

# Race for the Place fundraiser expects more than 3,500 participants



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The Gathering Place's annual fundraiser -- its biggest of the year, the Race for the Place -- is scheduled for June 2 at Beachwood Place, 26300 Cedar Road. The Gathering Place

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BEACHWOOD, Ohio -- National Cancer Survivor Day is a big one for survivors all over the country.

This is particularly so in Beachwood, where thousands gather each year at Beachwood Place mall, 26300 Cedar Road, to celebrate the day and take part in the annual Race for the Place.

"The Place" is The Gathering Place, an organization located at 23300 Commerce Park Road that provides free services -- including programming for children and young adults, art therapy, nutrition and exercise classes, support groups, education and more -- for those diagnosed with cancer and their families.

The 24th annual Race for the Place -- this year being held the morning of June 2 -- is The Gathering Place's largest fundraiser.

It is a 5K/1-mile walk held on the Beachwood Place grounds.

"Participants tell us 'the hospital saved my life, The Gathering Place saved my soul,'" said The Gathering Place CEO Michele Seyranian.

"Race day gives us the special opportunity to celebrate all of those we've had the privilege to walk with on their individual cancer journey.

"It is because of the amazing generosity and engagement of the community that we can continue to help everyone who walks through our doors as they face a life-altering cancer diagnosis.

"We cannot thank them enough. Without them, there is no us."

This year's race is expected to draw more than 3,500 participants and has a goal of raising \$425,000 -- about \$60,000 more than it raised in 2023.

The Gathering Place first opened its doors in January 2000, founded by its former CEO, Eileen Saffran.

Seyranian became CEO in 2020, but her association with the organization began almost from its inception -- and in a very meaningful way.

"My daughter, when she was 4 years old, was diagnosed with a very rare form of leukemia for children -- acute myeloid leukemia, which is truly an adult disease," recalled Seyranian.

"We came to The Gathering Place. A friend of ours had told us about it, thinking they might be able to help us."

The Gathering Place's medical librarian --whose services are among the free services provided -- helped Seyranian find an oncologist in Seattle, Dr. Fred Hutchinson, who was doing research on children with acute myeloid leukemia.

"So we connected with him and he made contact with the doctors at Rainbow Babies and Children's Hospital, where my daughter was treated, and, thank God, we had a positive outcome."

After being in remission for 22 years, her daughter, Alique Topalian, who is now 30, relapsed 18 months after Seyranian came to work at The Gathering Place.

"But she's (now) doing great," Seyranian said. "She finished her PhD. and she was working in psychiatry. After her relapse, she is doing very well and has now moved into cancer research.

"She does survivor research and develops survivor programs at the University of Cincinnati and Cincinnati Children's (Hospital).

"Cancer touches just about every family at some time," said Seyranian, who noted that each year in Northeast Ohio, 23,000 to 25,000 people get a cancer diagnosis.

"And that diagnosis also has a big impact on their families," she said.

"Every dollar we raise helps us to keep our programs free of charge, and that's what's really important.

"With the research that's been done, particularly with survivorship, it's critical that we not only focus on the medical side of cancer, which the hospitals do so well, but we also need to focus on the psycho-social, the physical, the nutrition -- those sides of it, as well.

"Research has shown the impact that that has on a person's ability during treatment, and then after treatment, to maintain the best quality of life."

Race Day begins with registration at 7:30 a.m., with family activities including face painting, games, music and more, all held in Celebration Village starting at 8 a.m.

A National Cancer Survivors Day ceremony gets under way at 8:45 a.m., with the race starting at 9 a.m. An award ceremony will take place at 10:30 a.m.

"We're all done by 11 a.m., because that's when the mall opens," Seyranian said. "It's a quick day, but a very good and important day."

To register or donate online, visit [racefortheplace.org](https://racefortheplace.org).

Community members can also call the organization at 216-595-9546 or visit The Gathering Place's Beachwood or Westlake (25425 Center Ridge Road) locations to coordinate their participation or donation to Race for the Place.

A variety of sponsorship levels are available. If interested in becoming a sponsor, call 216-455-1505.

*Read more from the [Sun Press](#).*