



Fall 2024

Newsletter

Dedicated to providing educational scholarships to Fairfield County students diagnosed with cancer

THE 2024 ANNUAL SUSAN FUND SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS CEREMONY



The annual Susan Fund Scholarship Reception was held in June. This year's 18 recipients were recognized and celebrated by their families, friends and guests. Jeff Booth, the Fund's Chair noted, "I'm blown away by the poise, intellect and optimism these courageous individuals exhibit." Over the 40+ years of the Fund's existence, Susan Fund scholars have become leaders in their communities and respective fields, as they inspire and demonstrate the unique ability to overcome their cancer diagnoses.

On behalf of the fully volunteer Board Jeff went on to provide a special birthday message to the Fund's Founder and Chair-Emeritus, Ann Lloyd. "Ann's vision and dedication helped The Susan Fund make awards to more than 900 individuals from Fairfield County who have been diagnosed with cancer totaling over \$2 million in scholarships since its inception."



Susan's brother, David Lloyd, then offered a remembrance of his fun-loving, joyful, and strong sister. David reflected on Susan's ability to put others first and her infectious personality. Throughout her treatment she didn't change, always keeping "her eyes fixed firmly on the future."

David was followed by the parents of Sona Kocinsky, 2024's featured recipient. Sona's speech expressed how The Susan Fund "empowers a beautiful community of people pursuing different dreams, diverse educational paths, and navigating various stages of life who are linked by a unique shared experience with cancer." Sona believes the scholarships she received have been an integral part of her education as she aspires to become a pediatric oncologist. The reception concluded with Susan Fund Board member, Kathy DiGiovanna, highlighting the accomplishments and future endeavors of the 18 scholars.

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FROM the CHAIRMAN / ABOUT SUSAN

It has been another exciting year for The Susan Fund. We celebrated our 42nd year, continued to enhance our website, and introduced several initiatives to increase our visibility to promote the Fund to a greater number of potential scholarship recipients. Most importantly, the board met with each of the 18 people who received 2024 scholarships. What an incredible honor it is to spend time with these individuals and hear about their journeys.



Because our recipients can apply for scholarships every year, we get to see many of them throughout their academic lives: we watch them grow, and we learn about the ways they “pay it forward” to help others. From a personal perspective, during a trip to Pittsburgh last year I invited six-time recipient Ryan Caulfield (who is pursuing his Doctorate degree at the University of Pittsburgh) to join me at the Steelers-Packers game. Here’s a photo of the two of us before kickoff.



As always, special thanks to our all-volunteer Board who make it possible to keep The Susan Fund moving forward in its fifth decade. They also make it possible for the Fund to distribute more than 90% of incoming donations directly for scholarships. Finally, a huge thank you to everyone who financially supports The Susan Fund through their generous donations.

Meet the Board: Diane Giannitti



I met Susan Lloyd in high school. We had some classes together and I would see her often where I worked after school at the Country Gal clothing store in downtown Westport. After she was diagnosed with cancer, she would continue to come into the store and shop. I was so touched by her presence, her ability to make me feel good, while she was going through the fight of her life. I always was filled with emotion seeing her at school or at the store, but as soon as she would speak to me, I wouldn’t feel sad because she had such a positive attitude.

The last time I saw Susan was at the store in late summer of 1980. She was talking about going to Colgate in September and how she was looking forward to it. She looked pale and weak, but her smile and eyes were bright and strong with determination. The brave way in which she lived her life has remained with me after all these years. I realize now as an adult, what an extraordinary, courageous person she was at such a young age. I am very proud to be honoring her life by serving on the Board. While I am still saddened by her death, I know her wonderful legacy

lives on through the deserving recipients of her scholarship fund. I have two adult daughters who have grown up knowing about Susan’s legacy and have both helped with our annual scholarship reception.

About Susan



Susan Davis Lloyd was a typical all-American teenager, entering her senior year at Staples High School, when she discovered she had osteogenic sarcoma. Despite having her leg amputated, Susan continued to participate in school activities and hold two jobs. A cheerleader and an outstanding student, she was accepted, early decision, to Colgate University. Unfortunately, her chemotherapy treatments were not effective, and she was unable to begin college.

When Susan died, her family and many friends wanted to do something positive to remember her. The Susan Fund was established with the goal of helping other young people who have been treated for cancer attain their educational goals. The Fund has continued to grow, and during the past 42 years has awarded more than \$2 million in scholarships. Through the generosity of others, Susan’s memory remains very much alive.

SONA KOCINSKY - RECEPTION SPEECH

Hi everyone, My name is Sona Kocinsky. I'd like to start by thanking The Susan Fund for this opportunity to speak about what this scholarship means to me. I am incredibly grateful to say this is my fourth time as a scholarship recipient.

As my family and the board members know, I unexpectedly discovered a love for physics in my undergraduate education. One of my favorite concepts to learn was relativity because it takes the most basic preconceived notions and flips them upside down, requiring you to redefine your understanding of fundamental concepts. In a way, I am discovering this is life, delving into new experiences, and learning to redefine your framework in response.



For me, cancer was similarly a jarring change of course that forced, challenged, and inspired me to adapt and grow. It continues to do so. More so than my personal experience, learning from the stories of others in this community has served as a rare and special form of education.

I first met with The Susan Fund just after graduating high school. I was a ball of nerves before my first “Meet the Board,” as I think is warranted for an interview. At the time, I had recently completed treatment, and my hair was beginning to grow back in springy chemo curls. This past May, I met with the board for the fourth time. A lot has changed in this time. My hair is now long and straight – reminiscent of its pre-cancer form. Instead of applying to college, I am applying to medical school. And now, the yearly “Meet the Board” meeting is like a warm reunion of catching up on the past year.

When I was initially diagnosed, a family friend and cancer survivor told me that I had just been granted a lifetime membership to a rare community — one that no one joins willingly, yet it is home to unparalleled compassion and support. Amidst the chaos of treatment, it took time for me to recognize the truth of his sentiment. The Susan Fund embodies this concept as it empowers a beautiful community of people pursuing different dreams, diverse educational paths, and navigating various stages of life. Yet, we are linked by our unique shared experience with cancer.

The Susan Fund Scholarship has been an integral part of my education, providing invaluable support for me to pursue my educational aspirations and my goal of a career in pediatric oncology. The stories of the cancer survivors, patients, and supporters I have encountered along the way, including Susan's story, are at the heart of my medical career motivations. Susan had bone cancer, like me, and went to high school in my neighboring town, where I used to have soccer games. I may not have had the chance to meet her, but her resilience, commitment to education, and compassion live on in her family, The Susan Fund, and the educational journeys this program supports.

To the board: Ann and Will Lloyd, Susan Baron, Lesley Palange, Kathleen DiGiovana, Brandon Held, Jeff Booth, Ed Grossman, Diane Karazulas, Matthew Garnett, and Kelly Frey Pollard, thank you for cheering me on through my college endeavors and as I now apply to medical school. And to the survivors, families, and friends in the audience, thank you for being a part of creating this incredible community of unique experiences and perspectives from which I continue to learn.

06880's Blog | "The Susan Fund: 4 Decades of Changing, and Celebrating Lives" (Reprinted with permission from Dan Woog of 06880)



More than 40 years ago, The Susan Fund awarded its first grants. The recipients were special: young men and women battling cancer. Besides facing staggering medical bills, they needed help paying for college. To date, The Susan Fund —named in honor of Susan Lloyd, a popular, multi-talented Staples High School graduate who succumbed to bone cancer prior to attending Colgate University —has distributed more than \$2 million, providing hope (and education) to hundreds of Fairfield County residents.

Every awardee's story is unique. But Ryan Caulfield's demonstrates the effect one grant can have on one person. And ultimately, countless others. At Staples, Ryan was in the National Honor Society. He competed for the Saugatuck Rowing Club. In 11th grade, he had trouble breathing. Eventually he could hardly walk up stairs. Rowing was out of the question. After being misdiagnosed with asthma, Ryan received far worse news: A large mass was occluding his left lung. He underwent a series of surgeries. The final major one, that May, involved a complete reconstruction of his airway. Fortunately, he kept his left lung. Ryan recovered, and graduated in 2017. He headed to the University of Pittsburgh, where he double majored in nursing and economics. He then worked for a year and a half in a thoracic center. Today he's midway through Pitt's doctoral program in nurse anesthesiology. His goal is to work at a major medical center. He could not have done it without the Susan Fund. He received scholarships all four undergraduate years. The grants continue in grad school. "It's been extraordinarily helpful," Ryan says.

And the Fund does not just hand him money. Members of the board of directors, including Ann Lloyd, Jeff Booth and Kelly Frey Pollard, check in regularly. "They're very invested in my career," he says proudly.

Every year too, The Susan Fund hosts a reception for recipients. This year's is June 23, at Saugatuck Congregational Church. It's always a warm, loving event. Stories are shared. Updates are offered. And, Ryan notes, attendees — all now born long after Susan Lloyd lived and died —think of her, and honor her legacy. To learn more about the Susan Fund — including how to apply for a scholarship, and donate — visit thesusanfund.org.

REMEMBERING KYLE BANCROFT



The Susan Fund extends its deepest sympathy to the family of Kyle Cameron Bancroft, who peacefully departed this world on March 15, 2024, after a courageous, four-year battle with Ewing Sarcoma.

The Stamford native "loved, valued and appreciated his family, his dogs, his friends and his education," according to his obituary. During his years in Stamford Public Schools, he was a perennial honors student, and he received multiple academic scholarships, including an award from The Susan Fund. Kyle attended Sacred Heart University, where he formed many friendships while soldiering through his pain to finish out the fall 2023 semester. In turn, Kyle earned a position on the Dean's list, which spoke volumes to his character and dedication despite his illness.

Kyle also loved baseball. From the time he began playing the game at the age of 4, baseball was his passion and a sport in which he excelled. Kyle played for Stamford North Little League, Stamford Rebels Travel, Stamford High School and Stamford Legion Post 3. During the off season, he played basketball and coached kids with special needs as a volunteer for Stamford High School's Unified Sports.

DAVID LLOYD PODCAST



In April, Dan Woog, founder of the popular blog “06880,” interviewed David Lloyd, one of ESPN’s longest-running anchors and a host of the 7:00 am edition of Sports Center. David is an older brother of Susan. In addition to talking about his role at ESPN, David discussed The Susan Fund.

“The Susan Fund started as a little thing and has grown over the years...[The Board] is a collection of really dedicated people and have built up this charity over the years and have given away more than \$2 million to kids in Fairfield County... My mom has told me for years that during the interviews to learn more about the applicants, the board is always blown away...I want to get the word out and let people know that if you’ve been touched by cancer and want to continue with your higher education that The Susan Fund is there for you...If you can donate, it’s a great cause and it helps people in your community.”

A link to the podcast can be found at thesusanfund.org, under the News tab.

2024 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS



Jose Campanario
Danbury, CT
Western Connecticut State University

Despite the many challenges Jose is facing as he fights his recurring cancer, he is determined to complete his degree at WestConn. He wrote, “I do plan on returning to school once I am able to get around on my own and feel capable of taking on an academic course load.” Jose remains interested in obtaining a degree in Finance but is uncertain in which direction his education will take him.

His letter of recommendation stated, “Jose is a bright young man with intellectual curiosity, integrity and a maturity beyond his years.” This is Jose’s third Susan Fund scholarship.



Josh Cappello
Trumbull, CT
Southern Connecticut University

Josh will be graduating from Southern in December, 2024 with a BA in History. This achievement is remarkable in that, throughout his college career, Josh has been coping with recurring brain tumors. Despite this enormous challenge, his grades have been extraordinary. In his letter of recommendation, one of his professors wrote, “Josh is a very hard worker, a sharp thinker, a good writer and a lively presence in class discussions.” Josh’s goal has remained the same throughout his education. He has developed a passion for the history of the Middle East and plans to teach on the college level. This inspired him to learn Arabic. Some day we will be referring to him as Professor Cappello! This is his fourth Susan Fund scholarship.

2024 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS



Ryan Caulfield

Westport, CT

**The University of Pittsburg
School of Nursing**

This is Ryan's sixth Susan Fund scholarship. He will graduate with a PhD in Nursing Practice in Nurse Anesthesia in December 2025. He is more than halfway through with the nine-semester program. As Ryan wrote, "I plan on working in a major surgical center to hone my skills and begin to build my practice." Ryan's abilities both academically and interpersonally are outstanding. His reference wrote, "Ryan demonstrates the instincts of a veteran nurse and has a very solid knowledge base....He has a wonderful ability to relate to others ...whether it is the surgeon performing the operation or the custodial staff." He is at the point in his training that he is performing anesthetic care with supervision.



Abigail Cerny

Fairfield, CT

Clemson University

This is Abigail's first Susan Fund scholarship. Her ultimate goal is to obtain a post-secondary education in order to earn a degree in biochemistry. She has been an active volunteer through SOSA, a nonprofit organization that partners with local philanthropies to help the underprivileged and disadvantaged, as well as provide community service in Fairfield County. Abigail is also an academic tutor and mentor, and traveled to West Virginia to help repair homes through the Appalachia Service Project. Abigail was an A student during her four years at Fairfield Ludlow High School. Her letter of recommendation said, "Abigail brings with her a manner that is determined, sincere, and extremely mature and uncommon for a woman her age."



Lauren Kelly

Greenwich, CT

Boston University

Lauren is in her junior year at Boston University, working towards a dual degree in music (CFA) and speech, language and hearing sciences. After graduating she looks to study and practice melodic intonation therapy to aid those who have suffered a left hemisphere stroke, those who stutter, and possibly some throat or laryngeal cancer patients. In addition to working at the Wheelock Family Theatre in Boston, Lauren raised \$500 for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. Her letter of recommendation said, "I have witnessed Lauren stand strong in the face of her life-threatening disease...Lauren is very talented and is motivated...Her academic performance is excellent." This is Lauren's third Susan Fund scholarship.



Sona Kocinsky

Trumbull, CT

Tufts University

Sona is a senior at Tufts University. She is pursuing a biology major and a physics minor. After graduating, Sona plans to attend medical school and specialize in pediatric oncology. Sona has participated in two summer cancer research internship programs. She recently made an oral presentation on her St. Jude research project at the AACR annual meeting in San Diego. Among her many volunteer programs, Sona is a 2024 member of the MIB Agents Junior Advisory Board and attended its FACTOR meeting this summer. Sona has also volunteered for Outreach for Tutors for Hope, that offers free tutoring to pediatric cancer patients, as well as Tuft University's chapter of Strong Women, Strong Girls, and the Boston Harbor Ronald McDonald House.

2024 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS



Brent McCreesh
Southport, CT
Sacred Heart University

Brent is in his senior year and will graduate with a degree in Sports Communication.

During the past two years, he worked at YES Network where he gained invaluable experience. Recently he was a Ticker and Production Assistant for The Mickey K show. Brent remains passionate about Chess. He is involved with The Chess Club of Fairfield County, NECA Chess and Red Bandit Chess and also serves as Co-captain of the Sacred Heart University Chess Team. His letter of recommendation states, “Brent continues to be a respected and appreciated member of the SHU Chess program. Brent also volunteers at TeamBrent, the organization his family created to raise funds to fight childhood cancer. This is Brent’s fourth Susan Fund Scholarship.



Eric Mengel
Southport, CT
Fairfield University

Eric is a senior and looking to work in financial services when he graduates. He previously worked at Chubb as an underwriting assistant. Eric is passionate about politics and previously ran for Representative Town Meeting (RTM) and volunteered for the town-wide campaign. His letter of recommendation said, “Eric proved to be bright, inquisitive, and diligent in his work. His collaboration and leadership skills were impressive...Eric’s “team player” abilities extended beyond his own work—he frequently volunteered to pick up additional work, train other people, review other’s work—these characteristics demonstrate a person’s true value and their ability to look beyond their own self interests.” This is Eric’s fifth Susan Fund scholarship.



Madeline O'Farrell
Brookfield, CT
Quinnipiac University

This is Madeline’s first Susan Fund award. She will be a freshman in the Occupational Therapy Honors Program at

Quinnipiac University this Fall.

During high school, Madeline was an active volunteer for the National Honor Society Blood Drive and was President of Best Buddies Friendship Club. The club’s focus is the inclusion of students with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Maddie’s letter of reference from her doctor states “Maddie is an exceptional young woman, not just because she went through all this, but how she went through it all. Her classmates will be lucky to have her perspective, intelligence and demeanor when working together.”



Sofia Petrafesa
Stamford, CT
Connecticut State Community College

Sophia’s experience as a cancer patient has inspired her to pursue a career in medicine.

Her goal is to become a

pediatric oncology nurse. She will complete her CT-CCNP program in the spring of 2025 and then complete her Bachelor of Science online while she is employed. During the summer she enrolled at Northeast Medical Institute to earn her phlebotomy certification and gain more in-hospital experience. Sophia’s letter of recommendation from her fall clinical supervisor stated, “Not only was Sophia one of my strongest intellectual students, she is one of the most compassionate, I believe her personal experience as a cancer survivor helped her relate to her patients!” This is Sophia’s fifth Susan Fund scholarship.

2024 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS



Declan Ratner
Fairfield, CT
Sacred Heart University

This is Declan's second Susan Fund scholarship. He is currently a sophomore in the PA-Dual Degree program at SHU, including working towards a Biology degree before PA school. Despite a heavy course load, Declan drives SHU students to volunteer sites for community service hours and has the opportunity to volunteer with them. This past summer Declan volunteered on a mission trip to help a New Jersey community repair houses, gardens and repainting. His letter of recommendation states "Declan is blessed with an extraordinary outgoing nature. His warm personality, natural ebullience, easy laugh and winning smile seem to connect with all who meet him."



Keylin Salazar
Stamford, CT
University of Connecticut

This is Keylin's second Susan Fund scholarship. She has not yet declared a major, but may pursue a degree in social work. If so, Keylin would like to help children with cancer and "encourage them to continue through every difficult moment of treatment, as there will be a significant reward at the end of their journey."

Her letter of recommendation states that "Keylin is an incredible young woman with resiliency and strength. She is committed to working to build the best version of herself and proudly talks about her future and goals. Keylin is a caring, generous, and thoughtful young woman who deserves the opportunity to move forward in reaching her professional and personal goals."



Ben Shemesh
Fairfield, CT
Bentley University

Ben is a graduate of Fairfield Ludlow High School and is in his freshman year at Bentley. It has always been a dream of his to live in the Boston area and to pursue a degree in Finance. He is also looking forward to taking advantage of the many academic and social opportunities that Boston provides. Attending Bentley is more significant because Ben underwent treatment for Hodgkin Lymphoma throughout 2023 and missed the second half of his senior year. During this time, he was determined to stay as active and involved as possible. His work at Birddogs clothing store gave him invaluable insight into retail operations, customer service and teamwork. This is Ben's first Susan Fund scholarship.



Nate Smit
Stamford, CT
Dean College

Nate will be a junior this fall and is studying towards his career goal of working with teenagers in the mental health field, specifically as a case worker or in human services.

This summer he hopes to have an internship in New York City working for diversity, equity and inclusion. Nate's academic coach writes "From the time we began working together, Nate's maturity and communication skills have been standout. Nate shines in his community of learners and it has been a pleasure to watch him grow over his first years of college."

This is Nate's third Susan Fund scholarship.

2024 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS



James Spengler
Fairfield, CT
University of Dayton

This is James' second Susan Fund scholarship. He is a sophomore studying for a degree in Marketing and a minor in insight selling. James joined a business fraternity called PI Sigma Epsilon which has a large focus on volunteering to better the community around the university and beyond. James continues to work, along with his co-founders, for the 9th Floor Foundation, a non-profit organization established to help the financial needs of pediatric cancer patients. He is accomplishing his overall main goal in life by raising money and awareness for pediatric cancer. James' professor writes, "He is a remarkable person... who has used his experiences to bring together his community to support other cancer patients."



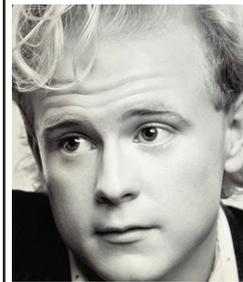
Will Varvaro
Easton, CT
The New School

Will is a senior at The New School working towards his Media Studies major with a self-designed concentration, focusing on film and creative writing. Upon graduation, Will plans to work in the film and media industry as an assistant producer for a few years and then apply to grad school. Will continues to work on short stories and a novel series which he has been working on for over five years. Will is currently working on a documentary project to bring awareness of LGBTQ mental health. Will's academic advisor wrote, "Their ability to not only think critically about their academic and career goals but also put into action the necessary immediate steps impressed me early on in our working relationship."



Matthew Viglucci
New Fairfield, CT
SUNY Oneonta

Mathew is a senior and a four-time Susan Fund Scholarship recipient. He is a music industry major with a minor in audio arts production. He recently worked to create a soundtrack to an up-and-coming indie video game. When not making or producing music, he is learning and practicing Japanese. Given his interest in both Japan and music, Matthew aspires to a career in the Japanese music industry. His talents were on display at this summer's Susan Fund scholarship reception, as samples of his music were played prior to the awards presentation. Matthew continues to be involved in the local Relay for Life fundraiser. His letter of recommendation said, "He has been an indispensable member of my student ensemble and continues to be an exemplary student."



Charlie Watson
Westport, CT
Utah Tech University

Charlie took a gap year in 2023 and worked 2 jobs and auditioned and starred in two short films in Cedar City, Utah. He also took virtual acting classes with Triple Threat Academy and expanded his creative talents by writing music and learning photography. Charlie is currently a freshman at Utah Tech University in their Film program. He ultimately would like to create short films and continue acting to make characters come to life. Charlie's letter of recommendation states, "As a result of his post graduate experience, Charlie's confidence has grown and he now has a clear sense of direction." This is Charlie's first Susan Fund award.

SUSAN FUND UPDATES

“Willow” at Mill River Village House

We first opened our guesthouse to families dealing with pediatric cancer in 2020, in the throes of a pandemic that made it hard for anyone to use it except as a respite from grief. Four years later, we have welcomed many couples and families who have universally confirmed our hunch that this space is indeed a sanctuary for peace and restoration. Whether you are celebrating a remission, in the middle of treatment, or needing a reprieve after a difficult diagnosis or loss, we invite you to stay in the hope that you will find strength and healing.



There are two separate guest units within our restored 1795 farmhouse. Each unit has its own entrance and can accommodate up to four people comfortably (more, if young children), with two bedrooms/baths (linens provided), living space (including Wi-Fi but no TV), kitchen, and washer/dryer. Each unit also has its own outdoor space to enjoy morning coffee or a glass of wine as the day winds down. All of this is set in the beautiful Berkshires, whose hills, streams, and winding roads offer a welcome change of pace from daily routines.

We offer two-night stays at no cost to eligible couples/families (no smoking or pets; groceries, transportation, and activities costs not included). Great Barrington, Lenox, and Stockbridge are a short drive away—offering a rich variety of theatre/art museums, hiking trails, restaurants, shops, and ski resorts. For more information, contact Kelly Frey Pollard at SusanFund@gmail.com.

Special Thanks to Our Foundation Sponsors

The Susan Fund is extremely grateful for the grants we received this year by the Westport Rotary Club, the Westport Sunrise Rotary, the Easton Exchange Club, the Rotary Club of Trumbull, and the Westport Woman’s Club. Their generous support allowed us to increase the amount of our average scholarship awards to this year’s recipients.



SUSAN FUND ALUM FINDS CAREER FULFILLMENT AT CIRCLE OF CARE

When Heather Stabinsky of Monroe was 16, she was diagnosed with stage 4 Hodgkin lymphoma. A junior in high school, she had to leave the classroom and study from home. She worked diligently to graduate on time, and was then accepted to her top college choice, Quinnipiac University. Her goal was to follow a course of study that would set her up in a medical career. But two years later, as a college freshman, she relapsed and had to leave school again.

Following treatment, she enrolled as a part-time student because “my brain was still foggy,” says Heather. “I had to redirect, and that was a hard decision, since my friends were on a four-year path. But, as I would learn, everyone has her own track.”

Heather started in the school’s pre-med program, then segued to nursing. Multiple scholarships from The Susan Fund helped cover some of her tuition expenses, and she was grateful for the support.



In 2018, Heather visited Circle of Care in Wilton, a nonprofit that provides financial, practical and emotional assistance to families of children with cancer. “I had been a recipient of Circle of Care and went there to volunteer, but then they asked me if I wanted a job,” says Heather, who enthusiastically accepted the offer. “I had long wanted to give back to an organization that had helped me. I was finally clearheaded enough to do so. I worked per diem. Once I showed I could do more, they gave me more.” That included projects for the marketing department. “They said, ‘Hey, you’re good at this!’ And I said, Yeah, I am. And I like doing it.”

In 2020, Heather took on a full-time role at Circle of Care. Around this time, she switched her major to business with a focus in marketing and took courses through Quinnipiac’s online program in the evenings. “I realized that a career in marketing would allow me to help people, which is the thing that makes me feel most fulfilled,” she says.



In May 2023, Heather graduated with a bachelor’s degree in business administration. A few months later, she was promoted to marketing and communications manager. “She’s grown so much,” says Liz Salguero, founder and president of Circle of Care, and the mother of a son who had cancer as a child. “I met her when she 16 and diagnosed for the first time. She’s now 27. I’ve watched her blossom. She is an amazing advocate for children and young adults facing cancer. Her contributions to our organization are tremendous because she understands this population.”

When Heather first came to Circle of Care, says Liz, “we had 1.5 employees. We now have eight. We have grown, and Heather has grown with us.” Circle of Care, which recently celebrated its 20th anniversary, has served over 3,600 families in two decades, providing \$2.8 million in direct financial support to families struggling with the financial burden of this diagnosis. And the future looks busy for the staff. “Medical costs are on the rise and inflation remains,” says Liz.

Heather is committed to helping the organization achieve goals. Most recently, she helped redesign the website, to make it easier for families to find information they need. “I’m proud of her commitment to this space. It is all about giving back. It’s one of the most beautiful, selfless things you can see.”

As she settles into her new position, Heather has advice for young adults as they map an educational course. “If you’re interested in something, just try it,” says Heather. “I never would have landed where I am today had I not been open to the idea that my path was not as straightforward as that of my friends. It’s okay if you don’t finish in four years and you can change your mind about what you want to do. When a cancer diagnosis interrupts your life, you have a new normal. It’s okay to accept that and navigate.”

In October, Heather became a member of The Susan Fund Board.

FORMER RECIPIENT UPDATES

Katie (Lovallo) Finnucan

From 2012 to 2018, I was honored to be a recipient of a scholarship from The Susan Fund, a blessing in getting through my undergraduate and law school studies. Without the kindness and support from my family at The Susan Fund, I'm not sure I would have been able to attend the schools of my choice. To this day, it is an honor and a privilege. After a few grueling years, I immediately felt at home when I connected with The Susan Fund as I began my journey at The University of New Haven, and finished my education at Quinnipiac University School of Law. For seven years, I was blessed to come to know the Lloyd family and the board members, and be able to help share in Susan's legacy.



In the last six years, I have been honored to join the Navy as an officer and attorney. I spent two years stationed in Norfolk, Virginia and the last two years back home stationed in Groton. In 2020 (and again in 2022), I married my husband who is also an attorney and we are expecting identical twins in early 2025! I am forever grateful for the opportunities afforded to me by The Susan Fund!

Morgan Galdenzi



Hello everyone!! My name is Morgan Galdenzi and I am a prior recipient of The Susan Fund Scholarship. About 10 years ago when I was a junior in high school at 16, I was diagnosed with a malignant brain tumor. I had two brain surgeries, radiation and chemo pills. Due in part to the generosity of The Susan Fund I was able to attend James Madison University and graduate with my Bachelors in Social Work. I had a reoccurrence my sophomore year of college, but was able to return to school the following year and complete my degree in December 2019. Today, I live in Brooklyn, New York and I have been on maintenance oral medication called inhibitors which keep my tumor from growing. I have been cancer free for

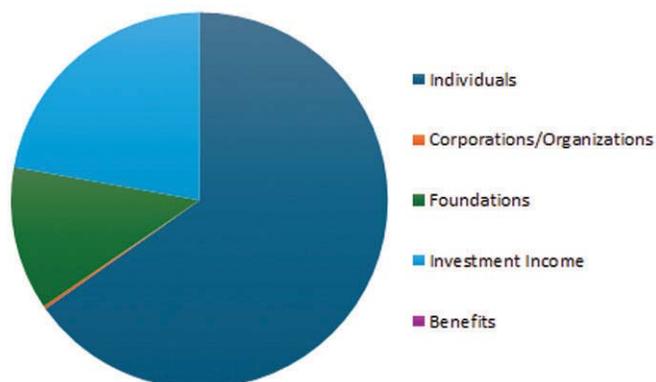
eight years!

Directly after graduation I moved to Arlington, VA and lived with my college roommate and best friend from Fairfield, CT. I started my career working at Enterprise Rent a Car and quickly joined their Management Trainee program. In 2021 my best friend and I moved to New York City. I was able to transfer with work and keep my job with Enterprise. One of my favorite parts of the city is trying all different types of food! I love going on walks and runs with my friends. I've ran two half marathons in the city this past year. I have really found a love of running to keep my mind and body as healthy as possible.

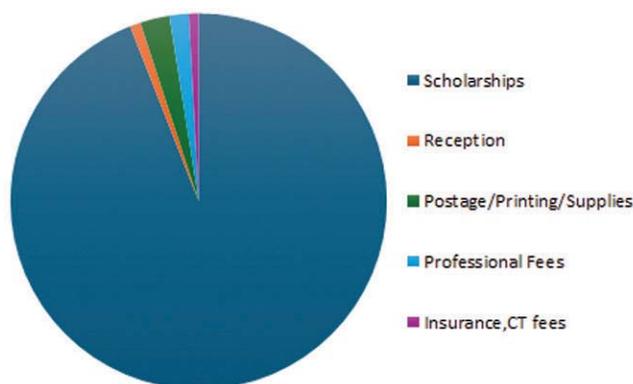


Today I am living in Brooklyn and am a Branch Manager with Enterprise at the Downtown Brooklyn location, overseeing 12 employees and a 250 car fleet. I love managing people and learning about different aspects of their lives within such a diverse community. I've learned the importance of empathy and patience through my diagnosis and I am lucky enough to practice these skills in the real world every day. I am happy and healthy and grateful to be where I am today and will forever be thankful to The Susan Fund for all the help and support they provided to me on my journey!

Where our money comes from:



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- Mail a check to The Susan Fund at 458 Newtown Avenue Norwalk, CT 06851
- Donate online at TheSusanFund.org
- Enroll in an Employer Matching Gift Program, if available

Consult your financial advisor about Donor-Advised Fund distributions, or the tax advantages of Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCD) from your IRA or appreciated securities.

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In Honor of The Zarifis Family
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Dancing with the Stars for The Susan Fund

On Saturday, September 28th, the Gaelic American Club in Fairfield, CT held the 11th Dancing with the GAC Stars competition in association with the Fred Astaire studios in Southport, CT.

Kelly Karazulas, Board member Diane Giannitti's daughter, competed for The Susan Fund and came in second place for the evening's event. Kelly said, "I'm happy to help this wonderful organization that my mom has been a proud member of for so many years. The Susan Fund continues to make a difference in the lives of so many students, and I was thrilled to honor them all."



HOW TO BECOME A SUSAN FUND RECIPIENT



-  Be a current resident of Fairfield County
-  Have been diagnosed with cancer sometime in one's life
-  Be attending or planning on attending an accredited post high school institution of higher learning
-  Fill out a Scholarship Application at TheSusanFund.org, available January 1st and due by April 1st

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