

# 2024 Annual Report

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# From the Executive Director

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As I look back on 2024, I am struck by what a year of growth it has been. In late 2023, I was invited to be a part of the NJ State Cancer Coalition's Survivorship workgroup. The Survivorship workgroup is tasked with finding ways to meet the objectives set forth in the current plan (2021-2025), and to start gathering data that will be used to help craft the next plan. In early 2024, I was asked to chair that workgroup. This allowed for me, and the Elixir Fund, to connect with more organizations throughout the state of NJ and expand our reach even further. Being a part of the discussion at a broader, state level has allowed us to better see what the needs of cancer survivors and caregivers are. Since we are an independent nonprofit, we can react and act more quickly to help meet those needs than some of our workgroup partners.

Our continued participation in Rutgers Community Scientist program not only allows us to keep up to date on current research but also provides an opportunity to make sure that the research and studies represent a broader patient and caregiver experience. We are able to stay current on cancer research, which puts us in a better position to help reduce some of the barriers to treatment.

Being a part of these larger groups has led to great discussions, which have led to the creation of new programs with more planned for the future. We planted those seeds in 2024 and are looking forward to continuing that work in 2025 and beyond.

Meg McQuarrie  
Executive Director





# Our Team

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**Secretary Kevin Manna**



**CFO- Nancy Murphy (r)**



**Jenny Godnick -  
Board Member (l)**



**Left to right  
Elizabeth Miller- Board Member  
Meg McQuarrie - Director  
Brian Ciuffreda - Board Member  
Tom Mazanec - Board Chair**



# Vision, Mission & Value Statements

## Vision

We aim to be a national resource for patients and caregivers to access support through referrals and program development.

## Mission

The Elixir Fund is dedicated to improving the comfort and care of cancer survivors (from the time of diagnosis on) and their caregivers.

## Value

We recognize that the diagnosis of a serious illness can overwhelm and exhaust both cancer patients and their caregivers. We believe that people deserve to take a break from the cancer journey by shifting the focus from treatment to living.



# Programs

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## PATIENT & CAREGIVER NAVIGATION



The Elixir Fund has always served as a resource for cancer survivors (defined as from the time of diagnosis on) and caregivers. Our director, Meg McQuarrie is a certified lay navigator and is available to help survivors and caregivers find resources - financial, emotional and physical. People tend to discover the Elixir Fund when they are searching for support services online, are referred to us by friends and family, or reach out for additional help after participating in one of the Elixir Fund's programs. Regardless, Meg does her best to find resources, answer questions, or just listen.

A few examples of those who reached out to us for help in 2024:

- A man from NJ who was referred to the Elixir Fund by a friend. He was looking for resources for his brother who had been diagnosed with glioblastoma.
- A woman from NJ who attended a program co-sponsored by the Elixir Fund. This woman must travel within NJ and to New York for treatment and she cannot drive herself. She was looking for help with transportation costs.
- A woman in MA undergoing treatment for a second breast cancer diagnosis. She continues to reach out for help managing the physical and emotional side effects.
- A woman from NJ who attended an Elixir Fund program and has reached out for additional suggestions on how to manage the side effects of treatment and has participated in additional support programs such as Jin Shin Jyutsu Self-Help and Meditation.
- Visiting Nurses Association in Ocean and Monmouth County reached out for help in finding resources for a woman who was newly diagnosed.



# Programs

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## ELIXIR FUND REGISTRY



The Elixir Fund Registry provides an opportunity for anyone who may have a care need- whether it be cancer or other chronic illness, or something more short-term such as help before and after surgery or rehab- to create an easy-to-share list of their needs. In late 2024, a supporter of the Elixir Fund offered to apply for a grant from their company that we could dedicate to updating and improving the registry. In early 2025, we were awarded that grant and have begun work updating the registry so that it is more user friendly. We look forward to sharing the new and improved Elixir Fund Registry with you in 2025.

## CANCER THRIVING & SURVIVING



In 2024 we were able to offer three different sessions of Cancer Thriving & Surviving. This program is supported by the state of NJ. The Elixir Fund and the Hunterdon Mercer Regional Chronic Disease Coalition have been working together to offer this program since 2017. While it can be difficult to recruit and retain participants, those that complete the program find it extremely helpful.

From one of our Cancer Thriving & Surviving Participants:

*Came away from the program with a slightly changed perspective on life in general. From here on, I think I will be a little more tolerant of my own imperfections and a little bit slower to criticize others (cause you can't always know what life has dealt them).*

# Programs

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## Guided Meditation

Our weekly guided meditation has a small, dedicated group of regular attendees; about 7-9. We also have people that drop in every few months or so. Our regular attendees are very appreciative of the program. Some of their comments:

- “Thank you for your service. Your classes are therapeutic. Thank you so much. Please know you are appreciated. I am a cancer survivor.”
- “Thanks for leading these meditation sessions as they have been a comforting ‘habit’ that gives me so much value. I find myself doing short little meditations whenever I have a quiet moment.”
- Meg McQuarrie was also invited to host an introduction to meditation at Hunterdon Medical Center in April 2024. There were 40 attendees, and the organizers said it was the most well attended session of their series. Meg was invited back to be a part of Hunterdon’s Survivorship event in June where she also offered a small, meditation session.

## Jin Shin Jyutsu

We began this program with Terri Land, RN and Certified Jin Shin Jyutsu Practitioner, in 2023. We meet twice a month to share easy handholds and flows that help alleviate the side effects of treatment. The topics we discuss are brought to us by our participants and the response has been wonderful. Those that attend regularly are eager to share how they have incorporated Jin Shin Jyutsu into their daily lives and how it has helped them to lower blood pressure, reduce anxiety and help with their pain. Our attendees also reach out before major events such as surgery for tips on how they can better prepare or recover.

This program is geared towards those who have been directly impacted by cancer, so they have also become an ad hoc support network for each other. Often, they will share ideas and tips or offer support to those who are newly diagnosed. Our participants regularly comment on how grateful they are for the program.

- “Thank you for the holds that you shared with me... I was able to get to sleep last night without the sharp pain. I added some stretching exercises. I did them all this morning again and the combination worked. I am able to walk and stand without the pain.”

## Port Pillows

We donated 25 port pillows directly from the Elixir Fund to Hunterdon Mercer Hematology Oncology. In the fall we were able to facilitate a donation of port pillows and scarves from volunteers at the Jefferson Township Library in NJ to the HHO.

In addition, we found a home for children’s hats and scarves the library was hoping to donate. We contacted the Emmanuel Cancer Foundation which is a pediatric cancer foundation that we have partnered with through our work on the Survivorship work group. They were extremely grateful for the donation.





# Presentations

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## Having your Say

In June, we were invited by the Ocean Monmouth Health Alliance to host an online discussion about the importance of having a Healthcare proxy and a living will. We also shared on ideas on how to have the conversation about these documents with friends and family. Our focus was that setting up a living will is really a gift for family and friends and allows them to fulfill wishes rather than make decisions. It also helps to ensure that you get to control your healthcare decisions.

The discussion was very well received and was also recorded, so is available online.

## I Finished Treatment, Now What?

Over the years we have surveyed some of our Cancer Thriving and Surviving “graduates” to ask about what additional programming they would be interested in. From that discussion, they said they would like programming that addressed life after treatment. Topics such as long-term side effects and who to call when you experience symptoms. Many said that they feel anxious when new symptoms arise, and they are often confused as to whether to call their primary care physician (if they even have one) or their oncologist.

We have also participated in seminars that focus on educating primary care physicians on how to talk to oncology survivors whether they are in active treatment or are post treatment. In addition, there are state and national initiatives to provide survivorship care plans to patients once they have finished treatment. However, after talking with many survivors few have received such a plan. Others commented that even if they did receive a plan, they had no idea where it was and hardly ever refer to it.

All that led to the idea of hosting a roundtable discussion between survivors, an oncologist and a primary care physician. The Elixir Fund partnered with the Ocean Monmouth Health Alliance and CentraState to facilitate this discussion. In August 2024 we brought together a small group of nine survivors, an oncologist and a primary physician for what turned out to be a very productive and engaging conversation.

The results of that discussion have been shared with the NJ State Cancer Coalition’s Survivorship workgroup in the hope that they may become initiatives in the future NJ State Cancer Control plan. We have also been incorporating this information into our current programming. We are looking for additional opportunities to host further conversations between survivors and medical professionals.

# Memberships

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## **NJ State Cancer Coalition's Survivorship Workgroup**

Our director Meg McQuarrie continued her tenure as the chair of the Survivorship Workgroup for the NJ State Cancer Coalition. The group is charged with highlighting the initiatives outlined in the current plan and proposing new initiatives for the next plan which will be drafted in 2025.

The workgroup is currently focused on surveying survivors in the state to identify what issues are of utmost importance to them. Results of this survey will be used to update current state programming and design new programs.

## **Rutgers Cancer Institute**

Meg McQuarrie has been involved in a few initiatives from Rutgers Cancer Institute. She has been a member of the Rutgers Community Scientist program since 2021. Community Scientists are available to provide comments on study design and current research projects at Rutgers Cancer Institute. In addition, clinicians and researchers often present their research or recruitment material to the community scientists for feedback. Participation in the program allows the Elixir Fund to keep up to date on the current research in cancer treatment as well as survivorship.

In 2024 Meg was invited to provide suggestions for an upcoming Survivorship ECHO (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes) series that was to be launched in 2025. ECHO is an online program that offers presentations to train and support medical providers.

As an extension of her involvement in the development of the Project ECHO series, Meg was invited to join the Rutgers Cancer Institute's Cancer Survivorship and Outcomes Center Leadership meetings. The CSOC meets quarterly to discuss current topics in survivorship.





# Fundraisers

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## COCKTAIL PARTY & AUCTION



We hosted our annual Cocktail Party & Auction on October 6, 2024. This is a casual afternoon event that our guests seem to really enjoy. Each year we have a few guests that leave telling us they are looking forward to next year. Our 2024 event was no different. We had an exciting auction, a drone golf ball drop and a fantastic wine auction. We are already planning our 2025 event. The event raised over \$11,500.

## STOMP OUT CANCER



Thanks to our newest board member Brian Ciuffreda and Princeton Charter School, the Elixir Fund was chosen as a beneficiary for their 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual STOMP OUT CANCER event. This is a multifaceted fundraiser based at Princeton Charter School. It is a family-oriented day filled with a variety of activities. There is a walk-a-thon around the school, friendship bracelet making with the bracelets being donated to Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, a raffle with gift baskets and experiences, as well as a day full of music with a variety of bands.

As a result of Brian's, and co-chairs Alicia Testa and Tori Clemens, hard work, STOMP OUT CANCER raised over \$9,000 for the Elixir Fund.

## TCS NEW YORK CITY MARATHON



This was our ninth year as a Charity Partner for the TCS New York City Marathon. Our team consisted of brother and sister duo Aramis and Beatrice Fakahany, Gene Szatkowski, Joshua France, and Xochitl Lopez. Our runners were from all ages and living across the United States. We are extremely grateful for all their dedication and the many hours they spent training and fundraising. Thanks to their efforts, we raised almost \$18,000.



# Financial Statements

Income	\$105,800
Event Donations	\$21,647
Foundations	\$51,100
Individual & Business Donations	\$23,344
Events	7,888
Programs	\$1,200
Misc	\$516
Interest	\$105





# Financial Statements

Expense	\$74,606
Programs	\$40,440
Operating	\$17,273
Fundraising	\$9,132
Events	\$7,761

# Looking Ahead

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## Elixir Fund 2025

In 2025 we will be expanding our programs that we began in 2024. We are looking for additional opportunities to host survivor and practitioner discussions with Ocean Monmouth Health Alliance. Together, we have also begun a project to put together a directory of Primary Care Physicians that are open to working with oncologists and continuing their own education so that they can better serve the needs of their patients who are cancer survivors.

We are also looking forward to launching a new and improved Elixir Fund Registry. Our goal is to make it more accessible and more user friendly. It is our goal to offer an option for survivors and caregivers to get the help that they actually need.

As always, we are grateful for the support of our donors as well as those that participate in our programs. Together, you make all this possible.





# Contact Us



800-494-9228



[contact@elixirfund.org](mailto:contact@elixirfund.org)



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