

Crossroads4Hope Hosts 10th Annual Conference on Cancer in New Brunswick

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[Crossroads4Hope](#) hosted its 10th Annual Conference on Cancer on Friday, March 21, at the Hyatt Regency in New Brunswick. This year's theme, Empowering Adolescent and Young Adult (AYA) Advocates, attracted over 100 attendees from five states: Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, and Washington, D.C. The conference brought together healthcare professionals, advocates, and experts to discuss crucial issues in cancer support for AYA patients.

Rachel Werner, Manager of Program Development and Delivery at Crossroads4Hope, said, "We are thrilled to have brought together such

a dynamic group to explore how we can better support AYA advocates and patients. This conference provided vital opportunities for networking, learning, and sharing resources." The conference agenda featured a keynote speaker, plenary presentation, and two breakout

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ACOC Attendee



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session options, all designed to address the unique challenges AYA cancer patients face. The event was sponsored by Bayer Fund and RWJ Barnabas Health.

Keynote Speaker: Matthew Zachary

Matthew Zachary, founder of Stupid Cancer, host of the Out of Patients podcast, and former Crossroads4Hope member, delivered the keynote address. A brain cancer survivor diagnosed at 21, Zachary shared his personal story and journey, offering invaluable insights into the AYA

cancer experience.

"I'm honored to return to Crossroads4Hope and contribute to this incredible conversation. The resilience and advocacy of the AYA community are truly inspiring," said Zachary.

Plenary Session: AYA Identity Development and Life Milestones

The plenary session, *From Patient to Person: Identity Development and Life Milestones for AYA's with Cancer*, was presented by Crossroads4Hope's very own Kyle Jachim, MSW, LSW, OSW-C, and Austin Morreale. They explored the intersection of cancer care and the broader life challenges AYA patients face, particularly focusing on LGBTQ+ issues.

Breakout Sessions Focus on AYA Needs

The conference featured two breakout session tracks, each offering three different presentations:

Breakout Session 1:

- o Navigating Transitions in Care for AYA Patients (presented by Alexandra Russo, LCSW, and Rachel Henesy, LMSW)
- o HPV Vaccine is Cancer Prevention: A Healthcare Professional's Guide (presented by Yareni Sime, MPH)
- o The Disclosure Dilemma: Sharing a Cancer Diagnosis with Youth (presented by Rachel Werner, MS, CCLS, GC-C)

Breakout Session 2:

- o From Googling to Healing: Technology's Role in Cancer Care for the Digital Generation (presented by Katie Devine, PhD, MPH)
- o Supporting Siblings and Peers Through a Cancer Diagnosis (presented by Jennifer Costa, MSW, CCLS)
- o Empowering Young Caregivers: Balancing Challenges While Embracing Resilience (presented by Hayley Feuchs, LMSW)

Each session aimed to support AYA patients, their families, and caregivers, focusing on communication, resilience, and effective transitions in care.

Attendees Reflect on Valuable Learning Experience

"The conference significantly expanded my knowledge and appreciation for the vital work of Crossroads4Hope," said one attendee. Another commented, "Great conference! The information was invaluable."

Katherine Schaible, Senior Director of Program and Impact at Crossroads4Hope, expressed her



enthusiasm: "I was inspired by the collaborative spirit and innovative ideas shared at this year's conference. These discussions will undoubtedly drive meaningful change in cancer care for AYA patients."

Looking Ahead: 2026 Annual Conference on Cancer

The 2026 Annual Conference on Cancer will again be held in New Brunswick, focusing on psychosocial support for advanced cancer, end-of-life care, and palliative care. Crossroads4Hope is currently seeking presenters for next year's event. Interested individuals can contact Rachel Werner at rwerner@crossroads4hope.org.

For more information about Crossroads4Hope and their mission, please visit www.crossroads4hope.org.

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