

KICK OFF

HEROES BALL '26

KICK OFF

Friday, Oct. 9, 2026

5:30-9:00 pm

Hyatt Regency Rochester

125 East Main St. - Rochester, NY

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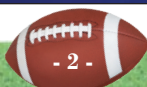
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ORIGINAL LOCAL CONTENT





5:30 - 6:45 pm

Cocktail & VIP Reception

Check-in/Registration

Hors D'oeuvres

Cash Bar (*complimentary two drink tickets*)

Silent Auction (closes at 8:45 pm)

Have Photos Taken!

6:45 - 9:00 pm

Dinner Program

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Oran Spitzer
News 8 WROC

Adam Interviews

Adam Chodak
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Auctioneer

Joe Lomonaco
WHAM 1180

Dinner & Program

Keynote Speaker - Thurman Thomas

"Adam Interviews" & Guest Q&A

Awards Presentation

Live Auction

Support the Mission

9:00 - 9:45 pm

Check-out & Photos

Please check-out by 9:45.

Auction item(s) not checked-out by 9:45 must be picked up at Cancer Support Community at Gilda's Club during business hours.



**HAVE A PHOTO TAKEN WITH
THURMAN THOMAS!**

(Photo session ends at 9:45 pm)



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KEYNOTE

SPEAKER



THURMAN THOMAS *Pro Football Hall of Famer*

Thurman Thomas is a Pro Football Hall of Famer, entrepreneur, philanthropist and longtime Buffalo community leader whose impact has extended far beyond the football field.

A native of Houston, Texas, Thurman first made his mark at Oklahoma State University, where he became one of the most accomplished running backs in school history and earned All-America honors twice. Selected by the Buffalo Bills in the second round of

the 1988 NFL Draft, he went on to become one of the most dynamic and versatile running backs of his generation.

During 12 seasons with the Buffalo Bills, Thurman was at the heart of one of the most memorable eras in NFL history, helping lead Buffalo to four consecutive AFC Championships and four straight Super Bowl appearances. A five-time Pro Bowl selection, he was named the NFL's Most Valuable Player and Offensive Player of the Year in 1991 and became the first player in NFL history to lead the league in yards from scrimmage for four consecutive seasons.

He finished his 13-year NFL career with 12,074 rushing yards, 4,458 receiving yards and 88 total touchdowns. His accomplishments earned him a place on the NFL's All-Decade Team of the 1990s and, in 2007, induction into the Pro Football Hall of Fame. He was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame the following year.

But for Thurman, Buffalo became much more than the city where he played football. It became home.

Together with his wife, Patti, Thurman has spent decades giving back to the Western New York community that embraced their family. Through the Thurman Thomas Family Foundation, Thurman, Patti and their family work to create opportunities and provide resources for people throughout the community, with a focus on education, health and wellness, diversity and inclusion.

(continued on next page)





The Foundation's scholarship program grew from a scholarship Thurman originally established in 1994 while he was still playing for the Bills. In partnership with the SUNY Erie Community College Foundation, the program helps disadvantaged Erie County students continue their education by providing assistance with tuition, fees, books and related expenses.

Thurman has also made health advocacy an important part of his community involvement. He supports Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center's Cruisin' for a Cure, an annual prostate cancer screening, education and awareness event created to encourage early detection and help save lives. His involvement brings particular attention to the importance of screening among men at increased risk, including African American men and those with a family history of prostate cancer.

Off the field, Thurman has built a career in business while remaining deeply connected to Buffalo and Western New York. Yet among all of his accomplishments — athlete, Hall of Famer, businessman and philanthropist — the roles that remain most important to him are those of husband, father, grandfather, friend and member of the Buffalo community.

Thurman and Patti have built their life and raised their family in Western New York, creating a legacy that is about far more than football. The same loyalty, determination and heart that defined Thurman's playing career continue to guide the Thomas family's work today.

More than three decades after he first arrived in Buffalo, Thurman Thomas remains one of the region's most recognizable and beloved figures — not simply because of what he accomplished wearing number 34, but because he chose to stay, invest, serve and make Buffalo his home.

His football career made him a Hall of Famer. His life after football has made his legacy much bigger than the game.



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HERO Award - *given to an individual or group demonstrating meritorious, outstanding or heroic distinctive personal involvement in the cancer arena by a local individual.*



John Mariano, M.D.

*URMC/Wilmet Cancer Institute
Golisano Children's Hospital*

A Rochester native, John's journey in medicine has been shaped by a longstanding connection to his community and a commitment to improving the lives of cancer survivors across all ages. After completing undergraduate studies at Cornell University and a formative research experience at the Food and Drug Administration, he returned home for medical school and a combined Internal Medicine–Pediatrics residency at the University of Rochester, where he developed a passion for

survivorship care and interdisciplinary collaboration.

His clinical training exposed him to the unique challenges faced by adolescent and young adult (AYA) patients, particularly those with sarcoma, and highlighted the importance of reproductive health and oncofertility counseling from cancer diagnosis through survivorship. These experiences inspired his clinical research, which uses real world data to identify barriers and opportunities in oncofertility and supportive care.

In Rochester, John partners closely with community based organizations, including Cancer Support Community at Gilda's Club, to develop developmentally appropriate programs and support for young people and families affected by cancer. Through joint programming, education, and advocacy, he works to bridge care delivered in the clinic with the lived experiences of survivors and their loved ones. With joint clinical appointments in pediatric and adult survivorship at the University of Rochester Medical Center, he is dedicated to providing personalized, equitable care while mentoring the next generation of clinicians.

*Scan QR Code to watch
Dr. Mariano's video*



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HONOREE

Jacob Gitelman Award - *presented in recognition of outstanding meritorious service by a local medical professional working in the cancer arena.*



Sajeena Geevarghese, M.D.

*Medical Director, Gynecologic Oncology
Rochester Regional Health*

A native of Chattanooga, Tennessee, Sajeena Geevarghese, MD, is a board-certified gynecologic oncologist and Medical Director of Gynecologic Oncology at Rochester Regional Health. She received her medical degree from Johns Hopkins University, completed her residency in Obstetrics and Gynecology at Washington University in St. Louis, and her fellowship in Gynecologic Oncology at the University of Minnesota.

She joined Rochester Regional Health in 2022 as Executive Medical Director of Gynecologic Oncology, where she leads the division's clinical, strategic, and operational priorities while continuing to provide comprehensive surgical and medical care to women with gynecologic cancers.

At the heart of her approach to medicine is the belief that it is an extraordinary privilege to care for women during one of the most vulnerable times in their lives. She views her role as extending far beyond treating cancer—to accompanying, coaching and supporting women as they navigate the physical, emotional, psychological and social challenges of a cancer diagnosis.

She believes that excellent cancer care requires both medical expertise and attention to the whole person. She wants every patient to feel seen, heard and respected, and above all, to know that she does not have to face cancer alone.

"So many women spend their lives caring for everyone around them—their children, spouses, parents and families. Cancer suddenly places them in the unfamiliar position of needing to be cared for. To be entrusted with caring for them during that time is an incredible privilege."

Central to this philosophy is the multidisciplinary team she has helped build at Rochester Regional Health. She is deeply proud of a culture defined by compassion, excellence, responsiveness, attention to detail and genuine support for one another. Physicians, advanced practice providers, nurses, medical assistants and access associates work alongside inpatient

(continued on next page)



and operating room teams, oncology pharmacists, social workers and other specialists with a shared commitment to caring for each patient as a whole person. Dr. Geevarghese considers one of the greatest privileges of leadership to be creating an environment in which talented people can bring their individual gifts together in service of patients and their families.

Throughout her more than 20 years in gynecologic oncology, teaching and mentorship have remained central to her career. She has taught and mentored generations of Obstetrics and Gynecology residents, several of whom were inspired to pursue gynecologic oncology and have become accomplished specialists themselves. She considers investing in the next generation of physicians another way to extend compassionate, excellent cancer care far beyond the patients she can personally reach.

Ultimately, Dr. Geevarghese's philosophy is simple: while medicine cannot always cure, it can always care. She hopes every woman entrusted to her care knows that she is seen, that she matters, and that she will never have to face cancer alone.

Scan QR Code to watch
Dr. Geevarghese's video



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Richard McGlynn Award - *given to an individual who through their leadership, inspiration or own survivorship, have worked on behalf of people with cancer.*



John Salter

ESL Commercial Banking

Immediate Past Board Chair

Cancer Support Community at Gilda's Club Rochester

John Salter is a Senior Relationship Manager with ESL Commercial Banking where he partners with businesses across the Rochester region to streamline banking operations, strengthen cash flow, and secure financing solutions. Throughout his 20-year career in banking and commercial finance, John has held roles at First American Equipment Finance, M&T Bank, and ESL developing a

reputation for building strong relationships and helping companies achieve their financial goals.

John joined the Board of Directors at Cancer Support Community at Gilda's Club Rochester in 2020 and quickly became a dedicated advocate for the organization's mission of ensuring that no one faces cancer alone. Throughout his tenure, he has served in several leadership positions including Development Chair, Vice Chair, and Board Chair. John also served as the Chair and Co-Chair of the organization's signature fundraising event, the Heroes Ball, in 2023 and 2024, helping to raise critical funds to support the organization's growing impact in the community.

Beyond his leadership positions, John has taken a highly hands-on approach to advancing Cancer Support Community's mission. In addition to leading fundraising efforts, donor cultivation initiatives, strategic planning, board development, and community outreach, he has actively represented the organization through television and radio media appearances to promote fundraising events and increase public awareness of the organization's services. He has also volunteered his time directly with members, including preparing and serving meals at member events and delivering groceries to individuals and families impacted by cancer. These experiences have allowed him to connect personally with those the organization serves while reinforcing the importance of providing compassionate support beyond clinical care.

During John's tenure on the board, Cancer Support Community experienced significant growth in membership, programming, revenue, and board engagement. This growth strengthened the organization's ability to provide comprehensive social, emotional, and educational support to cancer patients, survivors, caregivers, and family members throughout the region.

Scan QR
Code to
watch John
Salter's video





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- 16 -



Christie Simonetti Award - *given to an individual(s) in recognition of their caring and concerned spirit shown to others. The award's namesake passed away at the age of 8 from leukemia. She brought out the best in anyone who met her.*



Richard DiMarzo

*Founder, Judy's Fund
Judy DiMarzo Survivorship Program*

Richard graduated from Colgate University in 1972. He is the father of two sons, Josh and Brian; two daughter-in-laws, Amanda and Mary; and one grandson, Jack. He was married to Judy DiMarzo for 39 years until her death in 2009 after a nine year battle with cancer.

During Judy's lifetime, beginning with her cancer diagnosis in 2000, they began a giving campaign to the Wilmot Cancer Institute. After Judy's death, Richard began donating money initially to support to lymphoma research.

During a breakfast meeting with Dr. Jonathan Friedberg, Dr. Laura Calvi, his partner, Paul Hanrahan, and Paul's wife, Katie, the group discussed an alternative to supporting lymphoma research: funding a cancer survivorship program. After further conversations with friends and family, everyone agreed, and he decided to direct his support toward funding the cancer survivorship program.

Judy's Fund was the initial fundraising organization for the cancer survivorship program. As this program grew from infancy to adolescence to adulthood, the Judy DiMarzo Cancer Survivorship program at the Wilmot Cancer Institute was created with Richard's personal bequest. The program in Judy's name not only provides support for survivors, but additionally funds cancer research. Judy's Fund was the beginning of what is now the Warrior Walk/ Weekend, an annual event of the Wilmot Cancer Institute.

The original committee launched the Warrior Walk in 2013. The Warrior/Walk Weekend has raised more than \$3.5 million for survivorship and research. It has raised \$2.5 million in the past three years alone, and the hope is to raise another \$1.5 million this year. Most of this growth resulted as he stepped away from the day-to-day committee. Richard extends kudos to all those who work diligently on the Warrior/Walk Weekend.

Today, Richard has been happily married to Marisela for eight years.

*Scan QR Code to watch
Richard DiMarzo's video*



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Community Leader Award - *given to an individual or group of individuals demonstrating exceptional leadership and/or philanthropy through a commitment to health care and wellness in the cancer community.*



Rochester Americans

Jody Gage

Director of Strategic Planning

The Rochester Americans have regularly participated in league-driven cancer initiatives for the past several seasons, most notably Hockey Fights Cancer Night, a larger campaign spearheaded by the National Hockey League, National Hockey League Players' Association and the American Hockey League designed to unite the hockey community in support of people affected by cancer.



While the overall theme of the night is part of more a global initiative, it also impacts the local community with Cancer Support Community at Gilda's Club being

the team's primary partner and benefactor. The powerful initiative, which each year includes a variation of lavender-colored jerseys, dasherboards, stick tape, helmet decals and "I Fight For" cards, has successfully generated more than \$44 million since its inception in 1998 and has continued to remain at the forefront of raising awareness and supporting those affected by cancer, touching the lives of millions along the way. The proceeds from the auction for the specialty jerseys are donated back to CSC as are a portion from an exclusive fundraising ticket offer in the weeks leading up to the game.

Additionally, Amerks players have developed personal relationships with people affected by cancer over the years, from making appearances across Western New York at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center in Buffalo to Golisano Children's Hospital locally here in Rochester. Just this past season, Amerks players and their significant others spent an evening at CSC preparing dinner while Riley Fiddler-Schultz, the team's reigning AHL Man of the Year for community service, personally hosted over a dozen pediatric cancer patients along with their families from C.U.R.E. Childhood Cancer Association as part of his Fidds' Friends program.

*Scan QR Code to watch
Jody Gage's video*





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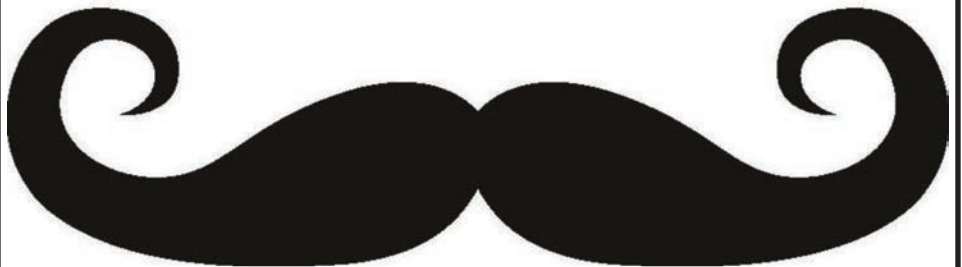


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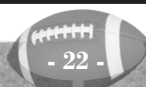
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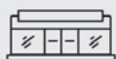
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Our Mission

We uplift and strengthen people impacted by cancer by providing support, fostering compassionate communities, and breaking down barriers to care. We create welcoming communities of no-cost support for everyone living with cancer – men, women, teens and children – along with their families and friends.

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MAPPING *my* JOURNEY®

Mapping My Journey is our personalized support system for those at any stage of their cancer journey. We offer more than 1,000 program sessions each year that aim to restore, support, and teach, from health and wellness, to expressive arts, social, educational, and youth classes.



Support Groups



Social Connections



Health & Wellness



Expressive Arts



Educational



Youth & Family



Veterans with Cancer



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