



The AYJ Fund smiles ... connections ... cures

The AYJ Fund was created in honor of Anna Yan Ji Arabia, who was diagnosed at age 13 with gliomatosis cerebri, a rare brain tumor. At the time of Anna's diagnosis, there was no research being done on this type of cancer. We are committed to supporting new research now being conducted to find effective treatments and a cure for this devastating disease.

The mission of the AYJ Fund is to bring smiles to kids with cancer, to keep them connected to friends and school through technology, and to support the research of gliomatosis cerebri and other brain cancers to find a cure.



MILESTONES! \$500k + AND 25th BIRTHDAY

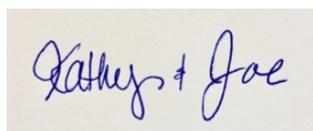


We have so much to be excited about and to celebrate! The AYJ Fund has hit a milestone in fundraising, having raised over one-half million dollars to support children with cancer. We never could have dreamed that we would reach

this level of fundraising when we first talked about creating the AYJ Fund to help children with cancer. Our goals were to make their days a little brighter and to advance research to find an effective treatment for gliomatosis cerebri, this rare brain tumor which took Anna from us way too soon. We are grateful to each and every one of our amazing AYJ Fund supporters who have helped achieve this; it is you who have touched so many kids and moved the needle further ahead in research.



We ask you to celebrate with us in your own way on April 9, which would have been Anna's 25th birthday. Spread a smile, do a random act of kindness, enjoy a cupcake, and, if you are able, please make a donation to Anna's 25th Birthday Campaign. We are still not able to hold our major fundraisers this spring, but believe everyone is ready for a party. What better reason to celebrate!



What one-half million dollars looks like to us

AYJ Love



INTERNATIONAL BREAKING NEWS

The AYJ Fund is excited to announce that we are one of five GC family foundations that worked together to fund our first joint GC cancer international research grant.

The AYJ Fund has reached a major milestone in its mission to fund brain tumor research on this type of brain cancer, which, to this date, has no effective treatment or cure. On February 23, 2021, we announced that, in concert with our European partner foundations, we would award a 300,000 grant, funded over three years to advance gliomatosis cerebri research.

The grant recipient was selected by a team of scientific advisors and the five family foundations. We are excited to share that the winning grant will be led by Prof. Chris Jones, Institute of Cancer Research, Sutton, UK, along with his team of Dr. Mariella Filbin, Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, Boston, USA, Dr. Maria Vinci, Bambino Gesù Children's Hospital, Roma, Italy, and Dr. David Castel, Integrated Research Cancer Institute,, Villejuif, France.

Each one of these research institutions will bring a unique expertise to the effort.

We heard during the three International GC Conferences— funded by family foundations, including the AYJ Fund — that to find effective treatments for gliomatosis cerebri,



they need to find what makes it different from other brain tumors and why this type of tumor is so invasive, growing differently than most other tumors. The grant project is focused on this challenge. They included this abstract in their proposal:



“Recent studies have failed to find significant differences between GC and other high-grade gliomas. Despite this, the unique clinical presentation of GC continues to be diagnosed, and patients with this disease still have an extremely poor clinical outcome. We have formed an international collaboration between enthusiastic researchers in London, Paris, Rome and Boston to tackle this problem with a new focus. We are using novel technologies to explore GC at the single cell level, in order to understand exactly what makes up these tumours, and how the individual GC cells interact with normal brain cells to produce the remarkable and terrible spread throughout the brain that is seen with this disease. We will take advantage of the respective skills of our group to study the genetic make-up of individual tumour cells, how this re-wires them to behave in the way that they do, and the precise nature of how they co-opt the normal brain structure and immune system. We will try to turn this new knowledge



into new concepts for how we may treat these tumours, and test these ideas in new models of GC in our laboratories. We have all participated in the three international congresses, and have been inspired by talking to and

working with the GC families across the globe. We are committed to both bringing our expertise to challenge the prevailing negativity around the study of GC, and also to continue to work with our families to fundraise and advocate on behalf of GC patients everywhere.”

The AYJ Fund is pleased to join Izas, la princesa guisante; Franck, un rayon de soleil; Mathys, un rayon de soleil; and Nina, un rayon de soleil, to make this research possible.

CAROLINE’S MIRACLE FOUNDATION

We were honored and so thrilled to receive a donation of \$4,000 from Caroline’s Miracle Foundation. This wonderful organization was one of our inspirations in creating the AYJ Fund.

Caroline’s Miracle Foundation (CMF) first contacted us back in 2010, when they heard that Anna was fighting brain cancer. Their foundation was created when they lost their daughter Caroline to DIPG, a similar brain tumor to Anna’s.



They had heard that Anna loved NYC and that she was purchasing bald Bratz dolls to share with other kids with cancer who had lost their hair to chemotherapy or radiation treatment. CMF sent us to NYC and purchased 50 of the

bald dolls for Anna to pick up at Toys”R”Us in Times Square. Despite being in a wheelchair, nothing stopped her from getting to NYC. She absolutely loved this trip and the ability to share these dolls.



AYJ FUND NOW IN 3D

We receive a number of beautiful and unique AYJ Fund gifts that are handmade or crafted with our logo, and we love them all! We have received a beautiful quilt, handmade pottery, etched mugs and even a Lego clone!

We have now reached a new level: We’ve gone 3D! Our friend Jake, a student in McCann Technical School’s Computer Assisted Design (CAD) program, created a two-color AYJ Fund heart on his home 3D printer. We are quite impressed, and also have no idea how he did this!



AYJ SMILES PROGRAM HOLIDAY GIFT CARD SMILES & MORE



Thank you ... Our AYJ Fund supporters certainly were in the holiday spirit this year! Although COVID-19 did not allow us to fill backpacks to send to pediatric cancer clinics to distribute this holiday season, our AYJ Fund Holiday Gift Card

promotion was a tremendous success. We exceeded our goal to purchase 200 gift cards and we were able to fill some backpacks ourselves to send to children impacted by cancer who we have been connected with. We were also able to fulfill a number of items on the Jimmy Fund Council's Amazon Wish List and sent over 200 additional gifts to give to teens and preteens over the holiday season.



Kate, the Adolescent Specialist at the Jimmy Fund Clinic wrote *"You are all amazing."*
"2020 may look different for most but not for AYJ."
"I am so thankful for all of your efforts to bring happiness to our teens and tweens."

John Crowder, Child Life Specialist at Baystate Medical Center wrote *"Thank you. These will really brighten some teens holiday season! We appreciate you thinking of our patients and families this year!"*

And from some grateful Moms:

"There is a lot of cute stuff she can use during chemo <3 <3. And I love the reindeer ears and Christmas light necklace."



"Thank you all for everything you do for our kids. Maddy loves the gift bag you have all sent her."

CELTICS BASKETBALL



Sometimes we are just amazed at the kindness of the cancer fighters we meet. This was the case when we connected with North Adams' Nick Murach this fall to find out how we could help. He told us his wish was to hold a basketball tournament to raise money for other kids with cancer instead of

something for him. We told him we would love to help. Unfortunately, COVID-19 had other ideas and we couldn't hold this event.

AYJ Fund wanted to find a way for Nick to know how much his efforts meant to us and how we were amazed by and grateful for this young man who thought of others instead of himself – even as he has been battling three types of cancer and multiple treatments and trips to Boston himself. We reached out to the Celtics Foundation, which responded with a signed basketball, great gifts and a personal note to Nick that included:

"We understand that you have been experiencing some tough times recently, but want you to know that you are on the minds and in the hearts of the entire Boston Celtics organization. It is fans like you who serve as a huge inspiration to our team."

CHEMO KID FOR A CAUSE

Nick Murach of the Celtics story decided not to accept no for an answer to his fundraising effort stopped by COVID-19. He found a way to help other kids with cancer. He is now selling shirts on Facebook, with proceeds generated being donated to the AYJ Fund.



Check these out on his Facebook page and send him a message with your order. Only \$10 per shirt!

HANDMADE HOLIDAY CARDS

If you have not yet checked out the handmade cards that Marjorie Connors makes, you are missing out! Marjorie and her Stampin' Up friends, Lorraine Hunt, Sandy Kelso, Lorraine Faucher and Celeste Morton, handmade 200 holiday cards for us to include in our backpacks, before we heard that the children's cancer clinics could not accept our holiday backpacks this season. We were able to provide packages of these beautiful cards in a number of the individual AYJ SMILE Holiday gifts we sent to children's homes, so that these kids could share these beautiful cards with family and friends. We are happy to say we have a number saved for next season!



Marjorie makes beautiful cards for all seasons and events that are available all year. Check out "Made by Marjorie" on Facebook.



COMPASSIONATE CARE COMES FULL CIRCLE

Dale and Bob Balawender found a beautiful way to thank the staff of Berkshire Medical Center Cancer and Infusion Center for Dale's wonderful care: a donation to the AYJ Fund. This donation meant so much to us, as Dale was one of Anna's special nurses through her cancer treatment. She always had a smile on her face and went the extra mile to provide care for Anna, even a surprise home visit to avoid another difficult trip to the hospital in Boston!

THANK YOU

A donation of \$100 has been made to the AYJ Fund to thank you, the staff of the Berkshire Medical Center Cancer and Infusion Center, for your wonderful care, from Dale and Bob Balawender.

The AYJ Fund was created to honor Anna Yan Ji Arabia, of North Adams, who was diagnosed with gliomatosis cerebri, a rare brain cancer, and became an angel at age 16. The AYJ Fund provides SMILES to children with cancer through gifts and fun experiences, CONNECTIONS to friends and school through technology, and CURES with support of research to find effective treatments for these children.

This donation means so much to us at the AYJ Fund as Dale took special care of Anna through her cancer treatment also.



www.ayjfund.org AYJ Fund on FB Kathy@AYJfund.org

AYJ FUND SUPPORTING RESEARCH

The AYJ Fund made two major end-of-the-year donations to further support the research of gliomatosis cerebri at two major research institutions we work with. Our AYJ Fund supporters have continued the amazing support of our work to make a difference for children with this rare brain tumor. We feel strongly that research needs to move forward. We donated \$10,000 to support GC research at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston and \$10,000 to Weill Cornell Medicine in NYC. We work closely with the researchers at both of these leading institutions and know the work they do will one day make a difference for these kids.

"This is amazing and generous Kathy and Joe! It is so wonderful to keep Anna's spirit in the lab we love having her portrait in the hall and feel your support enormously."

Jeff Greenfield, MD, PhD, Weill Cornell Medicine

"This is amazing and wonderful! "

"My best to you, my thanks to you and your supporters"

Kathy Warren, MD, Dana-Farber / BCH

SUPERBOWL TRIP OF A LIFETIME

Jace Ward is a 22-year-old young man who was diagnosed with Diffuse Intrinsic Pontine Glioma (DIPG), a rare aggressive brain tumor that is similar in many ways to GC. Jace has already exceeded his life expectancy with this disease and is involved in advocating for research and funding. His motto is: "I can't die...I'm too busy." He recently completed a new GD2-CART T Cell clinical trial at Stanford University, with some positive results. He was feeling better when he received a call about his favorite team, the Kansas City Chiefs. He was very excited to hear that Chiefs player Anthony Sherman was giving him two tickets to the Super Bowl. He and his Dad were flown to Florida for the game. When speaking with his Mom, the AYJ Fund offered to help Jace remember his fabulous trip by funding the photo books, video and other printed memories. His Mom stated:



"Roger and Jace will treasure this for a lifetime!!"

VALENTINE SMILES

We miss our angel Anna every day, but never more than on Valentine’s Day, which is Anna’s Angelversary. This year we celebrated 8 years from the day our angel went to heaven. We know that the best way to celebrate this day is to send SMILES to other children, so each year on Valentine’s Day we send SMILES gift packs to the children at the Jimmy Fund Clinic at Dana-Farber from the AYJ Fund. This year, the COVID-19 infection control restrictions were still in place, but we found beautiful blankets at Amazon that could be sent



directly to the clinic to meet the current requirements.



We found fleece blankets with colorful hearts and Red Sox blankets, which were distributed at the clinic throughout the weekend. We heard the kids loved them! We also saw that our friend Cameron from the

Berkshires had to travel to the Jimmy Fund Clinic earlier in the week, so we contacted the clinic to see if they could give him a blanket, too. Although Kate, the Adolescent Specialist, wasn’t able to catch him, she made sure he got one. The JF staff sure know how to help share SMILES!



Thank you AYJ Fund for Cam’s blanket. Jimmy Fund Clinic sent it to him in the mail. Kate said she went to find him, we must have already been in a room. Thank you for thinking of him.

💙💛 Cam’s Mom

LOVE YOUR MELON MASKS



Love Your Melon is a wonderful company that donates 50% of its profits to nonprofit organizations that lead the fight against pediatric cancer. We were so happy to receive a donation of 100 Love Your Melon Masks which we were able to donate to the Jimmy Fund Clinic to be distributed to kids with cancer.

BEAUTIFUL GIRL DONATIONS

We also received a generous donation from the Natural Life company with our favorite quote: “Beautiful Girl, You Can Do Hard Things.”



We know these adorable canvas zip pouches will be a hit with teens. We have provided a number of items with this quote on it to the beautiful girls going through cancer treatment. We are so grateful for their donation.



ONE BY ONE

The AYJ Fund was excited that the 4imprint company awarded us a One by One Grant. 4imprint selects an organization each month that is making a difference in their community. They say it’s, “Our way of making sure that every day we do something – even if it is just one thing – to help make the world a better place.” AYJ Fund received \$500 in printed merchandise, including a supply of sunglasses and USB charger blocks, which will be distributed to children with cancer.



HOME AWAY FROM HOME

So many cancer treatment expenses are not covered by insurance. This includes the cost of traveling to treatment and temporary housing while in treatment, food, supplies and more. The AYJ Fund was happy to help another Berkshire County young man who was receiving daily radiation treatments for six weeks at Massachusetts General Hospital and needed to stay in the Boston area. We were also able to provide a computer that had been donated to us to keep his CONNECTIONS to family and friends.

"You guys are honestly way too nice <3 I appreciate it times a million <3" And yeah it's been rough from airbnb to airbnb

John

VIRTUAL AYJ SIGHTINGS

We love sharing AYJ Fund sightings from our friends locally or from your travels. Please share your photos!



Family social distancing & sporting their AYJ Fund masks!



Seen in the Jimmy Fund Clinic – our friend Jake – and could that be Bernie in the corner ???

MEMORIAL DONATIONS

We are so blessed to have been the recipient of a memorial donation for the following:



Janice Richards – Janice’s daughter, Rosey Dzierga, is a great friend to the AYJ Fund. Her Mom lived in North Adams and was married 65 years to her husband.



VIRTUAL JIMMY FUND WALK

The Jimmy Fund Walk went virtual this year and Anna’s Angels participated from Priscilla Beach in Plymouth and from North Adams. Thanks to all who supported our team and the Jimmy Fund at Dana-Farber again this year.



COMMUNITY BAG PROGRAM



Thanks, Stop & Shop North Adams and all of you who picked up a “Give Back” Bag as part of their Community Bag Program. AYJ Fund was selected as the benefiting nonprofit for the month of January. Stop & Shop donated \$1 to the AYJ Fund for each bag sold during the month.

AYJ FUND PRINCESSES SPREADING SMILES

Although we were not able to hold our annual Children’s Princess Concert this year due to COVID-19, our princesses still found a way to share smiles and support the AYJ Fund. The princesses were contacted to see if they would stop by at this little girl’s princess-themed birthday party. Elsa and Ana (Brittney Scrivens and Rachel Barrows) made her day extra special, and when they received a donation, they passed it along to the AYJ Fund. Thank you, princesses!



BIRTHDAY DONATIONS

Thank you to Amy Chegas, mom to our beautiful friend and angel Kailyn, and also to Kathy’s cousin Sarah Fox Brock for choosing donations to the AYJ Fund through Facebook in place of birthday gifts. These donations help the AYJ Fund share more smiles with children.

THREE SPECIAL ANGELS

We love to connect with families of children with cancer and we do all we can to help them through their journey. The bonds are strong for these families whose children are diagnosed with gliomatosis cerebri or other incurable cancers. We celebrate every smile, every stable MRI and every success, and our hearts break when the cancer takes over a child. This is the



case for these three beautiful children, who we got to know well, and who all became angels within the last few months from GC. Jackson, Kailyn and Larayna: you will always be remembered and



we commit to continue to fight until effective treatments are found.

PRINCESS CHARLIE



We couldn't stop smiling at Princess Charlie modeling this Elsa wig we sent from the AYJ Fund. Thanks to the Princess Program Foundation and the Magic Yarn Project for this donation. It inspired Kathy to start crocheting and she will be making these wigs to send to other deserving little princesses.

ANNA'S 25th BIRTHDAY CAMPAIGN

On April 9, the AYJ Fund will celebrate Anna's 25th birthday. This will be a different celebration for many reasons. Anna is not here with us to celebrate with us, and we are not able to hold any in-person events. But, there is reason to celebrate and we ask you to join us!



Here are some ideas for ways to celebrate Anna's special day:

- ♥ Make a donation to our Anna's 25th Birthday Campaign
- ♥ Do a random act of kindness, share it on social media and tag AYJ Fund
- ♥ Enjoy a special treat – a birthday cupcake or treat of your choice!
- ♥ Share a post from AYJ Fund's Facebook page, Twitter or Instagram
- ♥ Introduce one friend to the AYJ Fund – share this newsletter and get them involved

We have not been able to hold any of our AYJ Fund in-person fundraising events in over a year, and we expect this to continue until late this summer. This directly impacts our ability to continue to support these kids with cancer who deserve so much. Your donation in any amount will allow us to continue to spread smiles to brighten the day of a child, keep them connected through technology and continue the critically important research that is now being done at the institutions we are connected with.

As you can see from this newsletter, our kids still need us. Please join us! Anna loved a good birthday party!

AYJ FUND

ANNA'S 25th BIRTHDAY CAMPAIGN

Please make Check payable to **AYJ Fund**

Enclosed is my tax-deductible gift of:

\$25 ____ \$50 ____ \$ 100 ____ \$ 200 ____ other \$ ____

Name _____

Address _____

Mail to: AYJ Fund 201 Eagle Street North Adams, MA 01247



You can also donate online at www.AYJfund.org

AYJ FUND CLOTHING LINE

Find our AYJ clothing line at www.AYJfund.org or scan this code below

AYJ FUND CLOTHING LINE

We're launching our AYJ Fund Clothing line available through our AYJ Fund website. We are excited to work with Becks Printing in North Adams to make this possible. Orders can be placed at any time.

All of these items and more are available for purchase



SCAN HERE
or visit ayjfund.itemorder.com/sale



WAYS TO CELEBRATE ANNA'S 25TH BIRTHDAY

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- ♥ Make a donation to our Anna's 25th Birthday Campaign.
- ♥ Do a random act of kindness on April 9, share it on social media and tag AYJ Fund
- ♥ Follow the AYJ Fund on Facebook and Instagram and share posts
- ♥ Share this newsletter
- ♥ Sign up for AYJ Fund on Amazon Smile – AYJ Fund will receive a percentage of all your Amazon purchases all year long

