ACS through a perspective of stories not just the logistics of fundraising and event planning.

I joined the California Emerging Leaders Council and began my journey in a passion project for Immigration and Health Equity. With a bumpy start not knowing much about advocacy, I have now led and planned the ACS CAN Summit for California. I've also begun working with a team of 6 drafting articles for my project. Although I still have a lot to learn, ACS CAN has helped me enter a space I feel I can always learn from for the rest of my career.”

NEW AMBASSADORS

from Armenia. A few days after her arrival, she was diagnosed with esophageal cancer and soon after could no longer drink water or eat food. Her recent immigration to the US made her ineligible for the insurance needed for her treatment. After a stressful few days, we were lucky to find a program for her to partake in thanks to a local social worker.

Continued on the right...

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

- Qais Arsala - District 5
- Lucinda Bazile, MPH - District 8
- Gabe Beugelmans - District 32
- Miki Hong - District 28
- Michael Lienhard - District 3
- Paige Price - District 37
- Angel Solorio - District 22
- Ethan Taylor - District 10
- Asad Warraich - District 14

VOLUNTEERS IN THE NEWS

Kudos to our amazing volunteers in the news:

Jamie Escoto, [Fil-Am media tech executive named top cancer advocate in California](#)

Sarva Channarajurs, [Mom Who Lost Child, Makes Case For Funding Cancer Research](#)

CANCER VOTES OPPORTUNITY

Cancer Votes 2024 is LIVE - you can participate in Cancer Votes activities now with the primaries and through the November election. Anyone nationwide can participate, and efforts will focus on federal races - presidential, Senate, and House. Our goal is to increase ACS CAN's power to impact public policy & build ACS CAN's relevance, capacity, and volunteer engagement by building relationships with candidates on all sides of the aisle, so whoever gets elected already knows about ACS CAN and the importance of cancer issues! We'll be asking candidates to sign the "Cancer Promise" to pledge their support for evidence-based policies. Here are your three steps to get started:

1. Take the training <https://www.cancervotes.org/training>
2. Receive your CV Volunteer Kit in the mail (includes a T-shirt, yard sign, button, and palm card with the Cancer Promise and questions)

3. Check your inbox for Cancer Votes assignments, campaigns, and incentives throughout the year!



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