

Twist Out Cancer  
Annual Report  
2020



WE  
GOT  
THIS.

## What we do:

Twist Out Cancer provides psychosocial support to individuals touched by cancer through creative arts programming.

## How we do it:

Our core program, Brushes with Cancer, improves the quality of life for survivors, previvors, caregivers and loved ones through a unique art experience.

## Our impact:

To date, we have impacted over **40,000 people** through Twist Out Cancer. In 2020, we impacted over **10,000 people** through our virtual programming.

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## A Year of Resilience

As a result of Covid-19, in March 2020, Twist Out Cancer made the proactive decision to pivot from community-wide, in-person programming to the virtual space. In April, we launched a **Resilience Campaign**, which provided the public with doses of hope from community members who have experienced isolation and loneliness from their experiences with cancer. The Resilience Campaign featured short videos and photos from those touched by cancer who shared how their own diagnosis and recovery from cancer affected how they were getting through the COVID-19 pandemic. The videos offered various tips about how others can survive and get through long periods of isolation and quarantine. The Resilience Campaign was featured on the front page of the **Chicago Daily Herald**, on **CBS in Philadelphia**, and **FOX in Austin, Texas**.

Anyone who has been touched by cancer was able to submit their own personal videos or photos, which showcased their journeys and what resilience meant to them. The submissions included a personal statement, reflection, and feelings about how they overcame their own personal crises, while offering messages of resilience, strength, and hope to others in similar situations. Select videos were produced and scored by Kobi Swissa of **Swissa Creative**.

Ethan Zohn, who survived cancer twice, won “Survivor: Africa,” and is a contestant on the current season of “Survivor: Winners at War,” posted a video on the Twist Out Cancer website. In his video, Ethan said he “is feeling anxious, confused, scared, and uncertain about this time and what the future holds. It feels really similar to when I was diagnosed with a rare form of blood cancer. The one thing that gives me hope is that in the middle of this crisis, we can all help other people out there.”

To help cope with increased isolation and quarantine, and to prevent exposure from the COVID-19, Twist Out Cancer hosted weekly **virtual Twistshops**, which are art-therapy sessions everyone could participate in from their homes. For six months, Twist Out Cancer offered free Twistshops led by Jacqueline Carmody, a registered art therapist and a Twist Out Cancer Board Member.



To understand Fayruz Benyousef's cancer journey, you have to go back to 1980. Benyousef was living with her family in Pennsylvania when her dad was diagnosed with acute leukemia. Both parents had no history of cancer.

After extreme challenges with his chemo treatment, her father went into remission and began a job as a civil engineer. But eight years later, the family was devastated once more.

"I went to take a shower and saw swelling on my collar bone," Benyousef said. "It didn't hurt and I didn't feel bad, but I showed it to my mom and she went white."

After going through a painful cycle with cancer, the family was hit again. Benyousef had stage 2B Hodgkin's Lymphoma. While Benyousef worked to pick up the pieces after exhausting treatment during the summer before her junior year of high school, Sharif relapsed. The

Leukemia came back and it was much more aggressive. Six weeks into Benyousef's senior year, her father passed.

Twenty years later, Benyousef and her mother were thrust back into the unthinkable. Her mother had stage 4 metastatic breast cancer and six months later, Benyousef's cancer came back.

Now mother and daughter are on the road to healing through their individual Brushes with Cancer experiences. An accomplished singer, Benyousef's mother was paired with a flutist and sings in the final piece.

"This experience is reigniting those passions and bringing a joy we'd never have without Twist Out Cancer," Benyousef said. "It's so heartwarming and a way to help heal by bringing back things that are happy memories, like being with dad."

**—Tony Nguyen and Fayruz Benyousef**

## Brushes with Cancer- Creating Unexpected Intersections:

Brushes with Cancer strategically matches artists with those touched by cancer to create unique pieces of artwork reflective of their personal journeys with cancer. Over a period of four to six months, selected pairs connect virtually or in person. Their relationships are guided and supported by Twist Out Cancer mentors, who often are clinical social workers and psychologists that serve as an additional support system for both the Artist and Inspiration. Participants have multiple opportunities to engage in Twistshops (art therapy programming) and connect with the larger Twist Out Cancer community. The program finishes on a high note with a celebratory art exhibition, gala and auction that all is accessible online. In certain cities, the artwork travels to hospitals, art galleries or public spaces where the exhibition can be viewed by the community.

What started in 2012 as a small art exhibition in Chicago for 20 Inspirations and Artists has now become an international program that has touched over 40,000 people around the world. Programs have been held in Chicago, Detroit, Austin, Ann Arbor, Tel Aviv, Montreal, Toronto, and Philadelphia.

## Brushes with Cancer events:

### 2020

#### General Motors, Warren, Michigan (September 25, 2020)

260 Attendees

625 Views

47 Program Participants

3 Host Committee Members

5 Mentors

#### Austin, Texas (October 25, 2020)

556 Attendees

64 Program Participants

6 Host Committee Members

9 Mentors

Honorary Chair, Valerie Newberg

Exhibition at Fairmont Austin

#### Chicago, Illinois (November 14, 2020)

620 Attendees

58 Program Participants

9 Host Committee Members

13 Mentors

Honorary Chair, Danny Glick, @Properties

## Spotlight- Brushes with Cancer at General Motors Design Center

**Twist Out Cancer** hosted our first 2020 Brushes with Cancer program at GM's Design Center in Warren, Michigan on Friday, September 25. This was the first time a Brushes with Cancer program was run exclusively for employees at one company. Twenty-five inspirations and 23 artists were selected to participate in the inaugural program.

Jeffrey Froggett, a Senior Graphic Designer and Gallery Curator at the GM Design Center, attended last year's Brushes with Cancer program in Detroit shortly after his wife passed away due to cancer. He was determined to bring the program to the GM Design Center and contacted Benn Shersher to do so.

***"Working with Twist Out Cancer is just another example of the work GM Design does to support our employees and our communities," Froggett said. "The Brushes with Cancer program has helped me honor my late wife, Julie, and I am confident that the 25 pieces (are) some of the finest art that the GM Design Center Gallery has ever seen."***

**View the Brushes with Cancer program at General Motors Design Center.**



***"Pain comes from suppression of emotions and I think to be able to talk about things that aren't always easy to talk about...I just think this program can be incredibly healing. Brushes with Cancer whether you are participating in the program, you are coming to the event, your heart will be moved. And that will be a full day. Feel the power of art, to see how a bond has been formed over a short period of time, while virtually. That is powerful stuff."***

**—Kathleen Brown, Brushes with Cancer Chicago Inspiration and Founder of buddhi.**



Total opposites often make for the best pairings, and that's what happened when Twist Out Cancer matched Inspiration Joni Goldstein and Artist Nancy Rosen.

"Joni is very bedazzled. I am not bedazzled, I am the opposite," Rosen said.

The two connected instantly and found out they have more in common than they thought. A dancer, Goldstein's happy place is the dance studio, which isn't much different from Rosen's happy place: her art studio. The two also bonded over having sons in wrestling.

"Not often are there Jewish wrestlers," Rosen said. "Joni and I have been immersed in wrestling culture for years."

But it was Goldstein's attitude by teaching dance with colorful wigs, and the support of her friends and family.

"Her attitude is just Joni, that's part of her story," Rosen said. "Such a great attitude and such a lovely family. It is a lot to take in but she handled it with such grace and dignity. There was never anything negative, never 'woe is me.'"

Through her treatments, Goldstein turned to dance to keep her spirits up.

"After I got the call, I had a 4 class and didn't have anyone to teach the class," she said. "So I went there and taught ballet for a couple hours and for two hours I forgot about my diagnosis. When I got out of class I said 'This is how I'm going to live my life.'"

So it was only appropriate for Rosen to paint a portrait of Goldstein in her natural element. For the portrait, Rosen asked Goldstein to bring in some props. Of course, her props were bedazzled: boots, stilettos and candles. Her pointe shoes were one of the few items not bedazzled.

The result is a bright, breathtaking portrait of Goldstein in her happy place.

"Our connection was brought out in her drawing," Goldstein said. "Nancy is artistic in her own way and I'm part of that signature now."

—Nancy Rosen and Joni Goldstein

## Twistshops

“Twistshops” are art therapy-focused workshops that promote healing, relaxation and emotional recovery through art therapy-based interventions that are designed to reduce symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress related to cancer.

Twistshops welcome individuals who have been touched by cancer to engage in art therapy-based workshops that focus on utilizing the arts as a mechanism for healing. Survivors, caregivers, previvors, and their loved ones are invited to participate. Participants are guided by a licensed art therapist through a variety of art-making activities that allow participants to process their past and current experiences as a patient, caregiver or supporter of someone with cancer. Through storytelling and mindful art-making, the intention is to help participants explore different emotions, and in turn revive self, heal and find ways to move forward.

Created and developed by Twist Out Cancer Board Member Jacqueline Carmody, Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor and Registered Board Certified Art Therapist, the program was envisioned in 2018 and implemented in 2019. Due to the nature of the pandemic, all Twistshops starting from the middle of March on were held virtually.

***“My goal as an art therapist is to provide a safe space for everyone and offer them guidance in exploring different emotions that develop throughout their experience. What typically transpires is an evening filled with art-making, bonding, and camaraderie.”***

–Jacqueline Carmody, Counselor, LCPC, ATR, BC


## 35 Twistshops

Total of individuals served: **450**

## Clinical Enhancements

TOC successfully implemented a clinically supervised mentoring program for 54 participants in **Brushes with Cancer Chicago**, as well as 50 participants in **Brushes with Cancer General Motors Design Center** and 62 participants in **Brushes with Cancer Austin**. Lauren Rynar, PhD was hired as the Clinical Director and recruited, trained and evaluated six clinical mentors with backgrounds in mental health. Dr. Rynar also devised and implemented surveys and questionnaires to evaluate and measure individual progress, satisfaction, and impact, and to support a new recruitment process including identification of appropriate participants and effective matching of artists and inspirations. Jacqueline Carmody, LCPC ATR-BC devised a formal Twistshop curriculum and trained six licensed professionals in program facilitation. We hosted one in-person and 34 **Virtual Twistshops**, directly serving 450 individuals, to address the psychosocial wellness of individuals touched by cancer. Two of our virtual Twistshops were streamed online with over **3,000 views**.

Board member, Dr. Gena Khodos worked with a team of stakeholders to identify “resiliency” as an overarching clinical goal for our programs. TOC aims to expand collaborative working relationships with leading oncology and cultural institutions throughout the country in 2021.




**Join us for the  
Virtual **Brushes  
with Cancer**  
Chicago Art  
Exhibition and  
Celebration**

an evening centered around art,  
entertainment, storytelling, hope,  
inspiration and survivorship.

**November 14, 2020**

TWIST  
OUT  
CANCER



**Join us for  
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Austin Art  
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**October 25, 2020**

TWIST  
OUT  
CANCER



"One of the wonderful things that are so unique about Twist, is the ability to see the direct impact that the dollars raised have on the participants. The much needed emotional support, which the inspirations gain, is a direct result of participating in the TwistShops and the art collaboration. None of this would be possible without the involvement of

volunteers and generous donors. It's so inspiring to be able to offer support to the participants at such a vulnerable time. Unique and powerful are definitely the terms that come to mind when thinking about Twist Out Cancer."

**—Fran Highbloom, Brushes with Cancer Philadelphia Co-Chair**

## Virtual Speaking Engagements

- Impact Philly
- Imerman Angels Survivorship Panel with Jonny Imerman and Ethan Zohn
- COVID-19 Survivorship Strategies with Ethan Zohn
- Hopeworks 'N Camden
- Bernstein Private Wealth Management
- **Hello Gorgeous Podcast**
- **One Tough B Podcast**
- **The Science of Social Impact Podcast**

## Growth—New Hires

**Dr. Lauren Rynar**, Clinical Director

**Jacqueline Carmody**, Licensed Clinical Art Therapist, ATR-BC

**Lindsay Patton**, Director of Digital Communications

**Ellie Monieson**, Social Media Manager

**Andrew Zahn**, Web Development

## Virtual Innovation

In early 2020, Twist Out Cancer engaged in a Design Sprint with **Swissa Creative** to reimagine Brushes with Cancer in the virtual space. Our board members and key constituents explored the key components of the program and worked to envision how these elements could be translated virtually. At the end of our engagement, we created a scaling guide for how to thoughtfully and strategically scale our virtual art exhibitions and celebratory events.

We worked with **Vast Development and Design** to update our current website and create online virtual art galleries that showcase the Brushes with Cancer artwork and the stories that inspired them. These galleries will live beyond the event and can be enjoyed by all.

### Virtual Art Galleries

**General Motors**

**Austin**

**Chicago**

Twist Out Cancer also partnered with **Kunstmatrix**, a German-based virtual reality software that creates immersive art experiences for attendees. This platform allowed Brushes with Cancer guests to view the art exhibitions in 3-D.

In an effort to reach thousands of supporters around the world, Twist Out Cancer partnered with OneCause, an online auction site that allows us to showcase the Brushes with Cancer exhibitions online and encourage bidding and donations electronically.

*Our transition to the virtual space has also allowed us to reach hundreds of cancer patients that otherwise would not have been able to attend our in-person events. We offered hundreds of free tickets to patients, their family members and healthcare providers.*

## 2020 Partners

### Sponsors

The Coleman Foundation  
Charles and Lynn Schusterman Foundation  
The Smith Family Foundation  
Benjamin B. Green-Field Foundation  
Dentons LLP  
Willow Group  
Cloz Talk  
Pivot Point Films  
Iris B. Communications  
Liska + Associates  
University of Illinois at Chicago  
Clear Channel  
TD Bank  
Titos  
Ascension Seton  
Texas Oncology  
Revolution Brewery  
Loewy Law Firm  
Padcaster  
Dentons  
Video City Productions  
Giant Restaurant Group  
Ranquist Development  
Law Offices of Jonathan M Aven, LTD  
Barrett Homes  
Three Oaks Development  
Farmer's Fridge  
Moon Rabbit Acupuncture  
Gideon Akande Training  
Northbrook Dentistry  
Steve and Michelle Monieson  
Cancer Wellness Magazine  
Cynthia Beck  
Dana Rebecca Jewelry  
Marc Jacobson & Associates  
fullline printing, inc.  
Goldman Bilow Family  
Layne and Dan Zagorin  
Kellner Family

Kalt Family  
Edelston Family  
Dorfman Family Foundation  
AJR Ventures  
Proper Rate  
@Properties  
Diagnostic Pain Center PLD  
General Motors Design Center  
Dr. Sharon Arffa  
Polka Dots  
Diagnostic Pain Center  
Slow North  
Endeavor  
Dr. Elisabeth Potter  
PLD Holdings  
Wendy & Doug Greenhut  
Martha & Cliff Eisenberg  
Andrea & Edwin Benn  
Mardi Kaplan  
Robert Link  
Dede Rogers  
Jennifer Greenblum  
Danny Glick  
Valerie Newberg  
Jordan's Food of Distinction  
Candor Threads  
Amber & John Weber  
Dr. Debra Patt  
Marcia Levy  
Jennifer L. Katz Margolis  
Susan Eisen  
Carol & Doug Kadison  
Bob and Lisa Kaufman  
Susan Lubin  
Teri Kelly  
Judith Berkowitz  
Susan Armstrong  
Tanny Brg  
Ernest and Cheryl Eisenberg  
Dochen Realtors  
Pals of Val Gal  
Wendy & Andrew Bernstein

## Organizational Partners

Moncrief Cancer Institute  
MD Anderson at Cooper  
Kids Kicking Cancer  
Jefferson Cancer Center  
Texas Oncology  
Ascension Seton  
Rush Hospital  
Lurie Cancer Center

Licorice Project  
NOCC  
Wellness House  
Supportive Oncology  
Collaborative for AYAs  
Fairmont Austin  
UIC Health



Carol Garrett didn't know what to expect from her *Brushes with Cancer* experience. One thing she did want, though, was to respect her artist's time by getting down to business right away.

It turned out Garrett's "let's do this" attitude was just one of many personality traits she shares with artist Kirk Roda. Garrett knows the art process takes time and she didn't want to rush Roda, who had a big undertaking on his hands.

"I didn't know what I was going to do, what I was getting into or who I'd be working with," Roda said. "I wanted to jump on it right away because coming up with a unique concept takes time.... The joy of art is coming up with something new."

The two connected immediately and their first conversation lasted a few hours. Roda appreciated Garrett's strength and personal resolve as he listened to her story. Roda says most of his work is based on his own intuitive trust, which is why it was important to him

to really understand Garrett's story, her emotions, her personality... everything that makes her the person she is.

"I was worried I had to make more of a sculpture she was looking for – I wasn't sure if I wanted to go that way, process-wise," Roda said. "It may be a little selfish, but I wanted her journey channeled through me. Instead of making something that would look good in her living room, I'm going to make something just by listening."

After connecting and building a deep trust between inspiration and artist, Garrett said she enjoyed her and Roda's process.

"If I could say anything to future inspirations and artists, it's: let the process flow through that discovery of what it can be," she said. "I didn't know what to expect."

**—Kirk Roda and Carol Garrett**

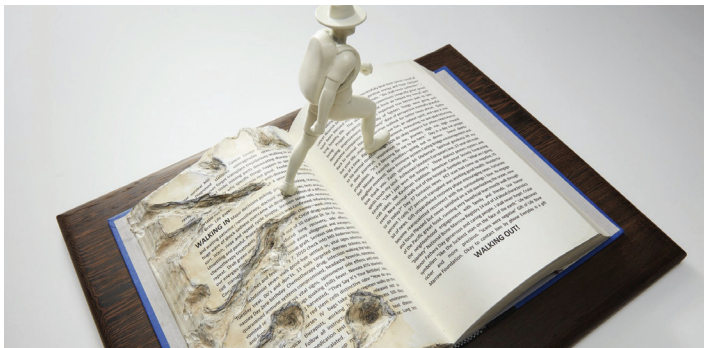
## Media Coverage Highlights

### Profiles

*New York Times*

September 20, 2020

**"Experiences With Cancer, Captured in Works of Art; The program *Brushes With Cancer* pairs patients with artists whose works make visible a disease that can be invisible and isolating"** by Susan Gubar.



**"Like Frida Kahlo, who painted flowers so they would not die, the participants in *Brushes With Cancer* illuminate the meaning of Thomas Merton's statement that 'Art enables us to find ourselves and lose ourselves at the same time.'"**—Susan Gubar

*Fox 32 Chicago*

**Brushes with Cancer pairs artists with people affected by cancer to create unique and healing art**

*Fox 7 Austin*

**What to expect at the *Brushes with Cancer* Austin 2020 Virtual Event!**

*WDIV-TV (NBC, Detroit)*

**"23 artists from General Motors Design Center create artwork for cancer program; Virtual *Brushes With Cancer* program scheduled for Friday night,"** by Madi Rzepka.

## Online Impact

Our online social media platforms have over **26,000 supporters** that are active and engaged in Twist Out Cancer activities. Here's how each platform breaks down:

**Facebook**

Followers: 17,672

**Twitter**

Followers: 1,230

**LinkedIn**

Followers: 196

**Instagram**

Followers: 7,107

Our donor database has reached over **7,000** and our monthly newsletters have a **18% average open rate**, well above industry standard.

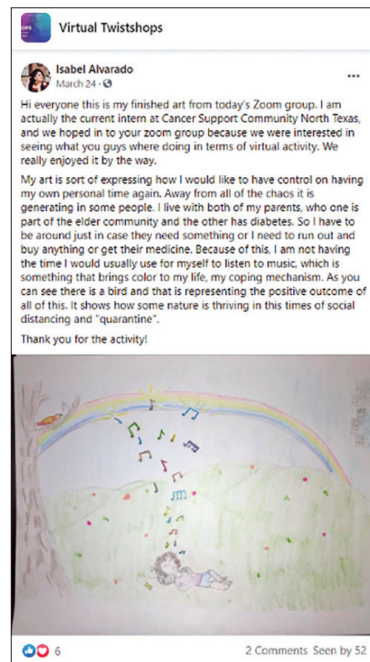
## Key 2020 Social Media Findings

### The Virtual Twistshop Facebook group was a success

When COVID-19 hit, TOC pivoted and offered virtual Twistshops to help those who were struggling with isolation. These hour-long sessions were led by Jacqueline Carmody and made it so people could access art therapy from the safety of their home.

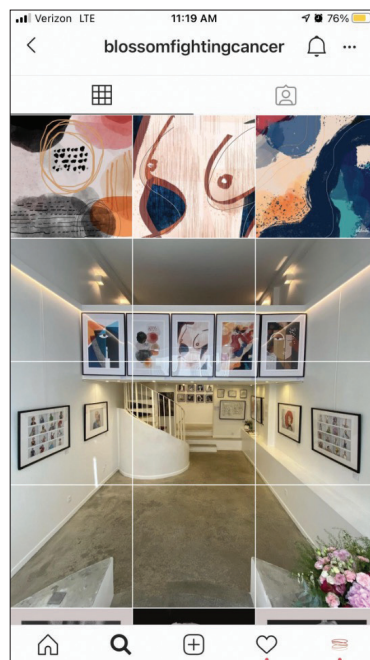
To promote our virtual Twistshops, we created a Facebook group for people to get information about the latest Twistshops and showcase their creations. The group gained 112 members, with 72 members active in the group - a 64.2% participation rate.

From March through August, TOC ran weekly Twistshops, with people attending from all over. During one Twistshop, TOC received more than 3,000 views.



### Through social, Twist Out Cancer found an incredible opportunity for our artists

This year, TOC connected with a gallery owner in Paris who was curating an exhibition that includes six artists that fought cancer and found healing through art. Longtime TOC artist Ishita Banerjee was one of the six artists to have their work displayed.





## Board of Directors 2019–2020

### Executive Board & Officers

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**Tim Richardson**, Toronto, Canada

### Staff

**Jenna Benn Shersher**, Founder and CEO of Twist Out Cancer, MSW

**Amelia Hanrahan**, Director of Operations and Strategic Partnerships

**Dr. Lauren Rynar**, Clinical Director, Ph.D.

**Jacqueline Carmody**, Licensed Clinical Art Therapist, ATR-BC

**Lindsay Patton**, Director of Digital Communications

**Ellie Monieson**, Social Media Manager

**Andrew Zahn**, Web Development

## Financials

Brushes with Cancer at General Motors:

**\$38,139.36**

Brushes with Cancer Austin:

**\$111,532.66**

Brushes with Cancer Chicago:

**\$162,186.65**

**Total Raised:**

**\$311,858.67**

\*Please note that a greater overview of our yearly fundraising will be updated and available on our website at the beginning of 2021.