

2024

# ANNUAL REPORT



A Breath of Hope

LUNG CANCER FOUNDATION

[abreathofhope.org](http://abreathofhope.org)

# Advancing Lung Cancer Research, Education & Support

Dear Friends,

Thank you for being such an invaluable part of the A Breath of Hope Lung Foundation (ABOH) community. I am deeply grateful for your empathy, passion, and unwavering dedication to our mission to defeat lung cancer.

In 2024, we reached a significant milestone—funding more research than in any other year in our history. At the same time, we continued to advance our education efforts to promote earlier detection of lung cancer and to ensure that patients receive the care, information, and support they need for the best possible outcomes.

As I reflect on my 13th year at ABOH and my journey as the organization's first executive director, I feel immense pride and humility. It has been an extraordinary privilege to witness—and be part of—the growth in our impact and momentum. To meet the ongoing challenges within the national lung cancer landscape, 2024 has seen us leaning more purposefully into strategic priorities, including expanding access to biomarker testing, a critical tool in personalizing treatment and improving survival rates.



*With gratitude and hope,  
Nancy*

**Nancy Torrison**  
Executive Director

# Collaboration, and Continued Success

The work at A Breath of Hope Lung Foundation has special meaning to all of us who support this organization. The same is true for me. My passion for patients and family members whose lives are touched by a lung cancer diagnosis started many years ago with my mother-in-law's diagnosis. Treatment options available to her at that time were very limited, and difficult to tolerate. Perhaps worse, the stigma that she and others who smoked faced prevented her from receiving the support that was so desperately needed. I wish I could go back in time and provide her better treatment options, more hope, and more compassion.

A Breath of Hope Lung Foundation works tirelessly to address the disparities in the treatment of lung cancer: disparities in research funding, disparities in support and education, disparities in early diagnosis and timely identification of actionable biomarkers. There have been very important advancements in all of these areas since my mother-in-law's experience with this beast of a disease, but there's more we can do.

We can't do this work without you. Please share this message with everyone you know. Continue to support this important work with your time, your financial gifts and your bold declaration to those in your social and professional networks. We can make a difference and provide hope. It takes all of us to continue to advance this mission.

Thank you for everything you have done to help us with this work. Together, we are making a difference for every patient, every family member, and every person touched by this underfunded and misunderstood disease. From our entire organization, we are grateful.



*Janet Huss*

**Janet Huss**

Janet Huss, MS, LP | Board Chair



# Lung Cancer Research

A Breath of Hope is proud to invest in cutting-edge research that leads to better treatments and longer lives for people facing lung cancer. In 2024, we **funded two outstanding early-career scientists whose innovative projects** are advancing the field of precision medicine. These awards are made possible through the generosity of families who have turned their personal journeys with lung cancer into a legacy of hope.

**We are deeply grateful to Peg Fisher-Jullie and Jerry Jullie, the Swedberg family, and our community of supporters who make this research possible. Together, we are ensuring that science keeps moving forward and that hope continues to grow.**

## IMPACT

# 2

**2 early-career  
scientists funded  
through Named  
Research Awards**

# \$300,000

**\$300,000+ invested  
in cutting-edge lung  
cancer research**

# Lung Cancer Research

## 2024 Peg's Fight for Life Early Career Award

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### Recipient

**Lindsay LaFave, PhD**  
*Albert Einstein College of  
Medicine & Montefiore Einstein  
Comprehensive Cancer Center*

### Project

Exploring Differences in Immunotherapy Response in EGFR and KRAS-mutated Lung Cancer

Dr. LaFave's work investigates why certain genetic mutations in lung cancer respond differently to immunotherapy. Using advanced modeling systems, her team is studying how EGFR and KRAS mutations shape the tumor's immune environment and exploring strategies to improve treatment responses.

This research could help doctors better match patients to therapies that work—and ultimately improve survival.

*This award is named in honor of Peg Fisher-Jullie, whose personal fight with EGFR-positive lung cancer inspired Peg and her husband, Jerry, to invest in research that will bring new treatments to patients.*

*"I want to be sure that there is a next line of treatment available for me and for all those who are also fighting this disease."*

**Peg Fisher-Jullie**



[\*\*Read Peg's Story\*\*](#)

# Lung Cancer Research

## 2024-2026 Julie Swedberg YOLO Research Award



### Recipient

**Jessica Konen, PhD**

Winship Cancer Institute of Emory University

### Project

miR-29 as a Master Regulator of Anti-Tumor Immunity

Dr. Konen's research focuses on understanding how lung tumors resist immunotherapy and discovering new ways to overcome that resistance. Her work on the microRNA miR-29 aims to identify biomarkers that predict treatment success and reveal novel drug combinations to boost immune response.

*This award honors the memory of Julie Swedberg, a passionate ABOH advocate and lung cancer warrior whose motto was "YOLO" (You Only Live Once). Julie's family and friends carry on her legacy by funding innovative science that gives patients more time and more hope.*

*"I have vowed that my diagnosis will serve a purpose. I have immersed myself into the lung cancer community and at ABOH in the hopes of raising awareness, reducing the stigma, and helping change outcomes for lung cancer patients."*

*Julie Swedberg*



[Read Julie's Story](#)





# Biomarker Summit

## Minnesota's First Biomarker Summit

In 2024, A Breath of Hope hosted the first-ever Minnesota Biomarker Summit, presented by Bristol-Myers Squibb. This important gathering marked the beginning of a critical statewide conversation on biomarker testing and precision medicine in lung cancer.

Biomarker testing, also called molecular profiling, ensures patients are matched with the right treatment at the right time. Yet, testing is not always ordered for patients with metastatic lung cancer.

The summit brought together physicians, pathologists, and healthcare leaders to identify barriers and discuss solutions that will expand access to timely and appropriate testing.

### AT A GLANCE

**First-ever statewide event** focused on biomarker testing in lung cancer

**100+ clinicians and leaders** from 17 Minnesota health systems engaged

Explored solutions to increase access to **early, broad-based biomarker testing**

Featured national experts and a **multidisciplinary Minnesota panel**

Launched collaboration to establish **reflex biomarker testing** as standard of care

# Biomarker Summit

## Minnesota's First Biomarker Summit

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A highlight of the summit was a multidisciplinary panel of Minnesota oncologists representing major health systems, who shared real-world experiences on overcoming workflow challenges. Attendees also engaged in a collaborative brainstorming session on how to advance systemwide practices and support clinicians in ordering appropriate testing.

This first summit laid the groundwork for building a stronger Minnesota healthcare community—one that understands the importance of precision medicine in lung cancer, feels confident in testing and identifying the best therapy, and commits to establishing reflex biomarker testing as a standard of care across health systems.

The day closed with a call to action: to work together toward a future where every Minnesota lung cancer patient receives biomarker testing as a routine and essential part of care.

**This inaugural summit sparked a vital conversation to ensure every Minnesota lung cancer patient receives the right test, the right treatment, at the right time.**



Bruce E. Johnson, MD, FASCO

Attendees of the first Minnesota Biomarker Summit had the honor of hearing Bruce Johnson, MD speak about the importance of biomarker testing. Dr. Johnson- a native of Minnesota- is **one of the investigators who discovered epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR) mutations** which have enhanced the treatment of lung cancer around the world.

Dr. Johnson is a Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School, an Institute Physician at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and Brigham and Women's Hospital, past President of American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) and has published over two hundred and forty research articles.



# Patient & Family Support

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A Breath of Hope's Patient and Family Support Program was created to overcome barriers lung cancer patients and families experience. We know that navigating a lung cancer diagnosis is overwhelming and something no one is prepared for. Our services are designed to enhance the patient's quality of life, reduce feelings of isolation, and foster a sense of hope and resilience during the fight against lung cancer. All services are provided by caring volunteers, many who have navigated the lung cancer journey, and trained professionals who understand the barriers lung cancer presents.



**TRANSPORTATION**



**PEER-TO-PEER COMPANIONS**



**SUPPORT GROUPS**

# Patient & Family Support

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## TRANSPORTATION

Transportation is a critical factor for lung cancer patients, as many require frequent visits to medical facilities for treatments and follow-up appointments. Reliable transportation ensures that patients can access the necessary care on time, without the added stress of figuring out how to get to appointments. For patients without personal transportation, this can mean the difference between receiving consistent treatment and potentially missing vital sessions, which could impact the effectiveness of their care.

A Breath of Hope's Transportation program pairs volunteer drivers with patients in need of rides to lung cancer appointments. This service reduces the stress of finding reliable transportation, allowing patients to focus on their health and recovery. It also alleviates the strain on family members and caregivers, allowing them to focus on other aspects of support and care without having to bear the full burden of transportation logistics. Transportation services are currently available in the Twin Cities and will be available in Rochester in 2025.



## PEER-TO-PEER COMPANIONSHIP

Connecting with others who have gone through the lung cancer journey as a patient or caregiver can provide a sense of comfort that can't always be found through a traditional support system. Knowing that someone else has navigated similar challenges can be empowering for patients and caregivers, reducing feelings of loneliness and isolation.

A Breath of Hope connects a trained volunteer companion to patients and caregivers. The companions role is to listen and offer hope and support. Companions can meet once or on an ongoing basis, by whatever method the patient or caregiver prefers- virtually, in person, via text, or phone.

# Patient & Family Support

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## SUPPORT GROUPS

### Support Groups, Patients Survivors Caregivers

A Breath of Hope offers several options for virtual support groups, available nationwide to those impacted by lung cancer

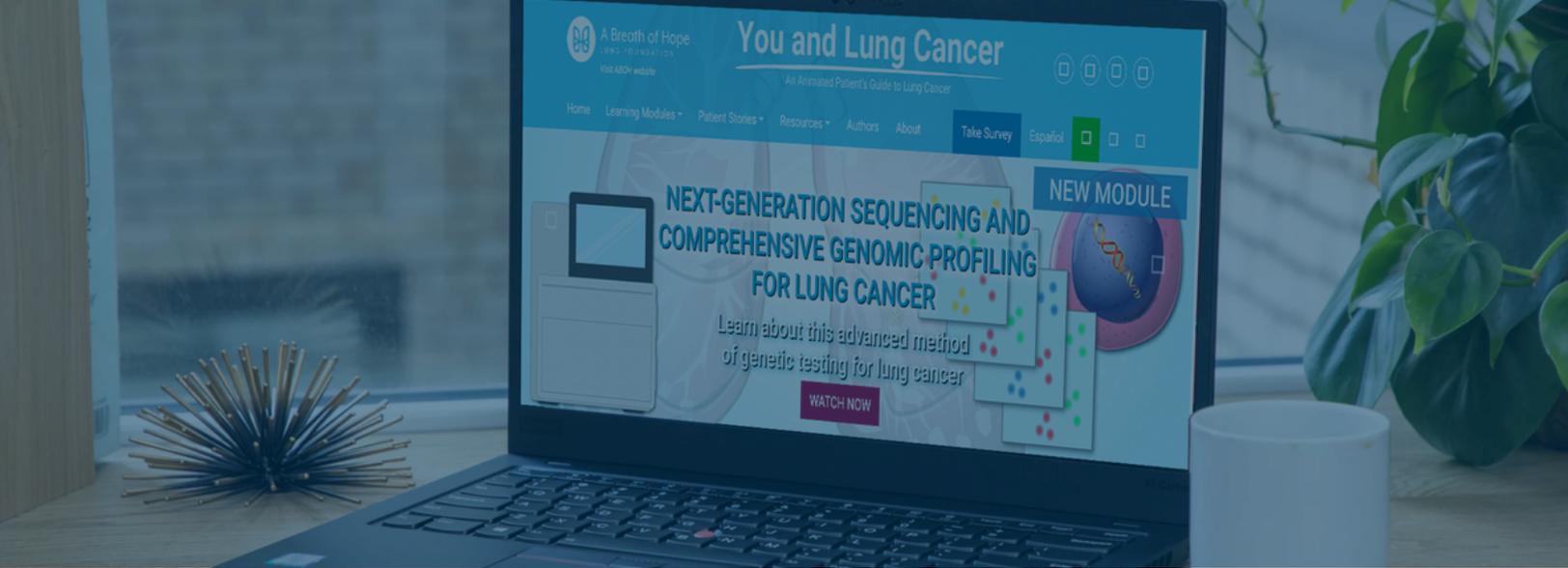
A lung cancer diagnosis can be overwhelming and isolating. A Breath of Hope's Patient, Survivor, and Caregiver group offers a resource to educate and build a support network while sharing their experiences. Support groups meet monthly, and are open to any lung cancer patient, survivor or caregiver. Groups focus on one topic a month, and allow time for reflection, sharing personal experiences, and community-building, empowering attendees to feel more in control of their journey.

### Grief Support

Grief groups can be an important form of support for those who have lost a loved one to lung cancer, providing a compassionate space to process emotions and learn coping skills. A Breath of Hope's Grief Group offers a non-judgmental environment where individuals can share their experiences, knowing that others can understand and empathize with their loss, while also learning about managing grief, self-care, and moving forward. Virtual Grief Groups are offered monthly.

[More About Support Services](#)





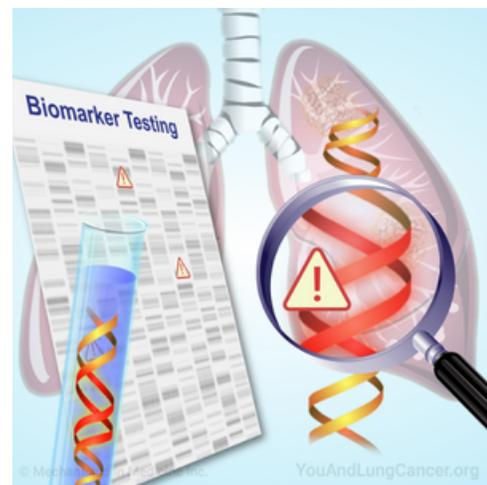
# Patient Education

Literacy-based education is one of the most powerful tools in the fight against lung cancer. Our learning platform continues to grow as a trusted, accessible resource for patients, survivors, caregivers, and healthcare providers. In 2024, we expanded this library by creating three new evidence-based, animated learning modules designed to empower patients with clear, easy-to-understand information at critical points in their cancer journey.

## 2024 New Modules

### 1. Understanding Biomarker Testing in NSCLC

This module explains the vital role of comprehensive biomarker testing in guiding treatment decisions for NSCLC. Patients learn how testing can identify key mutations (such as EGFR, ALK, KRAS, ROS1, and BRAF V600E) and PD-L1 expression, helping doctors personalize therapy for the best outcomes. The video emphasizes the importance of biomarker testing for everyone with NSCLC—particularly underserved communities who often face barriers to timely diagnosis and care.



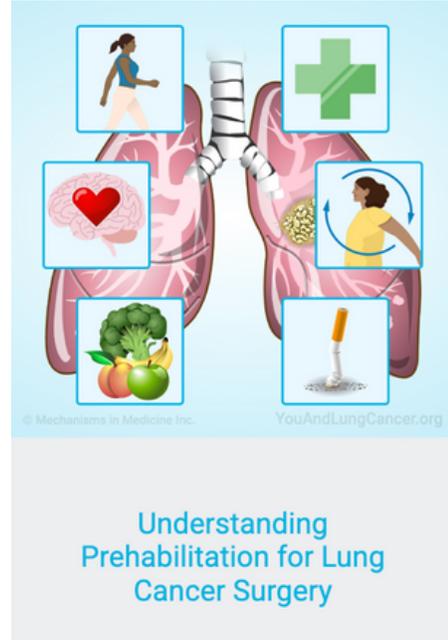
Biomarker Testing in NSCLC

# Patient Education

## 2024 New Modules

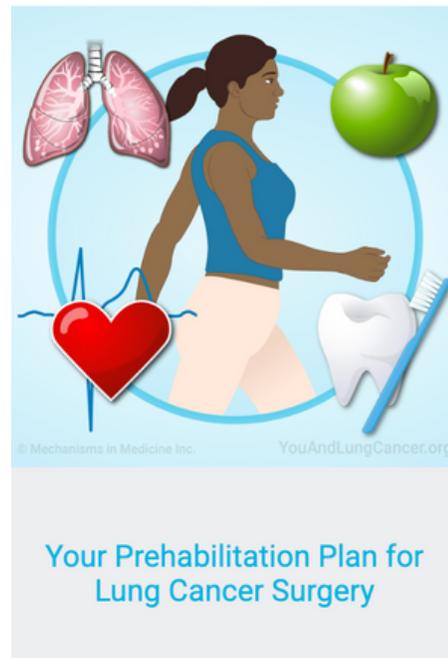
### 2. Understanding Prehabilitation for Lung Cancer Surgery

Complementing the personalized plan module, this animation provides a broader overview of the science and benefits of prehabilitation. It highlights strategies that enhance physical and mental health before surgery, while underlining the positive impact on surgical outcomes and recovery.



### 3. Your Prehabilitation Plan for Lung Cancer Surgery

This resource guides patients through developing a personal “prehab” plan to improve strength, lung function, and resilience before surgery. Covering breathing exercises, nutrition, fitness, and mental well-being, the module shows how prehabilitation helps reduce complications, speed recovery, and improve quality of life after surgery.

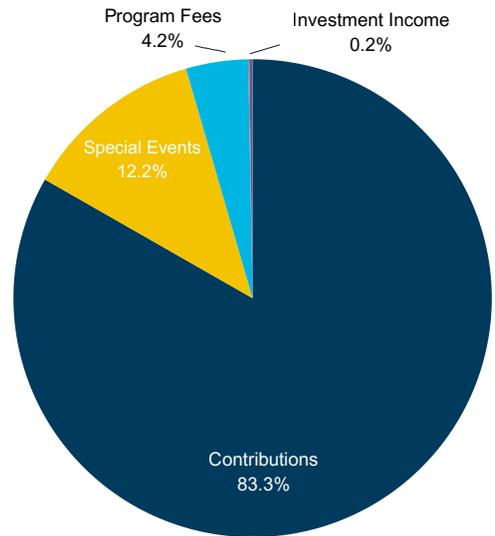


# Financials

## Revenue

|                   |           |
|-------------------|-----------|
| Contributions     | 1,028,461 |
| Special Events    | 151,182   |
| Program Fees      | 51,827    |
| Investment Income | 2,728     |

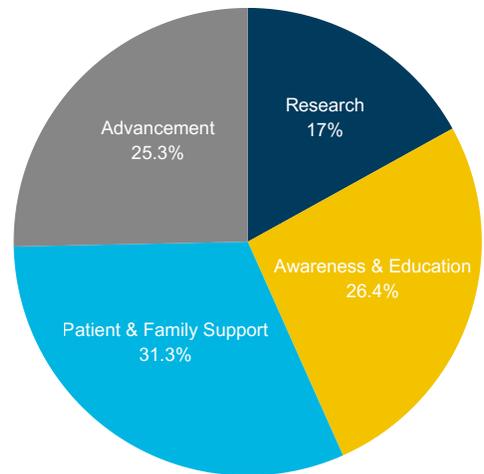
**TOTAL 1,234,198**



## Expenses

|                          |         |
|--------------------------|---------|
| Research                 | 213,016 |
| Awareness & Education    | 331,261 |
| Patient & Family Support | 393,770 |
| Advancement              | 318,091 |

**TOTAL 1,256,138**



# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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LUNG CANCER FOUNDATION

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