



WALK



## 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Lustgarten Foundation Westchester Walk for Pancreatic Cancer Research



*The Lustgarten Foundation Westchester Walk for Pancreatic Cancer, presented by Northwell Health Cancer Institute, draws over 450 supporters and raises more than \$136,000.*

Valhalla, NY, June 11, 2025 – More than 450 community members gathered on Sunday morning at Westchester Community College for the [16th Annual Lustgarten Foundation Westchester Walk for Pancreatic Cancer Research](#), presented by the Northwell Health Cancer Institute. Together, participants raised over \$136,000 to advance life-saving research efforts aimed at detecting, treating, and ultimately curing pancreatic cancer. Since its inception, the Westchester Walk has raised over \$5 million, 100% of every dollar raised going directly to research.

“At Lustgarten, we believe community is power,” said Linda Tantawi, CEO of the Lustgarten Foundation. “Pancreatic cancer is a devastating disease, but events like this inspire hope. Together, we walk to honor those we’ve lost, support those still fighting, and fund the research that will transform the future.”

### ***Medical Leaders Inspire and Empower***

[Crystal Antoine-Pepeljugoski](#), MD, medical oncologist and hematologist at the Northwell Health Cancer Institute — the presenting sponsor of the Westchester Walk — delivered remarks during the opening ceremony. She emphasized the importance of research in improving outcomes for patients.

“The funds raised here today directly support the development of new treatments and therapies,” said Dr. Antoine-Pepeljugoski. “We’re seeing inspiring progress in the field—and it’s fueled by the compassion and generosity of this community.”



*Crystal Antoine-Pepeljugoski, MD, Medical Oncology, Northwell Health, giving remarks*

She was joined by [Anna Komorowski, MD](#), Regional Director of the Northwell Cancer Institute in Westchester, and her patient, Robert Polito, a five-year pancreatic cancer survivor from New Paltz, NY. Their presence highlighted the real impact of cutting-edge care and long-term survivorship. Dr. Komorowski oversaw Robert’s care at Phelps Hospital, which included neoadjuvant therapy (chemotherapy both before and after surgery). He also underwent a complex Whipple procedure at Lenox Hill Hospital. Now 73, Robert thrives as an author and professor at The New School, a testament to the power of innovative care and the dedicated team approach at Northwell Health.

“I think for all pancreatic cancer patients, there's the statistics and there's your story, and they're not necessarily the same,” Robert told the crowd at the Westchester Walk.

### ***A Disease in Urgent Need of Attention***

Pancreatic cancer is the third-leading cause of cancer-related deaths in the U.S. This year, approximately 2,980 New Yorkers will die from this disease—most blindsided by a late-stage diagnosis with few treatment options. But there is hope. The 5-year survival rate for pancreatic cancer patients has more than tripled since the Lustgarten Foundation was founded in 1998, climbing from just 4% to 13%. The Foundation’s strategic partnerships with institutions like Northwell Health Cancer Institute and Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory are accelerating progress, bringing new treatments to patients faster and improving outcomes.

### ***Community Engagement and Support***

The event was emceed by Lisa LaRocca, Emmy Award-winning journalist from News12 Westchester, with live announcements throughout the morning from Andy Bale of 100.7 WHUD. Their voices helped energize participants and underscore the importance of the cause.

For those interested in supporting the Westchester Walk for Pancreatic Cancer Research, the [event registration page](#), as well as individual and team fundraising pages, will remain open throughout 2025.

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#### **About the Lustgarten Foundation**

The Lustgarten Foundation is the largest private funder of pancreatic cancer research in the world, funding preeminent pancreatic cancer researchers, driving the pursuit of bold and innovative science toward earlier detection and better treatments, and transforming pancreatic cancer into a curable disease. The Foundation funds research where creative risks yield high rewards to accelerate and expand life-saving treatment options. We believe time is everything to patients and their families, and that community is power. Lustgarten programs and events provide people affected by pancreatic cancer a voice and a place to create hope, together. For more information about the Lustgarten Foundation, visit [lustgarten.org](https://lustgarten.org) and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Bluesky](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [YouTube](#).

#### **About The Northwell Health Cancer Institute**

The Northwell Health Cancer Institute offers more than 25 oncology specialties integrating a broad network of nationally recognized hospitals and cancer experts. The Institute's Pancreatic Cancer Center, which is designated as a "Center of Excellence" by the National Pancreas Foundation (NPF), features a multidisciplinary team of specialists who provide compassionate, comprehensive care through innovative therapies and leading-edge surgical techniques.

#### **Contact:**

**Alexas Santiago**, Senior Manager, Marketing & Communications

845-558-6314 | [asantiago@lustgaren.org](mailto:asantiago@lustgaren.org)

**Brian Donnelly**, Northwell Health

(914) 575-9723 | [bdonnelly22@northwell.edu](mailto:bdonnelly22@northwell.edu)