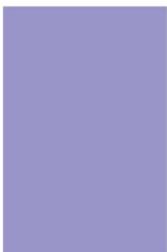


# AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY RELAY FOR LIFE



# Survivor Engagement Guidebook

Updated January 2016



## Survivor Engagement

Cancer survivors are the heart of the Relay For Life movement, with the Survivors Lap that takes place at local events being the cornerstone to the overall Relay experience. For many survivors, the Survivors Lap is so special that they can recall practically every detail of the first lap they participated in. It's an easy experience to remember, because for most it's much more than merely walking a circle around a track. This "LAP" is truly a culmination of their overall survivor experience – from their cancer journey to their involvement in fighting back.

At that American Cancer Society, we are charged with expanding that experience for our survivors both prior to and beyond the Relay For Life event itself. Survivors know firsthand the importance of the Society's lifesaving work, and they have the unique opportunity to become ambassadors for the Society and the Relay movement by sharing their personal stories and the value of our mission.

In looking at best ways to engage survivors in the Relay For Life movement, we should embrace three laps: pre-event lap, Survivors Lap, and Caregivers Lap. The pre-event LAP is critical to lay the groundwork for overall survivor engagement and experience. Look at this acronym to help identify the best ways to accomplish this.

**L: Learn about the American Cancer Society's mission.** We should directly connect survivors with the mission that drives everything we do. Connect them with others in the community touched by cancer; encourage them to utilize Society programs and services; and rally those passionate about the cause to join their local Relay For Life event.

**A: Amplify the American Cancer Society through the survivor's personal story.** Help survivors share their personal story and its connection to the American Cancer Society and its mission.

**P: Promote fighting back against cancer by fundraising on a Relay For Life team.** Encourage survivors to take part by forming a Relay team or joining one to raise funds to support the Society's lifesaving mission.

Survivors want to celebrate their cancer journey both at the Relay event and throughout the year. Local events should engage survivors on Event Leadership Teams, as Team Captains, and as part of the planning process. Though the Survivors and Caregivers Lead may take the initiative with this effort, survivorship engagement is such an important part of the Relay experience that it should be part of all that we do.

This guidebook will definitely assist Survivors and Caregivers Leads with their efforts, but it is meant for every Event Leadership Team member. Event Leadership Team members working on survivorship engagement are focused on:

- Recruiting and retaining survivors with the event
- Providing meaningful engagement for survivors at the event
- Providing meaningful engagement for survivors throughout the year

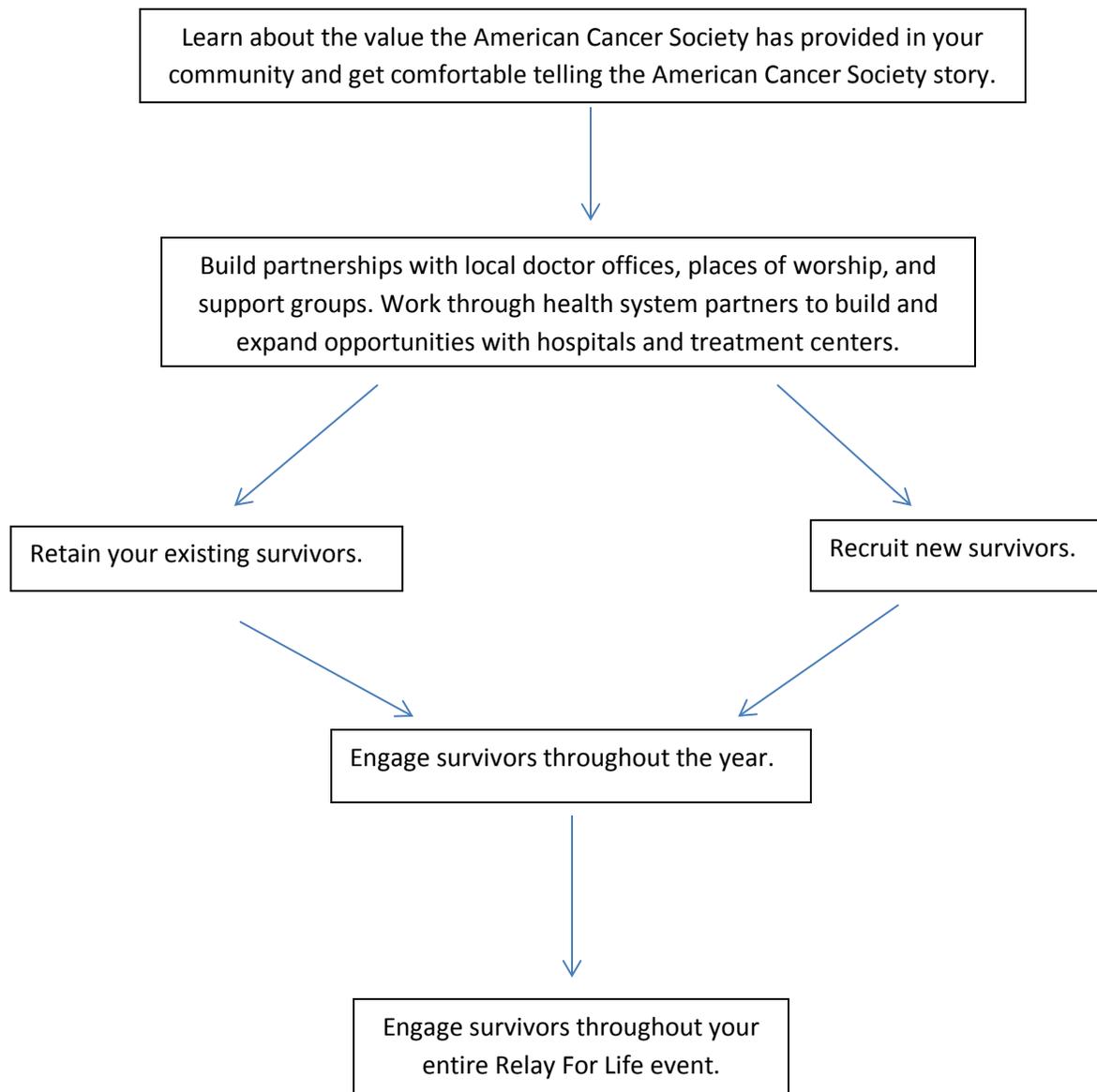
AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY

# RELAY FOR LIFE



For every Event Leadership Team member, the key to success when focusing on survivor engagement is to remember that for survivors, their involvement with our Relay events is much more than a lap. Their Relay For Life experience is really about fighting back, and we should continuously seek opportunities to connect survivors in various ways to do that. For some, fighting back may mean attending a survivor reception; while for others, it may mean joining the Event Leadership Team. It's important that we provide an opportunity for every way someone may want to support the cause.

## Roadmap to Success



Read the flowchart starting at the bottom. We can only effectively engage survivors throughout the Relay event if we have engaged them throughout the year. We can only engage survivors throughout the year if we put energy toward recruiting and retaining them. We can only recruit and retain survivors if we build various partnerships at the local level. We can only build partnerships when everyone sees the value of the American Cancer Society and its mission. Most importantly, people cannot see the Society's value without those in the community sharing their American Cancer Society story and connecting it back to the Society's mission to save lives.



## Telling and Selling the American Cancer Society

### Making the Ask

**WHAT DO I SAY?** Whether you are asking someone to sponsor you, join your team, start a team, or participate as a survivor, we need to feel comfortable with the ask. Try to recall who encouraged you to check out the Relay program for the first time? Do you remember what they said or what they did? How did you feel when you received the ask?

**THE ASK!** This should be a memorable 60-second sound bite to succinctly introduce yourself, the event, and why you participate in the Relay event or why the American Cancer Society and the fight against cancer are important to you. The ask should end with a short and concise question. Overall, it introduces you, highlights the Relay program, and opens conversation to the person of interest.

#### SUGGESTIONS ON HOW TO GET STARTED:

1. **Learn about the impact of the American Cancer Society in your community.**

Talk to your staff partner to learn about the ways that the American Cancer Society is making a difference in your community such as through locally-funded cancer research and local impact of Society programs and services. It is important to know what is happening locally so you can speak to people about their experience.

2. **Be prepared.**

Make a list of all of the possible ways this contact might find a connection to the Relay event. When talking with a survivor, it's easy to give them an invitation to the survivor reception. But it's important to really listen to what their interests are because they may want to get much more involved in the event.

3. **Opening**

"My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am participating in our community Relay For Life of \_\_\_\_\_ event. Have you heard of it?"

Pause for response....

If no, possible response could be:

"It is truly an incredible experience! Relay For Life is community-driven event that celebrates cancer survivors and their caregivers, remembers those we have lost to cancer, and fights back by raising money and awareness in the fight against cancer. There are some pretty amazing ceremonies including the Luminaria Ceremony at nightfall where candles are placed in luminaria bags in honor or memory of those who have battled cancer. I look forward to each year!"

If yes, ask about their experience! How did they hear of the Relay For Life program? Were they involved? If so, how?



4. **Tell your story.**

Paint a picture of why you are involved. Some possibilities could include:

- How cancer has affected someone you care about
- How the American Cancer Society has helped you or a loved one
- Speak to some of the mission focuses of the American Cancer Society. You can find monthly [Mission Toolkits on Relay Nation](#).
- Your favorite part of the Relay For Life event

An example: I got involved with my Relay For Life event after my friend was diagnosed with cancer. I saw firsthand how the funds raised were put to good use! She was able to utilize many of the Society's programs and services that helped her through her cancer journey. I am happy to share she is doing well and will be joining my team this season in her third Survivors Lap!

Whatever part of the American Cancer Society and the Relay For Life program brings out a passion in you, that's the part you should share!

5. **How has cancer impacted you or your family?**

Be sure to listen to the respond that is shared.

6. **The ask**

Here are some ways to ask them to get involved with the American Cancer Society and/or the Relay For Life event by using asks connected with opportunity statements.

For example:

- "There are many ways you and your family can join the fight against cancer."
- "I was wondering if you would consider joining my team?"
- "You are living proof that cancer CAN be beaten. Will you consider coming as my guest to the survivor reception? "
- "I am trying to raise money to help fund the mission of the American Cancer Society, and I was wondering if you would consider making a donation to support my efforts?"

Whatever you determine your approach is remember to pause and wait for an answer. Give the person an opportunity to respond and then reply appropriately based on answer.

Making the ask and closing the deal is critical in recruiting for you Relay event. So let's take a look at the three-step approach outlined here:

I. **Seek specific commitment; be open to alternatives.**

- Be clear about what you are asking and ensure that they understand so that there are no surprises later.
- Understand where you can allow flexibility in the roles to fit the person you are asking and where you cannot.
- Have in mind a deadline needed for their response and immediate action plan following their acceptance.

**II. When the answer is no have a plan to overcome objections.**

- Listen intently to understand the underlying reason for their objection. Do they need more information? Is something else on their mind? Maybe another volunteer role would be a better fit.
- Be equipped with the possible responses and options.
- Understand that a “no” can mean “not right now.” Keep the door open for future involvement.
- Be prepared to offer them something even if the answer is no. Always leave them with something positive to take away from the meeting.
- Even if the answer is no, ask for a referral for another contact.

**III. When the answer is yes be clear about the expectations.**

- Provide a one-page outline of the role, timeline, and communications plan.
- Ask them what they need from us and address any concerns or questions.
- Give them the contact person’s information for the role they have selected.

Follow up with a thank you email and include the contact person and staff.

**7. Ending**

Leave information including contact info, meeting dates, and times. Finally, thank them for their thoughtful consideration of this request.

**Helpful hint:** Practice the ask with a friend or family member so you feel more comfortable with making the ask! Think positive! Most people will say yes!



## Recruitment for Survivors

Local Event Leadership Teams work hard to plan and execute amazing Relay For Life event experiences for all participants and especially survivors. When planning your Relay event, consider the following to ensure that we honor and engage survivors in all capacities.

- Analyze your event's current involvement. By knowing the data around your event, you will have an idea of where to focus your time and effort.
  - Use available data. Ask your staff partner to pull a survivor report. This report can be run for the current year and the previous year.
  - How many survivors are new to the event? How many are returning?
  - Are the survivors attending your event reflective of your community? Keep diversity and inclusion in mind such as geography, race, religion, gender, age, etc.
- Create a retention plan.
  - Did you know you can send emails through the event website JUST to registered survivors? We can send a specific message to survivors to give them event-specific updates about survivor activities, ask them to sign up again, or even ask for feedback about what they would like to see at the event in the coming year.
  - Create a timeline for a few touchpoints with survivors throughout the year. Perhaps it's a birthday card or even a Valentine's Day card – it's a way to let our survivors know we're thinking about them throughout the entire year.
- Create a recruitment plan.
  - Identify some places in your community that can help with the recruitment of survivors such as support groups, places of worship, hospitals, doctor's offices, and local treatment centers.
    - When working with these groups, it's important to keep your staff partner in the loop. Ask your staff partner if the American Cancer Society has a relationship with an organization before going in as they may be able to direct you to the best person to ask.
  - Ask your staff partner to introduce you to your local American Cancer Society health system partners. American Cancer Society staff partners are working in the field right where we want to recruit.
- Coordinate a call party!
  - There is power in numbers! This is a time to get together during or after an Event Leadership Team or Team Captain meeting to canvas the community by calling and reaching out to newly registered survivors or those who have not registered yet from prior years. Let's make sure to let every survivor know we care about their participation in our event.



## Survivor Engagement at the Event

Consider these ideas to help as you brainstorm all of the possible ways to engage survivors through a meaningful experience at your Relay event.

- **Survivor reception:** Depending on the time of your event, your event may host a survivor dinner or a survivor lunch, but both are great opportunities to show special attention to our honored guests. Work with local restaurants to get food donated. Talk to your staff partner about what can be offered to a restaurant in return for catering the survivor dinner. Depending on the value, it could get them some nice recognition at the event!
- **Wall of Hope:** Survivors can put their handprints on a designated wall or sheet of paper as they enter the survivor tent. Their caregivers can join and put their handprints on the wall as well, around their survivors hand print but in a different color.
- **Survivor Photo Booth:** This can be done with a professional who is willing to donate his or her time or any volunteer with a smartphone. Have an area set up with some fun props and a background for survivors and caregivers to take pictures. It's a great way to not only engage people during the event but it's also keep in touch afterward. When sending thank you cards after the event, you can send the pictures out to those who took them (just remember to keep track by name of whose pictures you are taking). If you can print and mail them that's a great bonus, but if not, simply email the photo with a note.
- **Survivor Judges:** This is an idea to make sure survivors see the entire event and not just the inside of the survivor tent. Ask survivors to judge contests at the event such as best campsite, best team banner, judge a contest on the field, or more.
- **Virtual Survivor Program:** Sometimes a caregiver may be present at a Relay event but his/her survivor may not physically be there. Perhaps they are not well enough to attend or they live too far away. Whatever the reason, allow caregivers to honor their survivor at the event through a virtual survivor program.



## Best Practices for Engaging Survivors

**Best Practice from the California Division:** A local retirement community brought cancer survivors and caregivers over for the Opening Ceremony, and they got involved in numerous caregiver and survivor activities throughout the event. Though they couldn't stay for the entire event, it was a great way to get them involved.

**Best Practice from the Eastern Division:** At each meeting, we open with a mission moment. A member of our Event Leadership Team bravely volunteers to share their story or relation to cancer as a way for us to remember why we are each involved in the fight. These stories often include the diagnosis process or treatment course that went along with their personal fight, which help educate our members on different protocol and caregiver resources.

**Best Practice from the Florida Division:** We incorporated survivor campaigns into our social media presence. One was our #SurvivorSunday campaign in which we did a weekly spotlight on a survivor that is connected to our event, either as a loved one of a participant or a participant themselves. We also did a #RelayRoyalty campaign leading up to the night of our event. The campaign encouraged all participants to change their profile pictures on Facebook to a photo of them wearing a purple crown in order to honor the real Relay Royalty, our survivors. This campaign also helped raise awareness of the upcoming event.

**Best Practice from the Florida Division:** Our survivors and caregivers lead had a great idea to make a "Garden of Thanks" for the event. Each survivor wrote a thank you note on a paper flower to stick in the ground at the "garden". Participants walked by the garden all night, and we got great feedback. Survivors were so grateful that we gave them an opportunity to brag about their caregivers.

**Best Practice from the Great West:** We wrote holiday cards to the survivors we had on our list from prior year events. We also used it as an opportunity to announce when our next event would be held, along with an invitation for them to attend.

**Best Practice from the Lakeshore Division:** Adopt-A-Survivor was very successful for our event. We had teams adopt survivors who were coming to the Relay For Life event that did not have a team of their own. The teams made posters recognizing their survivors, socialized with them throughout event, and provided support to the survivors. Survivors were engaged in all parts of a team including telling their story, fundraising, and sharing survivor photo on team website. It was a very special opportunity for many of the survivors and teams.

**Best Practice from the South Atlantic Division:** We called our survivors and caregivers to walk in the Homecoming Parade with our Event Leadership Team. We were able to secure a local pink firetruck (dedicated to cancer awareness) to drive alongside the Event Leadership Team, survivors, and caregivers in the parade and to sit in for the tailgate.