



The AYJ Fund was created in honor of Anna Yan Ji Arabia, who was diagnosed at age 13 with gliomatosis cerebri (GC), 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.**

**AYJ FUND’S \$1 MILLION GIFT:  
A DREAM COME TRUE**

Our dream for the AYJ Fund has always been to make a positive difference in the lives of children with cancer. Our hearts are happy each time we send a child a SMILE gift pack, knowing how much it can brighten a difficult day. At every International GC Conference, we are inspired by the brilliant physicians and providers who are so dedicated to this work. When we visit labs that we are supporting, we are confident that, in time, with enough research funding, there will be an effective treatment for these children.

Our dream is now becoming a reality. The AYJ Fund began 2023, our tenth year as an organization, by announcing we have received a \$1 million gift. We are forever grateful to this donor, who asked to remain anonymous. In an article on page 6, you will be able to read more about the impact this gift will make.



We have two events coming this spring. Pam the Berkshire Medium will join us in North Adams on Saturday, March 11, and our Wine, Chocolate & Craft Beer Tasting in Brighton, MA will be Saturday, April 29.

*Kathy + Joe*

**AYJ Fund**  
**PAM the BERKSHIRE MEDIUM**  
Saturday March 11th  
2-4pm  
Freight Yard Pub  
North Adams  
**AYJ FUND BENEFIT**  
supporting children with cancer  
TICKETS \$45 at  
AYJfund.org

**AYJ Fund Wine, Chocolate, & Craft Beer Tasting**  
Wine Pull, Silent Auction and more ...  
Sat. April 29th, 2023 7 – 10 pm  
The Presentation School Foundation  
Community Center  
640 Washington St., Oak Square  
Brighton, MA  
Tickets available  
By calling: 413-662-2953  
Or online at: www.AYJfund.org  
\$35.00 donation

**PATRIOTS DIFFERENCE MAKER OF THE YEAR**

Just before the New Year’s Day Patriots game in Foxboro, MA, the Kraft family announced that Kathy and the AYJ Fund are the 2022 Difference Maker of the Year Award recipient, which includes a \$20,000 grant to the AYJ Fund.



Kathy shared, “I am so grateful and honored that our work to support children with cancer through the AYJ Fund is being celebrated by the New England Patriots Foundation. Eleven years ago, three rookie Patriots players visited our daughter Anna at Boston Children’s Hospital and brought joy and smiles to her hospital room. Since she became our angel, we work to spread smiles in this way to more children and to fund critical research to find effective treatments. It feels like a full circle moment.



## JIMMY FUND PRINCESSES

When we sent a box of handmade yarn wigs created by the Magic Yarn Project, we knew that they would create smiles at the Jimmy Fund Clinic. When we received these photos of Cora and Mia we were the ones with the huge smiles!



## AVERY'S BIRTHDAY SMILES

AYJ Fund helped Avery celebrate her 6th birthday. Avery survived her rhabdomyosarcoma cancer three years ago, but has been suffering from many side effects of her treatment, which damaged some of her organs. She is now on a stomach transplant waitlist. We continue to send Avery all the best. It looks like we made her happy: look at that beautiful smile. Her mom shared that Avery now knows how to recognize a package from the AYJ Fund and gets so excited!



"Your gift was her favorite of all, better than Dad and I she says!!! You made her soo happy she wanted that exact American Girl Doll for sooo long, the pillow she hasn't let go of!!!"  
"We really appreciate you thinking of her always!!!"  
*Avery's Mom*

## WALTER THE ENGINEER

"Well it's safe to say... Walter had the BEST day! Thank you AYJ Fund for this day full of wonderful memories. Thank you for making our train loving boys dreams come true!"

*Walter's Mom*

"Walter the Warrior Baby" had a great time on his trip to Edaville Railroad. He loved the train and adventure rides and train models. They found Walter is quite a thrill seeker!



## CARTER'S SLIME FEST

Carter is once again making Children's Hospital Boston home for an extended stay after a relapse of his rare form of leukemia just months after his first transplant. Carter was known for the slime he loved to make during his first eight-month stay in the hospital. AYJ Fund sent him a SMILES pack with "Slime King" and "It's Time for Slime" T-shirts, stickers and more.



## AYJ FUND BACKPACKS ON THE GO



Walter filled the AYJ backpack he received with his holiday SMILE with his favorite cars and went off to his physical and vision therapies. He is keeping the fun in his days, though they are filled with super hard work and therapies he needs to be ready for preschool in the spring.



**HOLIDAY SMILES PROJECT**

We were excited to be able to send AYJ Fund Holiday string backpacks again this holiday season. Our AYJ Fund supporters were so generous with sponsorships and gifts that we were able to send out 100 holiday backpacks to Dana-Farber Cancer Institute’s Jimmy Fund Clinic, 25 to Baystate Medical Center, and 25 to Weill Cornell Medical Center. We also sent 25 gifts to Dartmouth-Hitchcock’s Children’s Hospital and 20 more gifts to children we are connected with. We are grateful to everyone who participated in spreading these smiles this holiday season.



**Dutch**

Dutch had a big beautiful smile when he saw the stuffed reindeer popping out of his AYJ Fund SMILES gift pack before Christmas.



“We just got home from the hospital... That package was just the thing she needed. The look of pure joy on her face while opening those presents was just awesome to see! Thank you so very much ”

*Finley’s Mom*



**Finley**

**Nate**

Nate was back in the hospital this November having further surgery, so we were happy to see such a beautiful smile when he got back home and found his AYJ Fund holiday backpack.



**Luke**

Our friend Luke faces many challenges, along with his diagnosis of gliomatosis cerebri. We were so happy to connect with one of his

“Your thoughtfulness warms our hearts”

*Luke’s Mom*

therapists who was able to provide suggestions for holiday gifts, including a 5-foot sparkling stuffed snake.

**Mikey**

Mikey has also been battling gliomatosis cerebri, and was happy to receive an AYJ Fund Holiday SMILE gift box. You can see his smile as this gift pack brightened his day.



**Maddy**

We are so happy to include Maddy in our AYJ Holiday SMILES program again this year. Maddy was diagnosed with gliomatosis cerebri (GC) eight years ago and has been an inspiration to us all.

**HOSPITAL DONATION QUOTES**

“Hi Kathy and Joe! So wonderful once again to get your holiday package. We (and the kids) so appreciate it.” *Best, Nathan Robison, MD, Children’s Hospital Los Angeles.*

“Thanks for thinking of us and our patients, we always look forward to the AYJ fund holiday program!” *Jon Crowder Child Life Specialist, Baystate Medical Center*





**SANTA'S HELPERS**

Our friend Nick, a cancer survivor himself, is quick to reach out to find a way to help other children with cancer. This year, Nick recruited his co-worker Chris and others to help donate gifts for our Holiday Smiles Project. We were



overwhelmed and grateful to find a car full of gifts and to see Nick in good health.



Another one of our angels this holiday season was Emma Arnold. Emma was one of our AYJ Fund princesses for our "Once Upon a Dream" princess concert, and a local high school student. Emma

wanted to do something special this Christmas for a child we were connected with and brought a wonderful pile of gifts for a local child currently in treatment. Emma continues to show her kindness and generosity all year round.

**LIONS CLUB INVITATION**



Joe and Kathy were invited to speak at the Adams Lions Club meeting in January. We were excited to hear that Lions Club International has expanded its mission beyond vision to add "the

environment, childhood cancer, hunger, diabetes and other pressing humanitarian needs." Lions Club international has awarded four childhood cancer grants totaling \$200,000 over the summer. We enjoyed meeting with this wonderful group of generous people, many of whom have been touched by cancer in their families.

**DOROTHY ANN**

Thank you to Anna's friend Matt Vachereau, and Kyle, Pat, James, Wayne and Dave, all crew of the Dorothy Ann from the Great Lakes. This great crew donated \$350 to the AYJ Fund after Matt shared Anna's story and the work of the AYJ Fund.



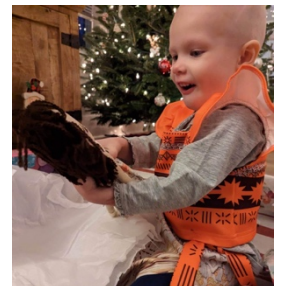
**ELKS DONATION**

We are so grateful to Bev Merrick, Doug Merrick and Matt LaBonte, who not only made a grant from the North Adams Elks Lodge #487, but also reached out to the state and national Elks to increase their donation to the AYJ Fund to a total of \$ 4,555. This wonderful donation will help so many children in our community.



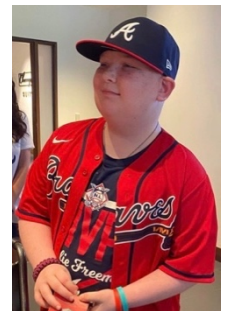
**SWEETEST SMILES**

Thanks to Debbie and Sue for the sweetest handmade dolls and AYJ bears, which are so special. We were so excited to send these out to little ones and to see their reactions.



**ANGEL MAX DODGE**

Our hearts were broken to hear our friend, GC warrior Max became another GC angel just days before Christmas. This photo is from when the AYJ Fund supported Max's family trip to watch the Atlanta Braves. Max was 14 and fought this cancer bravely, and always with a smile. #MaxStrong



**BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION**

Happy Birthday to Hannah Stansfield and Amy Lynn Chegus! Thank you for thinking of Anna and the AYJ Fund by celebrating your birthdays with Facebook fundraisers.



**STOP & SHOP BAGS**

Thanks to Stop & Shop in North Adams for selecting the AYJ Fund as recipient of November's Community Bag Program. We appreciate your support.

**A MESSAGE FROM THE HEART**

We asked Kate Belleau, our friend Jake’s mom, to speak at our AYJ Fund Board celebration to share the impact our board, as well as all of our AYJ supporters, have on the lives of cancer families.



*It’s hard to find adequate words of gratitude while having this opportunity to thank the people who have brought us to where we are. Myself and my family have been so fortunate to forge the relationships we have with Kathy and Joe - but we have always been aware that the AYJ fund is propelled by many people who are filled with the same grace and love that they carry.*

*Our relationship with the AYJ Fund began in 2018 with a smile. The AYJ Fund, YOU, provided my son Jake with an opportunity for fun with his friends before he underwent a major surgery. Soon that smile turned to connections when YOU provided Jake with a tablet to have video calls with his sisters and friends during*



Jake, Kate, Kathy and Mary

*inpatient chemo. For our family - the AYJ connections - YOUR connections didn’t stop there and - they weren’t limited to technology.*

*You connected us to our community, to necessary resources, and to the means for a safe van so my son could keep receiving life-saving treatment in Boston.*

*You provided smile, after smile - not just for Jake - but for his friends in clinic who fought beside him. I truly wish you could all have the opportunity to see the look on each face that is attached those backpacks. The impact of your programs ripples through that clinic. You gave us Mary (an AYJ Board member and Dana-Farber volunteer) - who was on the front lines for our Wednesdays in treatment.*

*We’ve also had the incredible opportunity to see hope in action standing in the labs with the researchers YOU support. YOU have connected us with doctors who*

*have become integral parts of Jake’s care team. Because of YOU.*

*Because of your unwavering love and support. Because YOU said “whatever it takes” and then put those words into action whatever it took. Because of your commitment and dedication to smiles, connections, and cures, my son is here and still receiving the best possible care.*

*Jake is an incredible person with a bright future and your support has helped him to overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Every opportunity to give back through his talents, like 3D printing items for raffles or his dancing livestream to raise money for AYJ research has been a blessing and healing experience for him and our family. Being part of bringing the AYJ gaming carts to clinic means so much to him. I love watching his face when he sees another child light up when they see the carts. He knows the difference it makes to them. Because of you, he’s going on to college next year and is inspired to continue to be a difference maker in the world.*

*Because of grace, because of love, because of Anna, and because of you - I am humbly blessed to be here with my son tonight.*

*We are so thankful for the work you do for all kids. Because of you, there’s hope.*

*Thank you, Kate*



**ADAMS COMMUNITY BANK EVENTS**

We are grateful to once again have been selected, along with our friends at PopCares, as recipients of the fundraising efforts of the Adams Community Bank to support local community cancer support organizations. We were invited to speak with staff on one of their recent weekly calls to share information on our organization and how we support children with cancer in the Berkshires. These employees are full of energy, generosity, creative spirit and fun. We are looking forward to their events.





## \$1 MILLION GIFT TO THE AYJ FUND

On behalf of the hundreds of children the AYJ Fund has helped, and in memory of the angels whose lives have been taken too soon by GC and other cancers, we are beyond grateful to our donor, for this \$1 million gift, which will help us advance this vital research.

“We are inspired by the work of the AYJ Fund to support children with cancer and to drive research forward. We are making this donation to accelerate research for children and their families facing this devastating diagnosis,” the donor said in making the gift.

100% of the \$1 million gift will be donated to Dana-Farber to advance GC research. Three quarters of the gift will be directed to GC research in their own labs and treatment for patients with GC. The remaining quarter of the gift, Joe Arabia said, will support an international collaborative research project, led by Dana-Farber and Boston Children’s Hospital physician Mariella Filbin, MD, PhD, on gliomatosis cerebri.

“Generous gifts like this fund urgent research that can make a difference in treating pediatric brain tumors at Dana-Farber and around the world,” said Filbin, Research Co-Director, Pediatric Neuro-Oncology

Program at Dana-Farber. Tab Cooney, MD, Director, Stop & Shop Family Pediatric Neuro-Oncology Outcomes Clinic, Dana-Farber, went on to say, “We are grateful for this donation to not only accelerate our understanding and treatment of this disease, but to also provide patient support before and after treatment.”



“Without our multitude of supporters and their contributions, of any amount, we would not have been able to do the good work that caught the attention of our donor,” Kathy and Joe said. “This wonderful gift accelerates research to one day change the lives of these children.”

And, with the donor’s big boost to the research program, gifts of current and future donors will be able to magnify the support, through Smiles and Connections, of more children living with cancer.

## IMPACT OF A \$1 MILLION GIFT TO THE AYJ FUND

We held Zoom meetings with Mariella Filbin, MD, PhD, and Tab Cooney, MD, to announce that we had received a \$1 million gift from an anonymous donor, and discussed ideas on the types of research projects that this significant gift could have on advancing research on gliomatosis cerebri (GC). What follows is the Opportunity for Impact section of their research proposal.



Mariella Filbin, MD, PhD

Momentum from a \$1,000,000 gift from the AYJ Fund will see increased patient impact as follows:

- *Utilization of next generation multi-omics techniques on precious patient samples to maximize information for personalized medicine;*
- *Expanded use of multi-omic matching tools to ensure patients enroll to the “right” trial for them, overcoming the limitations of current genetic-centric personalized medicine options;*
- *Utilization of a newly formed molecular tumor board that allows patients most likely to benefit to be able to join a trial of interest without delay;*
- *Expanded use of combination strategies;*
- *Novel biomarkers to teach us why specific new agents are working for some patients and not for other patients; and*
- *Interventions to improve physical, socio-emotional, financial health as well as quality of life for patients and families.*



Tab Cooney, MD

Our goals have current and future patients at their core. The overarching research and clinical goals are to improve the lives of children with GC/HGG effective immediately, with long-term goals to improve survival. A coordinated effort such as the one described among Drs. Filbin, Cooney and their international collaborators will speed our progress and hopefully produce less toxic and more efficacious therapies for children with GC/HGG and ideally serve as a model for other types of pediatric cancer.

**CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF LOVE, HOPE & SMILES THIS VALENTINE’S DAY**

On February 14, 2023, we will celebrate—yes celebrate—ten years since our Anna became an angel. We truly believe that since that day she has been guiding the AYJ Fund to support other children with cancer and connect us with the brilliant and determined physicians and researchers who are moving the understanding of GC and other brain cancers forward. We feel her in our hearts, we continue to be inspired by her, and though we miss her every day, we know she surrounds us.

It is hard for us to believe that it has been ten years of SMILES, CONNECTIONS and CURES programs. We thought we would share some of our initial programs and the history of our AYJ Fund.

Our first event was to hold a balloon launch for Anna’s first anniversary. Friends sponsored balloons and attached notes. From there we held our first Wine and Chocolate event in 2014 and, that year, sent our first holiday backpacks. Since that time, we have supported thousands of SMILES, CONNECTIONS and CURES.

**AYJ FUND 10 years ... BY THE NUMBERS:**

**4,000**

**SMILES** sent to children and cancer centers to brighten their day

**3**

**International Research Conferences** and our next in NYC September 2023

**4**

**Gaming GO Karts** sent to pediatric cancer clinics for children to enjoy while in treatment

**\$300,000**

**Dollars funding current research projects** with \$55,000 committed over the next two years

**\$1**

**MILLION** donation being directed to fund research at Dana-Farber



**CELEBRATE FEBRUARY WITH SMILES**

Our wish this February is that you share Anna’s smiles and spirit throughout the month with those in your lives and with those who may need it most. Anna loved to welcome new families to our neighborhood, reach

out to new kids in school to welcome them, and to make others smile, especially through her most difficult days. Instead of receiving gifts and proceeds from benefits, she directed donations to purchase bald Bratz dolls (trendy Barbie-like dolls) to give to other children who had lost their hair to cancer treatment.

Like Anna, you can spread smiles to honor Anna’s “Angelversonary” in

many different ways this month, here are just a few:

- ♥ Share 10 AYJ Fund Facebook or other social media posts
- ♥ Tell 10 people about the AYJ Fund this month
- ♥ Spend 10 minutes reaching out to someone you have not connected with in a while.
- ♥ Donate an item for one of our Chinese Auctions
- ♥ Support the AYJ Fund with a \$10 donation
- ♥ Make 10 people smile in your own special way
- ♥ Check out the AYJ Fund Charity List on Amazon and select an item for a child with cancer while you are shopping – or use your Amazon points!
- ♥ Find your own creative way to spread AYJ SMILES.



### SHOP AMAZON SMILE BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!

Amazon is discontinuing their Amazon Smiles program on February 20, 2023. This is so disappointing, as so many of you supported the AYJ Fund through this program. Through the years, we have generated over \$2,000 in donations from Amazon Smiles. Any purchases before February 20th will still provide a donation to the AYJ Fund, so shop early!



**Support AYJ Fund.**

When you shop at [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com), Amazon donates.

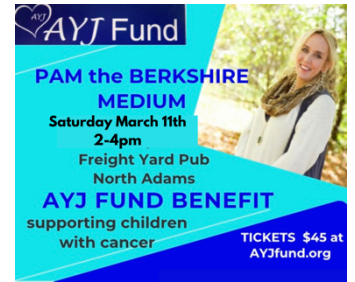
[Go to smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com)

**amazon smile**

### SPRING AYJ FUND EVENTS:

#### Pam the Medium March 11

Don't miss this exciting opportunity to see Pam share her gifts as she connects to our loved ones who have passed.



**AYJ Fund**

**PAM the BERKSHIRE MEDIUM**

**Saturday March 11th 2-4pm**

Freight Yard Pub  
North Adams

**AYJ FUND BENEFIT**  
supporting children with cancer

TICKETS \$45 at [AYJfund.org](https://www.ayjfund.org)

#### Wine, Chocolate & Craft Beer Tasting in BRIGHTON April 29

We are excited to be holding our first Wine, Chocolate and Craft Beer Tasting in Brighton, MA, since the pandemic. Looking forward to a great evening with great friends and AYJ Fund supporters.



**AYJ Fund Wine, Chocolate, & Craft Beer Tasting**

*Wine, Pull, Silent Auction and more ...*

Sat. April 29th, 2023 7 – 10 pm

The Presentation School Foundation  
Community Center  
640 Washington St., Oak Square  
Brighton, MA

Tickets available  
By calling: 413-862-2903  
Or online at: [www.ayjfund.org](https://www.ayjfund.org)  
\$35.00 donation