



Research  
Awareness  
Progress

*Dear Students,*

*Every movement begins with a spark; one person who decides that awareness matters, that compassion matters, and that taking action is worth it. Jo-Ann Danzis lived her life with that spark. She believed in the power of education, the strength of community, and the idea that ordinary people can create extraordinary change when they care enough to try.*

*Pancreatic cancer is a difficult disease, but the story doesn't end there. You have the ability to shape what comes next.*

*By learning the facts, speaking up, sharing information, and supporting one another, you are helping rewrite the future of pancreatic cancer. Awareness saves time. Time saves lives. And your voice — your curiosity, your leadership, your willingness to act — can reach people who might otherwise never hear these messages.*

*Whether you're hosting an event, sharing a post, leading a classroom activity, or simply having a conversation with someone you care about, you are making a difference. You are helping families feel seen. You are helping communities stay informed. You are honoring those we've lost and standing with those still fighting.*

*Most importantly, you are proving that young people are not just the leaders of tomorrow; you are leaders right now.*

*Thank you for choosing to learn, to advocate, and to shine a light on a disease that too often stays in the shadows. Jo-Ann believed in the power of education*

*to change lives. We believe in you to carry that mission forward.*

**Together, we can create a future where pancreatic cancer is detected earlier, understood better, and faced with hope. Please use this guide to help you plan outreach and awareness activities within your school or community group. Please contact us if you have any questions and also to share the type of activity you did! Contact [info@danzis.org](mailto:info@danzis.org)**

— **The Jo-Ann Danzis Foundation**

## **Pancreatic Cancer Outreach Projects Guide for High School Students**

### **Big-Picture Goals for Pancreatic Cancer Outreach**

For high school outreach, focus on three core goals:

1. **Awareness:** Understanding what the pancreas does, what pancreatic cancer is, and why it's often caught late.
2. **Prevention & Risk Reduction:** Recognizing what can be changed (lifestyle) and what can't (family history, genetics).
3. **Empathy & Action:** Supporting people affected and getting involved in advocacy or fundraising.

Pancreatic cancer is aggressive, often diagnosed late, and its rates are rising, including among younger adults under 50. Many young people mistakenly think it only affects older adults and don't know early warning signs, which researchers call a "dangerous" knowledge gap.

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### **Key Facts and Messages Students Should Understand**

Use this section to build classroom talks, posters, or social media content.

#### **What the Pancreas Is and What Pancreatic Cancer Is**

- **Pancreas Basics:**
  - **Role:** Helps digest food and regulates blood sugar.
  - **Location:** Behind the stomach, deep in the abdomen, which makes tumors harder to detect early.
- **Pancreatic Cancer Basics:**
  - **Definition:** A malignant tumor that starts in the pancreas.
  - **Challenge:** Often diagnosed at an advanced stage, which makes it harder to treat effectively.

#### **Symptoms and Why Early Detection Is Hard**

Common symptoms (most are vague and can be caused by many other conditions):

- Abdominal or back pain
- Yellowing of skin or eyes (jaundice)
- Unexplained weight loss
- Digestive problems or changes in stool
- New or worsening diabetes

These symptoms are often mistaken for less serious issues, which leads to delays in diagnosis and fewer treatment options.

## Risk Factors Students Should Know

- **Non-Modifiable Risk Factors (Can't Change):**
  - **Age & Sex:** Historically more common in older adults, but cases are rising in younger people, including those under 50.
  - **Family History & Genetics:** Conditions like BRCA1/2, CHEK2, Lynch syndrome (HNPCC), MEN1, and PALB2 increase risk. Genetic testing can help some people understand if they should be screened.
- **Modifiable Risk Factors (Can Change):**
  - **Obesity:** Increases lifetime risk by about 20%.
  - **Smoking:** A well-established risk factor.
  - **Heavy Alcohol Use:** Linked to increased risk.
  - **Diet & Inactivity:** A plant-forward diet, less red/processed meat, regular exercise, and maintaining a healthy weight can help reduce risk.

## Why Awareness in Young People Matters

- **Rising Rates:** Pancreatic cancer rates have been rising by about 1% annually, and more cases are being diagnosed in people in their 40s.
- **Knowledge Gap:** Over 50% of adults under 50 say they wouldn't recognize early signs or symptoms; more than 30% believe only older adults can get it.
- **Impact on Life:** Treatment is exhausting and often hits people in the middle of school, early careers, or family planning.

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## Planning Outreach: Step-by-Step for High School Students

### Step 1: Define Purpose and Audience

- **Clarify the Goal:**
  - **Awareness-Only:** “We want our school to know what pancreatic cancer is and why early detection matters.”
  - **Awareness + Prevention:** “We want students to understand risk factors and what they can do.”
  - **Awareness + Action:** “We want to raise funds, support a local family, or partner with an organization.”
- **Define the Audience:**

- General student body
- Science or health classes
- Sports teams (fitness & risk factor angle)
- Community night with families

## Step 2: Choose Activity Types

Activity Type	Best For	Impact Style
<b>Awareness Posters or Displays</b>	Hallways, classrooms, or cafeterias	Visual impact; quick facts and graphics
<b>Morning Announcements or School News Segments</b>	Entire school	Short, consistent awareness messages
<b>Classroom Presentations</b>	Science or health classes	Educational and interactive
<b>Social Media Campaigns</b>	Students and community	Digital reach; share infographics or short videos
<b>Fundraising Events (walks, bake sales, purple days)</b>	Whole school or community	Action-oriented; builds empathy and involvement
<b>Guest Speakers or Survivor Stories</b>	Assemblies or clubs	Emotional connection and real-world perspective
<b>Art or Writing Contests</b>	Creative students	Personal expression and awareness through creativity

## Step 3: Build the Message

- Keep it **simple and factual**—focus on what pancreatic cancer is, why it's hard to detect, and what can be done to reduce risk.
- Use **purple**, the awareness color for pancreatic cancer.
- Include **statistics** that show why awareness matters (e.g., rising rates in younger adults).
- End with a **call to action**—learn more, share information, or support research.

## Step 4: Partner and Promote

- **Partner with organizations:** Pancreatic Cancer Action Network (PanCAN), Hirshberg Foundation, or local hospitals.
- **Promote through school channels:** announcements, newsletters, social media, and bulletin boards.
- **Engage teachers and clubs:** science, health, student council, or community service groups.

## Step 5: Reflect and Share Impact

- Collect feedback from participants or attendees.
- Share photos or summaries with local media or community newsletters.
- Reflect on what worked and what could be improved for next time.

## Example Project Ideas

1. **Purple Awareness Week:** Each day focuses on a theme—facts, symptoms, prevention, empathy, and action.
2. **“Know the Signs” Poster Campaign:** Students design posters showing early symptoms and risk factors.
3. **Pancreatic Cancer Awareness Walk:** A school or community event to raise funds for research.
4. **Science Class Mini-Lessons:** Students present short lessons on the pancreas and cancer biology.
5. **Social Media Challenge:** Share one fact a day for a week using a custom hashtag.
6. **Story Wall:** Invite students to post messages of support or stories about loved ones affected by cancer.

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## Key Takeaway

Pancreatic cancer awareness among young people can save lives. By learning the facts, sharing them widely, and showing empathy for those affected, high school students can play a powerful role in changing the future of this disease.