



2026 Courage & Cancer: An Evening of Stories Call for Stories | CELEBRATION

*"The transformation of silence into language and action is an act of self-revelation."
-Audre Lorde, *The Cancer Journals**

The 4th annual *Courage & Cancer: An Evening of Stories | Celebration* will be held on Wednesday, May 6, 2026, at the Troy Hilton Garden in Troy, NY.

We are seeking individuals who are willing to tell their own, true story as part of our upcoming spring fundraiser. You could be one of a handful of storytellers selected to share your first-person experience with cancer, live and on-stage in front of an audience or published for those to read, all for a good cause. We are seeking submissions for both the stage and in print, to be published in our event program. The theme of the evening is: Celebration.

Courage & Cancer: An Evening of Stories is an opportunity to tell your story of challenges and triumphs while going through cancer. The evening will be a feast of good will and support, and a chance for our community to connect in-person away from the waiting room, exam rooms, and treatment.

Why would you want to do this? For fun or as a personal challenge. To write and tell a great story. To share truths only you know with our community listening and applauding. To help the NYOH Community Cancer Foundation further its mission to support local cancer patients with financial assistance and other resources.

No professional public speaking, theater, or professional writing experience required! For those on stage, Emily Rubin, published author and cancer survivor will be your storytelling coach and cheerleader. All stories accepted for publication may be edited for clarity and length.

About Courage & Cancer: An Evening of Stories:

- This magical fundraising event benefits the NYOH Community Cancer Foundation. All proceeds will support the foundation's work. [Learn more here.](#)
- Date is Wednesday, May 6, 2026.
- Time is 5:30-8:00 PM.
- Location is Hilton Garden Inn, 235 Hoosick St., Troy, NY.
- This event is open to the public. Due to the content of the program, ages 18+ is recommended to attend. Tickets and sponsorship opportunities coming soon.

- The evening will be video recorded. Live streaming will not be available. ASL access will be available.
- View the [event webpage](#).

Your Story

Story submissions must:

- Be true from your own experience(s).
- Incorporate the theme of “celebration”:
 - Think of a time when you celebrated a milestone at any time during your cancer treatment—a fist bump moment, and not necessarily, when you completed treatment, and perhaps it is something not related to cancer—you ran that 5K, you finished a knitting project, you celebrated a wedding, or birthday—cancer can be in the foreground or background.
 - Share an example of when you bounced back from a difficult time during treatment.
 - Reflect on a moment that caused you to adapt; or
 - Describe an experience from or activity with a supportive relationship or loved one.
- Be 1,000 words or less. Up to 4 pages, typed, double-spaced.
- The deadline to submit is Wednesday, February 18, 2026.

Expectations and Commitment

If selected to be on-stage:

1. You MUST be available for the following. Exact dates and times TBD:
 - Group kick-off (Zoom, March)
 - Tour of the venue (In-person, first week April)
 - 1:1 time with our storytelling coach (two 1-hour sessions on Zoom, April-May)
 - Group prep call (Zoom, one-week prior to event)
 - Dress rehearsal (In-person, week of the event | May 4 or 5)
 - Day of the event (May 6, 2026)
2. Agree to accept feedback, adjust your accepted submission, and receive coaching in your delivery. You may be asked to edit or fine-tune your story, based on the recommendations of our storytelling coach. This is done to curate a cohesive and polished program for the audience.

If selected for publication in our event program:

- Review and accept any final edits by event committee members
- Give final permission to publish your story

All selected storytellers will be asked to assist with promoting the event and invite friends and family to attend. This is a fundraiser for the NYOH Community Cancer

Foundation. All event proceeds will support financial assistance and patient education for individuals in our community.

Informational Sessions:

Info sessions are optional opportunities to learn more about the NYOH Community Cancer Foundation and Courage & Cancer: Evening of Stories event; as well as ask questions about how to submit your story and anything else that's on your mind about the process. Attending an info session is not required to submit a story. Two different info sessions are available. You do NOT need to attend both sessions. They are via Zoom and will NOT be recorded. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing a link to join the session.

- Tuesday, Feb. 3 @ 10 AM: [Register in advance.](#)
- Wednesday, Feb. 4 @ 6 PM: [Register in advance.](#)

Key Dates and Deadlines

- Info session #1: Tuesday, Feb. 3
- Info session #2: Wednesday, Feb. 4
- Deadline to submit: Wednesday, Feb. 18
- Notifications: Wednesday, March 11
- Event: Wednesday, May 6

Tips for Submitting

- Stick to the theme of Celebration. Give us a specific example or time when you had reason to celebrate—were you still going through chemo at a family members wedding or significant birthday?
- Start by describing a small gesture: something you might not even have thought was important. It can be something you did for someone, or someone did for you, or a passing encounter, but afterward, it changed everything, or at the least made you feel like you could face the next challenge with a new energy and clarity.
- Try to “set-up” your story: Who are the characters in your story? What is the setting and location? Tell us the situation and even backstory.
- Be descriptive! Invite the audience and readers into your world with details such as where you were, the clothes you were wearing, tastes, smells, what objects did you see, what noises did you hear, or who was in the room? Be as imaginative and poetic as you like. Think of the experience as a celebration or rebooting of your life, or an acknowledgement of a step taken that was significant and energized you to keep going. Describe the tsunami wave you rode in on and came to a safe and or exciting landing.
- You can also celebrate someone else in your family, colleague, and friend circle that included you in their celebration or accomplishment.
- Tell us how cancer has changed you. Instead of giving us a list of your treatment timeline or procedures we want to know how treatment changed you and empowered you -- as described through a pivotal moment or reflection on a particular experience.

How to Submit Your Story:

- [Complete our online application](#). Submissions will only be accepted online.
- Send us a copy of your story in Word or PDF as part of the application. Be prepared to upload your story when you submit.

2026 Courage & Cancer: An Evening of Stories Call for Storytellers Q&A

Do I need to be a cancer survivor to submit a story?

- No. While submission from survivors will be prioritized, we are accepting storytellers who are caregivers, healthcare professionals, and loved ones of someone who has/had cancer to represent multiple perspectives of the experience.

Do I need to be a patient or former patient of NYOH?

- No.

I have an idea for a story, but not sure if it fits the theme or it's not really finished.

- Your submission should have some sort of message you'd like to convey AND should address the theme of resilience. Our storytelling coach can work with you to make suggested edits and polish your story.

How are storytellers selected?

- A small volunteer committee will read all submissions and make selections based on criteria such as the individual's connection to cancer, ability to address the theme, and story content. All stories will be considered for the stage and for print. However, it is anticipated that there will be more submissions that we can accept on stage. Selected storytellers will be notified on Monday, March 3.

I have a fear of public speaking, but I love to write. Is this for me?

- Yes! No professional writing, theater, or performance experience necessary. If selected for the stage, our storytelling coach will help you polish your story and work on delivery. You'll have multiple opportunities to practice and participate at a dress rehearsal, too.

If selected, am I allowed to make any changes to my story from my original submission?

- If selected for on-stage, our storytelling coach will work with you to edit and shape your story for performance.
- Stories published for print may be edited for length and clarity.

Are storytellers compensated for participating in this event?

- No. This is a fundraising event to support the NYOH Community Cancer Foundation. All storyteller participation is voluntary with no monetary compensation.

Can I jointly submit a story with my spouse/partner/parent/sibling to share our collective experience together?

- The format of the evening is one storyteller telling their story on stage, one at a time. If you have a joint story, run it by us: and we may consider it. Ideally, we want to see you on stage solo, telling your own story to a very understanding, earnest, and supportive audience. This is your moment to shine and share an experience that will inspire our supporters.

Can someone else be on stage to read my story for me?

- No. This is YOUR story, and YOU are the best who can tell it. Also, please do not submit a story if you are not available the date of the event and/or cannot fulfill the small list of expectations and commitments included above.

Do you have any tips for getting started?

- Read through our suggested prompts.
- Take 10 minutes to write a few sentences about a story during your cancer journey that you have always wanted to tell.
- Expand the story by including as many specific details as you can remember: How did you feel? Who was with you? What did the space you were in look or smell like? was it a special occasion? Did something unexpected happen?
- Write two or three pages: it's okay if it's more or less! Just get it all on paper.
- Talk about your ideas! Ask a friend or loved one to bounce around ideas with.

Who do I contact if I have questions about my submission?

- Please contact Rachel Hye Youn Rupright, Foundation Administrator for any questions: rachel.rupright@nyoh.com or (518) 373-3950.