

## A Message from the President

IACAN is a 501(c) nonprofit cancer resource organization whose mission is to serve the South Asian community through education, resources, and support of those affected by cancer. The vision of IACAN is that every South Asian reduces their cancer risk by maintaining a healthy lifestyle and that no South Asian travels the cancer journey alone.

Fueled by early success in 2023, IACAN sustained momentum and successfully concluded another impactful year. We hosted educational events, augmented the marrow registry with hundreds of new donors, offered free mammograms in collaboration with the Rose Foundation, encouraged the practice of yoga alongside SVYASA, and was involved in many other engaging activities. Highlights include two novel programs launched in the latter half of 2023, the Adolescent and Young Adult (AYA) program and the South Asian Cancer Health Research Scholarship under the umbrella of the IACAN Youth program.

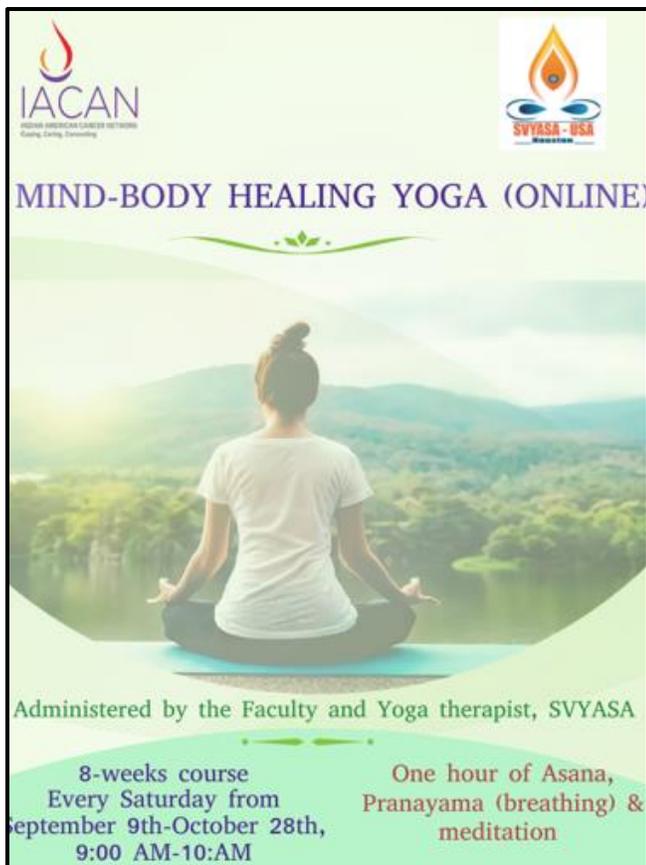
In this issue, we briefly touch upon all these activities and provide a snapshot of events planned for the first half of 2024. I hope you will enjoy reading this issue of The Optimist.

As we begin 2024, IACAN is committed to serving our community, and we look forward to your constant support and cooperation. IACAN is your partner and resource – so please reach out and let us serve you!



Ronald Abraham

## Fall 2023 Mind Body Healing Yoga Program



**MIND-BODY HEALING YOGA (ONLINE)**

Administered by the Faculty and Yoga therapist, SVYASA

8-weeks course  
Every Saturday from  
September 9th-October 28th,  
9:00 AM-10:AM

One hour of Asana,  
Pranayama (breathing) &  
meditation

IACAN's ongoing mind and body healing yoga program, conducted in collaboration with the Swami Vivekananda Yoga Anusandhana Samsthana ("SVYASA"), achieved notable success during the fall of 2023. The 8-week program, from early September to October, effectively engaged numerous survivors and their caregivers. Certified Yoga therapists from SVYASA skillfully led the sessions, tailoring them to address the unique needs of the participants.

Yoga, alongside complementary practices, has become increasingly recognized for its positive impact on psychosocial factors such as depression, anxiety, and stress among cancer patients and survivors. Our program, designed to enhance the mental wellbeing of survivors and caregivers, utilized a holistic approach incorporating a blend of asanas (postures), pranayama (breathing exercises), and dhyana (mindfulness).

Taking place virtually every Saturday morning over eight weeks, the program provided a convenient and accessible platform for participants. The program's popularity in the community can be attributed not only to its cost-free and convenient nature, but also to the substantial health benefits gained through regular engagement and consistent practice.

The significant positive impact on well-being is a compelling reason for IACAN's commitment to continue this biannual program in partnership with SVYASA.

-Ronald Abraham, IACAN

## South Asian Cancer Health Research Scholarship

**Fall 2023**  
South Asian Cancer Health Research Scholarship

**APPLY NOW**

"Develop your critical thinking & communication."

**IACAN**  
INDIAN AMERICAN CANCER NETWORK  
Coping, Caring, Connecting

**ABOUT THE SCHOLARSHIP**  
The program aims to encourage South Asian cancer health research among students of South Asian origin.

**ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

- Currently enrolled in a Texas-based university.
- A resident of the United States and of South Asian origin.

**APPLICATION PROCESS**  
Deadline for application: Sunday, October 1st, 5:00 PM

**FOR MORE DETAILS:**  
scholarship@iacannetwork.org  
<https://iacannetwork.org/scholarships/>

The South Asian Cancer Health Research Scholarship program was initiated as part of the "IACAN YOUTH PROGRAM" with the objective of supporting young scholars in contributing to South Asian health literature through innovative research ideas in the areas of clinical, behavioral science, population science, or global health. A major aim of this program is to afford the South Asian youth community research experience while increasing awareness of IACAN in the community. In this inaugural cycle, two applications were received and reviewed for scientific merit by a committee of highly experienced scientists from around the country. One application was selected for further consideration towards funding for a one-year term.

- Jagannadha Sastry, IACAN

## Adolescent and Young Adult Alliance

**Join us in our fight against childhood cancer!**  
IACAN's Adolescent and Young Adult (AYA) Program Kick-Off!

**Did you know?**  
Approximately **1 in 285** CHILDREN in the U.S. will be diagnosed with cancer before their 20th birthday.

**SEPTEMBER IS CHILDHOOD CANCER AWARENESS MONTH**

**Did you know?**  
Average Cost for one child: **\$833,000**  
The average cost associated with medical treatment and lost parental wages in 2018.

**When:** September 24, 2023  
**Time:** 4:00 pm-6:00 pm  
**Where:** Aling's Chinese Bistro  
6542 US-90 Alt, Sugar Land, TX 77498  
**\$15 Ticket (includes 1 drink)**  
**Register:** [www.iacannetwork.org](http://www.iacannetwork.org)

**IACAN**  
INDIAN AMERICAN CANCER NETWORK  
Coping, Caring, Connecting

**Alings**  
Generous Sponsor



In 2023, IACAN took the bold step to develop its first Adolescent and Young Adult Alliance (AYA). The intent is to provide a safe and positive forum for teenagers and young adults to participate in fun and therapeutic events to help them process either their current or past journey with cancer. IACAN, in the near future, will offer non-medical expenses support to their caregivers as addressing the social drivers of health can directly impact how well a patient and their care circle progress through treatment. To get the word out about IACAN's newest program, Monalisa Chandra and Mital Brahmabhatt were guests on the Chai Time radio show to discuss the relevance and importance of an AYA program. IACAN also hosted a successful social event at Alings Chinese Bistro to kick-off the program. We are excited to see what the future has in store for our AYA program and look forward to the support of our community as we support our youngest cancer fighters and survivors.

- Mital Brahmabhatt, IACAN

## Team IACAN at the 2023 Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure, Houston



The atmosphere at the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure in Houston on October 7, 2023, was truly electric, as IACAN participated in this significant event dedicated to combating breast cancer. The palpable sense of unity and purpose among the diverse participants created a powerful tapestry of hope. Adorned in vibrant pink attire, a sea of survivors, caregivers, and supporters, including the dedicated members of IACAN, passionately demonstrated their commitment to raising awareness and funds for breast cancer research. The event brought together roughly 10,000 runners and walkers, transforming Sam Houston Park in downtown Houston into a colorful and spirited gathering. The race symbolized a collective stride towards progress and a celebration of life along the journey. The event was a testament to the strength of community engagement in the ongoing battle against breast cancer, leaving a lasting impact on all who participated and reinforcing the importance of solidarity in the face of this pervasive disease.

-Shikha Khatri, IACAN

## IACAN's Marrow Program



Aligned with our commitment to safeguarding lives through a strong marrow/stem cell donor registry, IACAN has supported and collaborated in organizing multiple drives at diverse social and religious gatherings in 2023. The table presented below illuminates the achievement of successfully registering 118 potential donors at diverse events during the latter half of 2023. This noteworthy accomplishment brings our annual total to  $403 + 118 = 521$ .

-Shikha Khatri, IACAN

Date	Event/Location	Potential donors registered at the event
19-Aug-23	Indian Independence Day Celebration	2
1-Sep-23	Atul Purohit's Garba Event at ULH Event Center	37
22-Sep-23	Navratri Celebration at the Gujrati Samaj	40
28-Oct-23	Aishwarya's Garba Event	31
3-Dec-23	Bharathi Kalai Manaram Cultural Event at Durgabari	8

-Gaytri Kapoor, NMDP and IACAN

## IACAN's Educational Outreach Activities

Smitha Mallaiah, MS, C-IAYT, engaged a wide audience while discussing the beneficial role of Yoga in cancer care in nurturing wellness virtually through zoom. This interactive session encouraged the attendees to experience the benefits first hand through the Fall 2023 Mind Body Healing Yoga practice. Another very impactful outreach was the discussion on the preventive benefits of HPV vaccination on FM 103.5 with Dr. Sanjay Shete in an Open Forum conversation with Dr. Buchar, Jagt Kamdar, Smriti Singh and Dinkar Chedda

IACAN HEALTH EDUCATION SERIES

**HPV Vaccination is Cancer Prevention**

TUNE IN TO  
FM 103.5, Houston  
HUM FM RADIO  
humfmradio.com

OPEN FORUM

with  
Sanjay Shete, PhD  
Subodh Bhuchar, MD  
Jagat Kamdar  
Smriti Singh  
Dinkar Chedda

Saturday, 2nd September  
4:00 PM-5:00 PM

IACAN  
INDIAN AMERICAN CANCER NETWORK  
HOUSTON, TEXAS

Call at 1-888-749-1035 to join or ask questions

CANCER PREVENTION

IACAN  
INDIAN AMERICAN CANCER NETWORK  
HOUSTON, TEXAS

Webinar: Nurturing Wellness: Exploring the Beneficial Role of Yoga in Cancer Care

Smitha Mallaiah, MS, C-IAYT  
Sr. Mind-Body Intervention Specialist,  
UT M D Anderson Cancer Center  
Program director, SVYASA

When: Saturday, September 2nd, 2023,  
10:00AM-11:00 AM

Where: Via Zoom.

Registration: [www.iacannetwork.org](http://www.iacannetwork.org)

Mital Brahmabhatt and Dr. Monalisa Chandra shared their experiences and knowledge on Adolescent and Young Adult (AYA) cancer survivorship with Linlin Yan and Alifia Motiwala on Chai time, highlighting the relevance of the new initiative by IACAN. Through the AYA program, IACAN aims to help our South Asian Adolescents and Young Adult Cancer survivors navigate their survivorship journey.

-Ronald Abraham, IACAN

## PINK OUT SUNDAY

IACAN in partnership with "The Rose" celebrated PINK OUT SUNDAY on October 29<sup>th</sup> 2023 amidst many breast cancer survivors, supporters, clinicians and volunteers. The message of the event was nicely summed up by Dr. Monalisa Chandra, past president of IACAN, "it's time for self-care ladies. Mark your calendar to make sure you get your annual screening mammogram. If you don't have insurance, cannot drive, have language barrier, or scared, call us at 713-370-3389 and IACAN will help you!" This was a novel initiative at creating cancer awareness through a fund raising event and was a huge success. The speakers included Dr. Nina Tamerisa, Dr. Abdul Moosa and Amanda Gujral, NP who educated the audience about the risks of breast cancer, its prevalence among women and men, and early detection through regular screening mammograms. The Q&A session addressed common myths and concerns associated with breast cancer, treatment and survivorship with valuable insight from Dr. Ajit Bisen and Dr. Quereshi who joined the panel along with Ashma Moosa.

IACAN  
INDIAN AMERICAN CANCER NETWORK  
HOUSTON, TEXAS

The Rose  
Cancer for South Asian Health Awareness

present

**Pink out Sunday**  
Breast Health Awareness Program

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 29th  
3:00 PM - 5:00 PM

@  
Los Tios Restaurant  
5161 San Felipe St  
Houston, TX 77056

HEB  
Grand sponsor

Join the fiesta to celebrate  
life and survivorship

Buy tickets

Speakers:  
Nina Tamerisa, MD  
MD Anderson Cancer Center;  
IACAN Board  
Amanda Gujral, NP  
The Rose

713-370-3489 info@iacannetwork.org

Thank you **HEB** for your sponsorship.



-Ronald Abraham, IACAN

## End of the Year Volunteer Luncheon



End of the year volunteer luncheon was an event for recognizing the enthusiastic volunteers who through their passion and dedication provide hope and support to cancer survivors and their care givers. Everyone in this organization gives back to the community with a pure heart. IACAN appreciates the experts, the wonderful volunteer doctors who help the survivors navigate this complicated journey with the much needed second opinion, sharing more insight to their ongoing process of treatment/diagnosis, thus reducing the anxiety and bringing calm to them and their family members. The activities engaged in by IACAN throughout the year was highlighted including the novel programs which were launched in the latter half of 2023, namely the Adolescent and Young Adults Program (AYA) and the IACAN South Asian Cancer Health Research Scholarship program. Other beneficial programs such as the Mind Body Healing Yoga program, free mammogram for the uninsured initiative to encourage timely breast cancer screening, and the bone marrow drives to enhance the Bone Marrow Registry by adding more potential donors from the South Asian community were also part of the discussion. Among the success stories that were shared at the event, we had the privilege of listening to a bone marrow recipient, Rahul Singh, who came all the way from Dallas to share his testimony. Two years ago he received a stem cell transplant from an unrelated donor that gave him a second chance at life. We were all captivated as he narrated his journey through his diagnosis, the search and finally the cure and expressed his heartfelt gratitude to IACAN and NMDP for his new lease of life. This inspiring and motivating event wrapped up with a fun bingo game and a delicious spread of Italian cuisine.

-Ronald Abraham, IACAN

## Upcoming Events

Here is what to look forward to-

- IACAN and NMDP's Marrow drive at NASHA- University of Houston, Feb 24, 2024
- IACAN and NMDP's Marrow drive at SMAP CSMJ Event- FBC Fair Grounds, Rosenberg, Feb 25, 2024
- In Person seminar on Fatty Liver Disease- March 2024. Details TBA (To Be Announced).
- IACAN Spring 2024 Mind Body Healing Yoga program – Late March to early May 2024.
- Show on Yoga with SVYASA on Chai Time Radio. April, 2024. Details TBA
- Radio show on Breast Cancer. May, 2024. Details TBA
- IACAN's International Day of Yoga celebration– June 2<sup>nd</sup> 2024.

Information about our upcoming programs and events will be available on the IACAN [website](#) and [Facebook page](#).