

May 2024, Issue 38

Dallas YACS-A-LOT Newsletter



Evening at the Arboretum
by: Valerie Cano

What a wonderful evening to celebrate Adolescent and Young Adult (AYA) Awareness Week and get together with friends, family, and loved ones at the Dallas Arboretum. Not only did we get to enjoy the beautiful garden and bask in the sun for a bit, but together, we got to enjoy the evening with a delicious Italian dinner and assortment of desserts. Throughout the event, we were also able to take some fun shots at the photo booth and pick out a small plant to pot and take home with us.

This event was truly a delight! It was a great way to spend time together and bond, laugh, and reflect. One of my favorite takeaways from the evening was admiring the people who took time to walk down to Sam Snow's memorial bench and take a moment to reflect. This was touching because it shows how close many of us have become with each other and how we have impacted each others lives since meeting. I think this in with the goal of AYA Awareness Week.

Overall, I'm so happy that I got to spend my evening with y'all at the Dallas Arboretum. I truly love my succulent that I got to plant at the event, which is currently thriving and already sprouting in its new home!



Dinner with a View



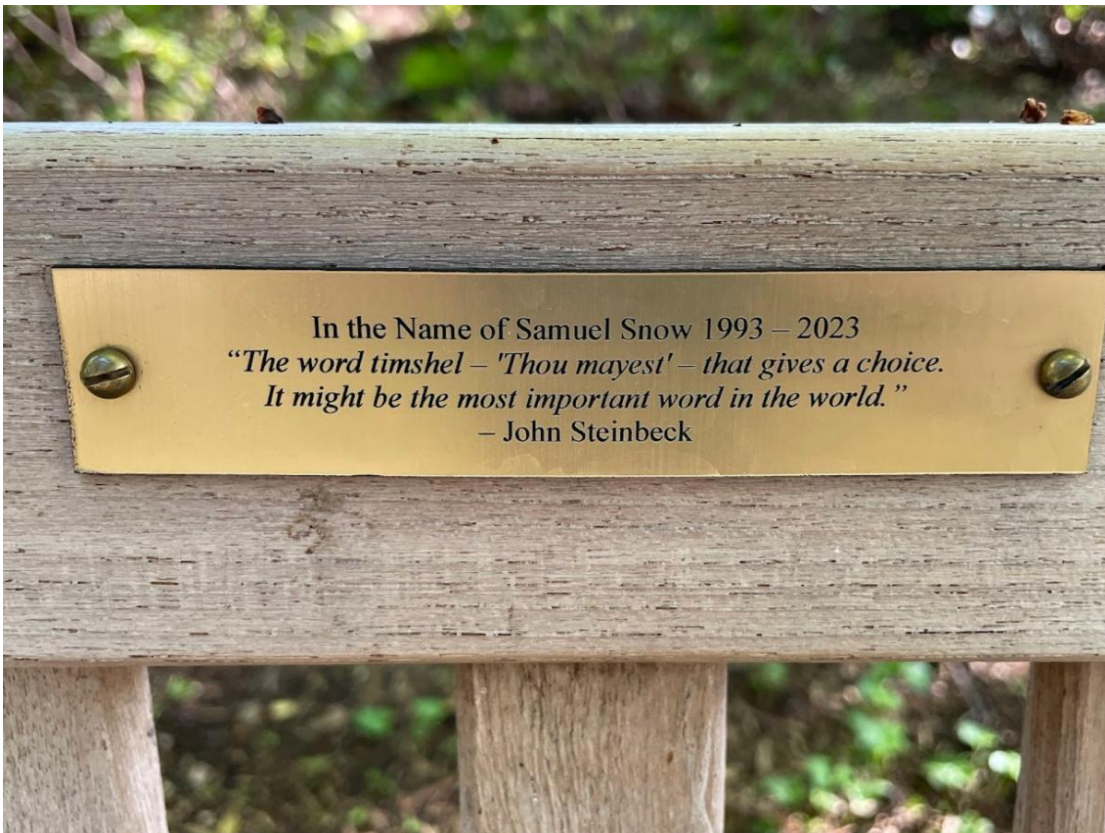
Pita's Planters Party Favors



Photo Booth Fun!



Nathan and Valerie Dressed to Impress!





Partner & Spouse Survey

We developed a brief survey to learn more about how we can support your spouses and partners. Please share the above QR code.

Be Part of the YACS Directory

This is a completely voluntary survey to gather contact info to share with group members. You do not have to answer all questions, and can quit any time. We'd love to know you better!

<https://forms.gle/n2e2qBnLpLFi3oew8>

Presenting to Providers at the Spring Oncology Education Session

by Rachel Walker



I had the privilege of joining a panel alongside other young adult cancer survivors and their caregivers at the UTSW's Providers Spring Oncology Education Session on March 23rd. Our conversation delved into the unique hurdles faced by patients diagnosed under 40, such as navigating healthcare systems, managing long-term side effects, coping with delayed diagnosis, legacy planning, and balancing career and social life amidst cancer. We had the opportunity to directly engage with healthcare providers, gaining valuable insights into their perspectives and approaches to treating young adult cancer survivors. The providers candidly discussed the challenges of fully disclosing potential treatment side effects and addressing the specific needs of young adults. These discussions are crucial for advancing care for young adult cancer survivors, providing me with a deeper understanding of both the professional and human aspects of being a healthcare provider.

Equest Couples' Event

by Leticia Hernandez

Our YACS crew and their partners had a wonderful time with some Armenian miniature ponies (and a donkey!) at Equest! Together with the Equest staff, we worked through collaborative exercises and discussed various emotions while strengthening trust and communication.

"It was more helpful and insightful than I could've imagined," said Joey (Leticia's partner). "We learned quickly that the ponies were far more responsive when we completed exercises together, and that with slight adjustments, the ponies were more willing to do the obstacles with us."

Our couples learned not only more about each other, but about these sweet ponies and their body language, herd behavior, and how they bond with and respond to humans. Pictured below are our couples who attended the outing and their miniature ponies: Dare, Tex, Turbo, Ranger, and Taco the donkey.



Extra Equestrian Ride at Equest

by Nathan Warner

This month, we went to Equest in South Dallas for a fun afternoon of horseback riding. Some of the YACS squad had been to this event in years past, and maybe even got to ride the same horse as they had previously. For me, it was my first time attending and definitely brought back memories of horseback riding adventures from childhood. The event started off with learning how to care for and getting familiar with the horse with which we were riding (and them getting familiar with us). This included grooming and preparing them for riding. One important thing I learned is that while our eyes look straightforward, a horse's eyes look at an angle. It is quite important that the horse know that you are there so that they do not get upset and potentially kick you in the face; therefore, being in their line of sight at some point is vital. From there, we moved into the arena where we walked alongside our horses (which strengthened familiarity for them and us) until it was time to saddle up. Once saddled, we were able to continue riding around the arena, while listening to any instruction given for the Equest instructors and volunteers, until it was time to head out on the trail.

The trail was dry enough for us to ride that day, and each of us had someone from the organization walking alongside the entire way. All of the horses seemed pretty relaxed on the trail minus when flies/mosquitos would try to land on them, which for the horse I was riding was often. The horse I rode especially liked when I would pat him and tell him he was doing a great job (even when he would stop to take breaks). Once we rode the trail and were back in the arena, it was time to dismount the horse (I gracefully nailed it) and walk them back to their stalls so that they could get some food (which they loved). Overall, the experience was 5/5 stars.





Nathan Ready to Ride Thorin



Joshua Grooming Kilty

My Horse Friend

by Katy Yost

A few weeks ago, our group had the opportunity to participate in several activities that were held at Equest Equine Therapy. Equest holds a dear place to me as I have had the privilege to participate in numerous activities with our group, and I also receive therapy there as well.

Each time I am there, I learn something new about myself and the horses... Did you know a horse can “read/sense” how you are feeling, your attitude, your joys, your trouble, etc. all from your heart beat which they feel up to 4 feet away. They feel your joys, your sorrows, your worries, your triumphs.

I have done therapy in the past, with the mindset of reaching this “invisible” yet to me a perceived tangible finish line- I will have better relationships with these people, I will feel better about this, I will feel more settled, etc. And just wanting to fast forward to get through it and get to the “other side.” And this maybe just me, but I have often felt this about my cancer journey as well, finish this scan, check. Do this treatment, check, and so on and so forth.

In reflecting and working with my horse mentor, I have realized that it doesn't actually work that way. You can't skip “Go” sometimes, it's a long journey, with slow steps, sometimes you're just standing still in the same place and looking around, sometimes you get turned around, but it's all part of the journey. I know many of would not choose to be on this journey, and sometimes I feel that way too. In reflecting recently, I have found some gratitude. If I had skip from Day One of therapy to the end and missed all they days in between over the last 6 months, I would miss all of the nurturing and time it has taken to build the relationship I have with my horse. We have had hard days and amazing days all the same, but I can truly say we have built a friendship, a trust, a bond that has truly been life changing. I would have missed if I just skipped to the end.

I write all these to say I am with you if you want to skip all the hard and get

to the finish line- I think that's human and natural. But it's wonderful to reflect on what got you to where you are right here, right now (even if that's still far from the preverbal "finish line"). Maybe it's more about the journey, the people, animals, etc. you meet along the way than the finish line itself.



Katy and



Karen and Potter were a great match!

Nathan's Comedic Turf

One of the many things I'll remember about Taylor is her dry wit, and her comedic turf always showed that. Taylor wanted to pass the torch to a fellow funny friend, and Nathan willingly stepped up. We appreciate you, Nathan!

What do you call an illegally parked frog?

Dallas YACS Calendar

Upcoming Events:

SAVE THE DATE!!! Friday, May 3rd- Sunday, May 5th- Our Annual Sam Snow YACS Retreat at Sky Ranch

Tuesday, May 28th, 6pm- YACS Yoga at the Cancer Center

Tuesday, May 28th, 7-8:30pm- In-person support group at the Cancer Center

Sunday, June 23rd, 10am- Explore Impressionism at the Dallas Museum of Art. Join us for a private viewing of works in the Impressionist exhibit followed by a guided painting activity.

Saturday, July 27th, 4-6pm- We will beat the heat with an afternoon playing arcade games at Cidercaide Arlington.

RSVP for any of these events by emailing Alex at alexandra.huffman@utsouthwestern.edu.

Happiest birthday wishes to our YACS celebrating in May!

Caleb Humerickhouse, 5/6

Matthew Zimmerman, 5/13

Amy Stumbris, 5/16

Spencer Swann, 5/16

Brandie Meyer, 5/17

Candice Stinnett, 5/23

Meghan Hitchcock, 5/27

Anna Blackwell, 5/29



In Loving Memory

Taylor Christine Roth

October 8, 1991- April 19, 2024

Taylor Christine Roth PhD of Dallas, Texas peacefully passed away on April 19, 2024, after bravely facing a long battle with brain cancer.

Taylor graced this world on October 8, 1991, in Amarillo, Texas, before moving to Plano at the age of 4, where she blossomed into a curious and compassionate soul. Her journey of learning and love was fostered at Plano Senior High School, where she developed a passion for the humanities and trivia. She graduated with honors in 2010.

Despite facing a brain tumor diagnosis in 2011, Taylor's indomitable spirit shone brightly when she represented Baylor University on the television show, Jeopardy! in 2013. Taylor's thirst for knowledge led her to earn a bachelor's degree in psychology from Baylor University in 2015, magna cum laude, followed by a doctoral degree in child psychology from the University of Nebraska, graduating in 2022. She also found joy in imparting knowledge to aspiring young minds as a teaching assistant at UNL.

Taylor was a member of Mensa, Phi Beta Kappa, and had authored or co-authored several articles on psychology topics. Two opinion pieces that she wrote on societal issues were published in the Dallas Morning News.

Her recent job at the Center for Public Partnerships and Research, part of the University of Kansas, showcased her unwavering commitment to improving the lives of children through her expertise in psychology and research.

Taylor's compassionate heart, fueled by her strong Christian faith, brought light and hope to those around her. She sponsored a child through Compassion International and worked in the children's ministries at churches in Plano, Texas and Lincoln, Nebraska. Taylor was an avid supporter of Head for the Cure, which raises money to help find a cure for brain cancer. She visited Capitol Hill last year to lobby for additional brain cancer research funding and for better federal support of brain cancer patients.

Taylor's generosity and thoughtfulness knew no bounds. She had a knack for remembering birthdays, showering loved ones with heartfelt gifts, and uplifting spirits with her encouraging messages. One of her best friends was her cat, Maddy.

Her love for traveling and embracing new adventures inspired others to enjoy every moment of life's journey. Taylor savored fine food – finding and leading her parents to some of the best restaurants in the country. She also loved baking and cooking.

Taylor leaves behind a legacy of love and resilience cherished by her parents, Phillip Richard Roth and Stacy Walton Roth, her maternal grandparents, John Frank Walton and Linda Koonce Walton, her uncle John Christopher Walton, aunt Melissa Roth Fisher, uncle Michael Fisher, and cousins Abby Fisher Crother and Zachary Fisher. She is preceded in death by her paternal grandparents, Richard James Roth and Duva Hinshaw Roth.

Taylor's family would like to thank the many health professionals who have helped Taylor over the years, particularly her neuro oncologist Dr. Elizabeth Maher and social worker Alexandra Huffman, as well as loving caregivers and Taylor's other dear friends. In honoring Taylor's memory, let us carry forward her legacy of kindness, curiosity, and unwavering faith, knowing that her spirit will continue to guide and inspire us all.

A celebration of life service for Taylor will be held Saturday, May 11 at 11:00 a.m. at Citizen's Church, 4501 Legacy Drive, in Plano, Texas. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Head for the Cure Foundation, <https://give.headforthecure.org/team/548932>.





Alex's Meditation Moment

In April, we spent a beautiful evening at the Dallas Arboretum surrounded by colorful flowers budding in well-tended gardens. Our event overlooked a pond with a fountain, and we had the perfect view of the Dallas sky line as the sunset. The imagery brought to mind a story I recently heard told by Jay Shetty. Jay is a bestselling author, award-winning podcast host of On Purpose, and the Chief Purpose Officer of Calm. He also embarked on a life-changing three-year journey as a Hindu monk, and in many of his presentations, he shares a tale told to him in his first few days at the monastery. In the story, a teacher asks a student to take two buckets down to a river every morning, fill them, and bring them back up a hill. When the student realizes one of the buckets has cracks and holes from repeated use—and has no water left by the time he reaches the top of the hill—he speaks to the teacher about getting rid of it. Surprisingly, the teacher says to simply carry on as usual. So the student continues, without understanding why.

But after a few months, Shetty explains how the student now sees “on one side of the hill, there’s a beautiful row of flowers, plants with vibrant colors, abundantly growing.” So the student invites the teacher to see it, saying that he doesn’t know why the new growth is “only on one side.” The instructor then discloses that when he found out about the broken bucket, he intentionally planted seeds on that side of the walkway so they’d be watered daily.

Shetty then zeroes in on the moral of the story: “The teacher explained that often in life, there are moments we feel like this broken bucket, or there are situations and circumstances that feel out of our control, and also feel broken, wounded, or dysfunctional. In those moments, we may not be able to change the situation, but we can plant some seeds.

In this month’s meditation, I hope you’ll ask yourself, these questions: What seeds can you plant in the areas of your life that feel out of control or

unfulfilling? What could it look like to plant seeds for a new vision you've been holding? For an idea that has sparked your curiosity? Once you've planted these seeds, how can you best tend to them so that they can grow?

Find yourself in a comfortable seated position. Begin by taking a few deep breaths. Close your eyes or soften your gaze. Feel the places where your body connects with your chair and the support the framework provides in all of those areas.

Imagine that you are in a place that holds meaning for you. It could be familiar or unfamiliar. You are gently moving, with intention but without rush. Notice the ground upon which you move – perhaps it is soft grass, a dusty dirt path, concrete, or even an indoor floor. You carry with you a small bag containing a most sacred gift: a seed of possibility, born from your gratefulness. You are on a journey to plant this seed.

Your destination comes into view. Perhaps it is a tilled garden bed, a field, the woods, or a room with a container – even just a cup. When you arrive, you take a moment to root yourself. You might say hello to this place, open your senses to the surrounding area, take a few deep breaths, audibly sigh.

Consider what preparation might be needed for planting: You might begin by asking permission or expressing thanks. Is the soil that will hold this seed ready for sowing or might it need some tending? Are there any weeds or stones that need to be cleared to allow space for your seed to take root and grow? Is there any other action that might help make this act of seed planting feel like a sacred ceremony?

When you're ready, take out your small bag and pour the seed into your hand. Remembering that the essence of this seed is sourced in gratefulness, gently close your fist. Tune into the possibility that exists within this seed. What wants to emerge from this seed – as an extension of your grateful heart? Imagine the seed buried in nutritive soil, germinating with light and water, growing roots and stem and leaves and flowers and soon more seeds so that the cycle may continue. What takes shape? What flourishes? How and who and what might this growth nourish?

Place your seed in the soil. As an act of completion, you may want to set an intention, say a blessing, and/or express gratitude. Leave this place, trusting that your seed will grow.

Slowly bring awareness back to your body and the space in which you find yourself. Take a few deep breaths to close this meditation.

Joke Answer

Toad

Sam's Writing Prompt



As we step into May, it's the perfect time to reflect on personal growth and new beginnings. For this prompt, think about a significant moment in your journey with cancer that felt like a turning point – whether it was a moment of realization, an encounter that changed your perspective, or a particular day that stands out in your memory. We'll call this your *May Moment*.

Prompt: Write about a *May Moment*. Describe this moment in detail – where you were, what was happening around you, and what you were feeling. How did this experience help shape your outlook on your future? What did you learn about yourself from this moment that you carry with you into this new May?

This exercise is an opportunity to acknowledge the challenges you've faced and celebrate the strength you've found along the way.

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

Cooking with Chris!



Hey May, Y'all! Can you believe summer is here already. Hope you are staying cool out there in this brutal Texas heat. This month, I'm featuring beverages instead of entrees.

When I was a kid, I remember the first time I went to Mexico. I was about 4 or 5, and I had a sip of a delicious drink that's now known as Agua Fresca. There are different flavors from lime, strawberry, pineapple, mango, watermelon, and hibiscus.

I'm going to explain how to make the base for it then you can add whatever seasonal fruit or flavor you wish.

Ingredients for the Drink Base:

- One gallon of water or 128 fluid oz.
- 4 cups of cane sugar (Make sure it is cane sugar. Granulated sugar will make it taste totally different.)
- 2 tsp of vanilla extract

- 1 Tbsp of agave nectar

Mix all ingredients using a whisk until fully dissolved.

Fruit Puree

For this next part, you can use frozen, canned, or fresh fruit, but please, I beg you- do not sure the powdered pre-mixed Agua Fresca. My ancestors will frown upon it. LOL!

For a gallon of Agua Fresca, you're going to blend 3 cups of fruit. Whatever fruit you desire. Blend until you reach a smoothie consistency, add water if needed. Once fully blended, incorporate into your gallon of sweet water, and mix vigorously.

If you're making hibiscus (or Jamaica as we call it), you're going to boil 2 cups of hibiscus petals into 5 cups of water. Boil for 10 minutes until you get a deep dark burgundy hue. Strain the hibiscus petals and incorporate into your sweet water.

Chill for 3 hours.



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...



UT Southwestern Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center | 6202 Harry Hines Blvd, Dallas, TX
75390

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