



A Breath of Hope  
LUNG FOUNDATION

2023 Annual Report



15 YEARS OF HOPE &  
IMPACT

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Leadership .....	02	Financials .....	07
Patient and Family Support Program .....	03	Stories that Inspire .....	08 - 09
National Research Program .....	04	Circle of Light .....	10
Animated Patient's Guide to Lung Cancer .....	05	Donors .....	11 - 15
Community Outreach for Earlier Detection .....	06	Board of Directors and Staff .....	Back

## Leadership



### Nancy Torrison, Executive Director

I'm proud of the work A Breath of Hope Lung Foundation is doing to improve health outcomes for those who have been diagnosed with lung cancer, including the psychosocial support and patient education we offer that is known to alleviate negative emotions and improve outcomes. A Breath of Hope's support services reduce the heavy burden that lung cancer patients and their families face, and studies show that supportive care improves quality of life and ensures that patients achieve the maximum benefit from their treatment.

With strong, skilled, and dedicated staff and a committed board of directors, A Breath of Hope (ABOH) is creating real change that leads to lives being extended or saved. Our impact is tangible, from driving important scientific discoveries (ABOH Research Program), to educating the public for earlier detection (ABOH White Ribbon Awareness Program), to offering patient education and support services that satisfy unmet needs and empower patients to live with hope (ABOH Patient & Family Services Program). I am so grateful for the thousands of donors that support our work. It is an honor to be part of the solution to lung cancer in our world. Thank you for believing in us. We are strongest together.



### Randy Hertog, 2023 Board Chair

It was a privilege and honor to serve my second term as Chairman of the ABOH Board of Directors in 2023. ABOH continues to successfully advance its mission by supporting those impacted by lung cancer, increasing public and patient education, and raising awareness that leads to earlier diagnoses.

I lost my wife more than seven years ago to lung cancer that appeared out of nowhere in stage 4. She had no symptoms. Screening could have caught her lung cancer early and saved her life. I am especially drawn to our efforts to improve early detection for improved treatment outcomes. More than 70% of U.S. patients are diagnosed in stage 3 or 4 when it is harder to beat.

I remain very proud and honored to be part of an impactful organization with a highly dedicated team supported by an engaged and talented board. I want to personally thank donors for your support of ABOH. Your support and contributions are key to our continued success in bringing hope and improved survival.

# Patient and Family Support Program

## SUPPORT PROGRAM OVERVIEW

A lung cancer diagnosis is life-changing for everyone involved. A Breath of Hope understands that the lung cancer journey is unique and there are benefits in connecting with others who understand the complexities of the road you are traveling.

A Breath of Hope designed its Patient and Family Support Program to meet the unique and complex needs of individuals and family members living with lung cancer. Matching the right service at the right time with compassionate staff and volunteers can provide a vital lifeline during a challenging time. Through support groups, events, and services such as patient education, transportation, or peer-to-peer companionship, A Breath of Hope creates a sense of community to remind those impacted by lung cancer that they are not alone.



In the weeks following my lung surgery, I was weak, in rough shape, and sometimes had six to seven appointments in one week. The reliable, dependable rides from A Breath of Hope Lung Foundation were literally a lifesaver for me.

**JAN JESKE, LUNG CANCER SURVIVOR**

## A BREATH OF HOPE TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM

One of the major barriers for lung cancer patients is finding rides to their many appointments. An inability to find a ride can lead to unintended consequences such as disease progression, ER visits, increased anxiety, and suboptimal clinical outcomes.

Addressing patients' social determinants of health is a priority for A Breath of Hope. Our 2023 Minnesota transportation program delivered more than 200 rides in the nine-county metro area, including rides to lung screening for family members. Our selfless volunteer drivers are screened and trained, and patients report feeling safe and comfortable in their presence.

## A BREATH OF HOPE COMPANIONSHIP PROGRAM

A Breath of Hope understands that connecting with someone who has experienced lung cancer can offer a unique sense of comfort to patients and families facing their own lung cancer journey. Peer-To-Peer Companions foster a shared understanding and life experience, creating a safe space for patients and caregivers to share their fears, concerns, and emotions. Through these interactions, patients and caregivers often find comfort and hope.

Patients, survivors, and caregivers are matched with a survivor or caregiver who has experienced the lung cancer journey. Patients and caregivers can choose how often they connect with their volunteer Peer-To-Peer Companion and how they would like to meet - from a one-time chat to regular get-togethers through a virtual or in-person meeting, phone call, or text.



## A BREATH OF HOPE SUPPORT & EDUCATION GROUPS

The aim of A Breath of Hope support groups is to provide resources, tools, and education that lead to improved health outcomes. A Breath of Hope offers two groups, one for patients and caregivers and the other for those grieving for a loved one following a lung cancer loss.

### PATIENT & CAREGIVER SUPPORT

Lung cancer patients often report feeling isolated, shamed, blamed, afraid, anxious, and sad following their diagnosis. A Breath of Hope's monthly support group meetings provide a safe space for them to learn, network and share their personal experiences. Topics in 2023 ranged from "Navigating Clinical Trials" to "Tools to Overcome Anxiety and Scanxiety." Average attendance in 2023 was ten participants.

### GRIEF SUPPORT

Seeing and caring for someone you love with lung cancer is heartbreaking and difficult. Grief can begin well before you lose your loved one (anticipatory grief), and the stigma facing lung cancer patients can make it even more painful. The A Breath of Hope monthly grief support meetings provide a safe and nonjudgmental space for grieving friends and family members to learn and share with others who understand. Topics in 2023 included "Help with Financial Planning" to "Navigating the Holidays Without a Loved One." Average attendance in 2023 was six participants.



# National Research Program

Today, death rates from lung cancer are in decline thanks to progress across the spectrum of care. Research is the key to new discoveries that help us develop better treatments and improved screening methods to find lung cancer earlier.

Despite being the number one cause of cancer deaths in our country, lung cancer research still receives far less funding per cancer death than other cancers. A Breath of Hope's Research Program is critical to filling this gap, and ABOH-funded projects are driving new treatments to increase the survival and quality of life for people living with lung cancer. With experts from around the country working with us to vet and score each submitted proposal, we are proud to be funding some of the country's most compelling discoveries. Most of our funded research has been published in major scientific journals.



## JAIME SCHNEIDER, MD, PhD

Dr. Jaime Schneider is with Massachusetts General Hospital, the largest teaching hospital of Harvard Medical School. Her study aims to identify novel strategies to overcome resistance to targeted therapies in oncogene-drive lung cancer by uncovering unique metabolic dependencies conferred by distinct onco-genotypes and understanding whether metabolic reprogramming drives resistance to targeted therapy. These studies will uncover previously unknown metabolic vulnerabilities that can pave the way for new therapeutic approaches for patients with lung cancer.



## ANASTOSIOS DIMOU (2023 PEG'S FIGHT FOR LIFE AWARD WINNER)

Dr. Anastosios Dimou is with the Mayo Clinic College of Medicine. He is the recipient of the 2023 Peg's Fight for Life Award for his project entitled: BiTE to target EGFR peptide: HLA class I complexes in EGFR mutant lung cancers. Dr. Dimou will screen a lung cancer patient-derived library of antibody sequences to develop a compound that engages the immune system, specifically toward EGFR mutations. The approach will leverage unique aspects of the immunobiology in mutant EGFR lung cancer to deliver a personalized immunotherapeutic for further preclinical and clinical development.



## ABOH 2023 LDCT SCREENING GRANT

The Native American Community Clinic based in Minneapolis used this screening grant to host a free community event for patients, staff, and the community with onsite pulmonology providers to answer questions about lung cancer and screening eligibility.

We are excited to have been able to provide this grant to the Native American Community Clinic to bring greater public awareness to lung cancer and provide screening to those who are eligible. In partnership, we believe we can save lives in Native American communities.

We have made exciting progress in the lung cancer field, but more funding is necessary to help those fighting lung cancer today. Thank you for supporting ABOH's research program. You are saving lives with your dollars!

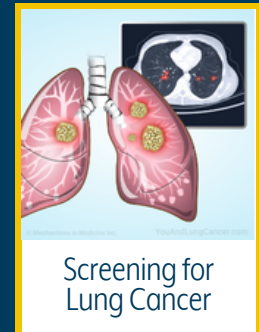
# Animated Patient's Guide to Lung Cancer

The Animated Patient's Guide to Lung Cancer found at [YouandLungCancer.com](http://YouandLungCancer.com) is a unique, award-winning online patient education resource that overcomes medical illiteracy to deliver critical information that can improve health outcomes. This evidence-based resource consists of patient-friendly animations, expert videos addressing patient FAQs, easy-to-understand patient-centered slide shows, downloadable e-learning resources, and infographics. Every patient, regardless of their socioeconomic status, will learn about their disease and be better equipped to participate in shared decision-making with their care team.

In 2023, A Breath of Hope was proud to add three new learning modules to its robust resource that drew 1.3 million total visits by the end of 2023.

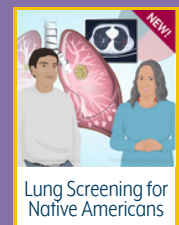
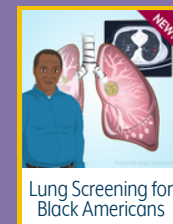
## SCREENING FOR EARLY DETECTION

This animation provides an overview of screening for lung cancer with low-dose computed tomography (low-dose CT or LDCT). Screening is used to detect lung cancer early when it is most treatable. Sadly, lung cancer screening uptake is poor in the US, and it is still only available for people over the age of 50 with significant smoking histories. However, ABOH is working diligently to broaden the eligibility criteria and improve screening uptake in the U.S. Our thanks to faculty expert Dr. Abbie Begnaud of the University of Minnesota for sharing her expertise in our faculty video.



## EARLY DETECTION IN BLACK AND NATIVE AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

This animation provides an overview of the importance of early detection and screening for lung cancer in Black and Native Americans, the groups that experience the highest incidence and mortality rates. Lung cancer is the leading cause of death for Black American men. More Black American men die from lung cancer each year than men from any other group. Native American populations are at much higher risk of getting and dying from lung cancer than most other populations. Our thanks to Dr. Annie Rusk of the Mayo Clinic and Dr. Fatima Wilder of the Brigham and Women's Hospital for sharing their expertise in our faculty videos.



## ANIMATED GUIDE TO LUNG CANCER IN SPANISH/ UNA GUÍA ANIMADA PARA CÁNCER DE PULMÓN

Approximately 55 million Americans, or 17% of the total U.S. population, identify Spanish as their first language. Knowing that lung cancer patients face many unmet needs and barriers, ABOH created a Spanish patient education resource to address the language barrier for Hispanic lung cancer patients. Our goal is to help every lung cancer patient achieve the best possible outcomes.

In 2023, we were honored to present a new three-part module in Spanish: Comprender la inmunoterapia para el cáncer de pulmón (Immunotherapy); Comprender las pruebas de biomarcadores de cáncer de pulmón de células no pequeñas (Biomarker Testing); and Terapia dirigida en el cáncer de pulmón de células no pequeñas (Targeted Therapy). Our thanks to Dr. Luis Ruez of Memorial Cancer Institute for sharing his expertise in our faculty videos.



# Community Outreach for Early Detection

Early detection through preventative screening is the quickest way to an improved lung cancer survival rate. Currently, more than 70% of U.S. lung cancer cases are diagnosed in stage 3 or 4 when treatments might not be as effective. Only 6% of Americans and 8% of Minnesotans who are eligible for lung cancer screening get screened.

A Breath of Hope makes early detection a high priority by educating both smokers and nonsmokers, working with healthcare systems to improve screening uptake and broaden screening eligibility, and working to reduce the smoking stigma. All of this work is critical to improving the 26.6% five-year survival rate.

## SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS AND EVENTS

In 2023, A Breath of Hope made a significant impact in driving awareness by exhibiting at the MN State Fair with healthcare partners, raising awareness through marketing campaigns that reached millions of Americans, and speaking at 30+ local community events. Direct engagement with the community is a powerful tool in our mission to educate and create opportunities for two-way conversations about prevention and screening eligibility. The more we share the realities of lung cancer, the more we dispel an inaccurate stigma that slows progress. A Breath of Hope delivered nearly 20 million lung cancer messages in 2023.

## MN SCREENS CAMPAIGN

Launched in 2023, MNScreens is an ongoing statewide campaign to increase the number of Minnesotans being screened for lung cancer. Currently, most people between the ages of 50 and 80 with a 20-pack-year smoking history are eligible to be screened for lung cancer.

MNScreens.org is a user-friendly online resource that empowers individuals to educate themselves about lung cancer screening. It provides a quick and easy quiz to help determine screening eligibility and includes a map of Minnesota's screening programs. The website encourages visitors to take the quiz and speak to their doctor about their results. A Breath of Hope's goal is to help patients become well-informed and prepared to participate in decisions about their health. Early detection is critical to improve cancer survival.

## NATIVE AMERICAN STORYTELLING RESOURCE

Thanks to a grant from the Minnesota Cancer Alliance and the Mystic Lake Group (Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community), ABOH created a storytelling video that educates about lung cancer exclusively in the Native American voice.

This resource is being used by Native American communities across the country to educate their people about their leading cause of death and the importance of detecting it early.

To view this video, please scan the QR code to the right.



**30+**  
COMMUNITY EVENTS

**20 MILLION**  
LUNG CANCER MESSAGES

# Financials

## INCOME

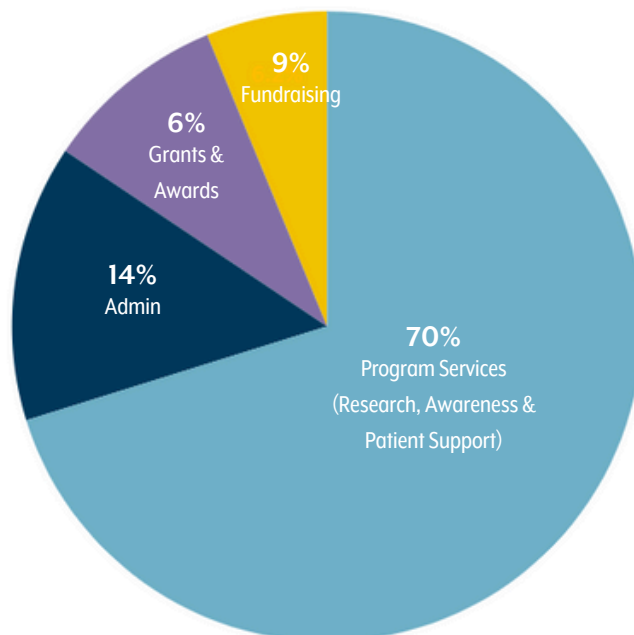
Contributions	597,350
Grant Revenue	557,000
Circle of Light Donations	39,000
Memorial & Honorarium Donations	100,952
In-Kind Donations	67,503
Special Event Revenue	116,880
Event Registration Fees	76,470
Merchandise Sales (Net of Expense)	3
Interest Income	1,510
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$1,556,667</b>

## EXPENSES

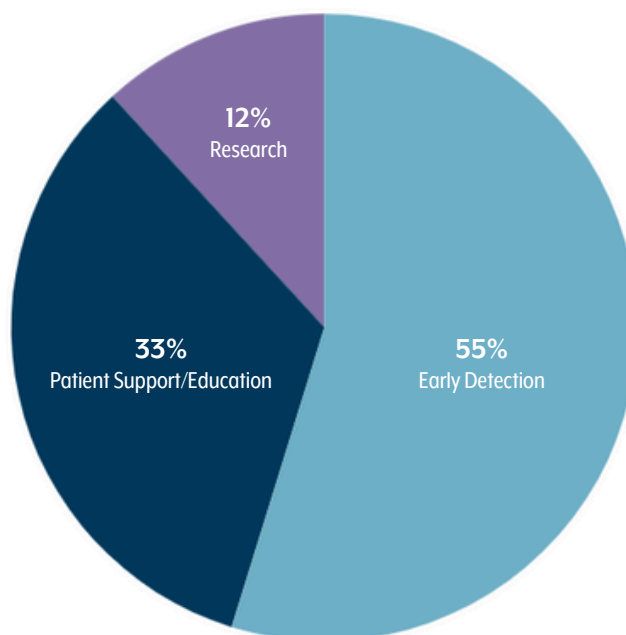
Patient Support Expenses	165,144
Research Awards	80,273
WRAP Program (100% Awareness)*	260,639
Operating Expenses	121,023
Payroll Expenses (72% Program)*	579,966
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES (76% Program)*</b>	<b>\$1,207,045</b>

Total Assets	1,720,466
Total Liabilities	113,081
<b>TOTAL NET ASSETS OR FUND BALANCE</b>	<b>\$1,607,385</b>

## 2023 EXPENSES



## 2023 PROGRAM SERVICE EXPENSES



\*Awareness Program - WRAP: White Ribbon Awareness Program includes awareness and early detection events, billboards, media campaigns, public speaking engagements, social media outreach, and targeted email campaigns.

A Breath of Hope Lung Foundation (ABOH), a 501(c)(3) charitable organization, works diligently to earn the trust of our donors. ABOH is in excellent standing with the Charities Review Council and has earned a Platinum Seal of Transparency from GuideStar. For a full report of our 2023 financial activities, view our 990 on our website [abreathofhope.org](http://abreathofhope.org), or visit [smartgivers.org](http://smartgivers.org).



# Stories that Inspire



## Lauren Coye, Lung Cancer Survivor

In 2019 and early 2020, Lauren experienced a significant fever that would not let up. As this was the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, she attributed it to Covid. In September of 2021, she took a turn for the worse. She and her boyfriend went swimming at a lake, but the moment Lauren entered the water, she was unable to breathe and had to be dragged out of the water by others. For the next two months, Lauren was sick and on multiple antibiotics.

In December 2021, Lauren finally received a chest CT scan after previously being denied due to not having a smoking history. Within 15 minutes of the scan, her doctor called her to tell her she had a tumor in her lung that they believed had been growing for years. In January 2022, a biopsy concluded that it was lung cancer. On March 15th, 2022, Lauren had surgery to remove the lower and mid lobes of her right lung.

Following her surgery, Lauren has continued to receive CT scans. Her last scan was in April of 2023, and she was declared to have No Evidence of Disease (NED).

Today, Lauren runs marathons worldwide and enjoys hiking trips. Her backpack has a white ribbon on it to spread lung cancer awareness. “I have the ribbon on my backpack so that when people ask me about it, I’m able to share with them about my journey and educate them about lung cancer.”



## Steve Kuczenski, Lung Cancer Survivor

In April 2017, Steve Kuczenski was experiencing severe stomach pain, a persistent cough, and unusual fatigue. He decided his symptoms warranted a visit to the ER where he received a CT scan. Appendicitis was ruled out, so Steve was sent home and asked to follow up with his primary care physician.

Steve had recently retired and was planning to leave on a mission trip to Africa soon, so his doctor ordered a low-dose chest CT scan. Sadly, this scan revealed lung cancer that had spread to his lymphatic system and adrenal glands. “The next day, I had a biopsy of my adrenal gland. Thankfully, the marker PD-L1 had a go-to immunotherapy I could get at Regions Hospital starting in May,” Steve explains. Over the next two years of treatment, Steve’s medical team didn’t find any new tumors, but the ones already there continued to grow slowly. After talking to his oncologist, Steve and his medical team decided to radiate his adrenal glands stereotactically, which is a five-day treatment that targets the tumor and minimizes hitting other organs. Next, Steve received stereotactic radiation to his lungs and lymph nodes. During this time, Steve’s tumors started to shrink.

Today, Steve gets a CT scan of his abdomen every six months and no longer needs an MRI scan of his head. Thankfully, his cancer is stable and he travels often. After hearing about A Breath of Hope from one of its founders, Mary Jane McKeon, he became a volunteer driver for the patient transportation program in September 2021. More than two years later, he is one of A Breath of Hope’s most committed volunteers.





## Colette Smith, Stage 1 Lung Cancer Survivor

On September 17, 2015, after a lengthy road to diagnosis, Colette was diagnosed with Stage 1A lung cancer with an EGFR mutation. She had never smoked so the diagnosis came as a shock to her and her family.

Colette had surgery to remove her upper left lung and has continued to receive scans every six months to monitor her lung tissue and watch for changes. A couple of nodules on her lung have entirely disappeared; others are still there but have remained stable. Today, Colette is happy to show 'no evidence of disease' AKA NED - a patient's best friend! She now receives her CT scan annually and feels hopeful.

Colette shared, "There is a solution to every problem, but sometimes the solution doesn't come immediately. Several years ago, nothing was on the market to treat EGFR mutations. Now, there is so much. All the advancements in science give me hope." Today, Colette emphasizes her desire to continue advocating for lung cancer research and being a voice for those no longer here with us.

"Ensuring you have a thoughtful and thorough doctor is essential," Colette says. "They should ask questions and want to have a conversation." Colette strongly believes in advocating for one's health, especially during a critical illness like cancer.



## Dean Lieser, Stage 3 Lung Cancer Survivor

After a sleepless night with stomach pain in November 2021, Dean Lieser decided to go to the doctor, knowing something was off with his body. Concerned about Dean's stomach pains, his doctor ordered a CT scan of his stomach. The scan caught the lower right side of his lung which revealed a lung nodule.

Dean's follow-up occurred a few months later in March of 2022. At this time, doctors did another CT scan that showed the spots on his lung were still present. A tissue biopsy was the next recommended step. Shortly after he received his lung biopsy, the results came back. On April 18, 2022, Dean was officially diagnosed with Stage 3A adenocarcinoma of the lung, the most common type of non-small cell lung cancer. After getting a second opinion, more tests revealed that the cancer was also in two of Dean's lymph nodes and that he had an ALK-positive mutation. The following steps for Dean included surgery in July 2022 and immunotherapy treatment.

Dean has been on an ALK inhibitor since January 2023. Today, Dean has no evidence of disease.

Dean says, "Lung cancer is anyone's cancer, and if you have any unexplained chest symptoms, don't be nonchalant about seeking medical help. Just because you don't smoke or feel you are healthy overall, lung cancer is still a risk for all of us."

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