

Dear Selection Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this proposal for “Rooted in Prevention, Growing in Hope,” a community-centered educational and survivorship event to be hosted during Oral Head and Neck Cancer Awareness Week in the healing garden of American Cancer Society Hope Lodge Houston. This initiative aligns with the mission of the American Head & Neck Society (AHNS) to advance education, prevention, and community outreach in head and neck oncology.

The primary target population includes patients, survivors, and caregivers at risk for or affected by head and neck cancer in the greater Houston area. We will also invite individuals at elevated risk for oropharyngeal cancer, including those with a history of tobacco use and those lacking access to preventive dental and medical care.

A secondary target population includes underserved and publicly insured patients receiving care at neighboring non-profit institutions, including Ben Taub Hospital, Memorial Hermann Health System, and Legacy Community Health. By intentionally extending invitations to these communities, we aim to reduce disparities in access to prevention education and survivorship resources.

The event will also engage multidisciplinary providers (speech-language pathology, audiology, head and neck surgery, dental oncology, dietetics, nursing, and social work) to foster collaboration and shared ownership of community outreach efforts.

Methods:

“Rooted in Prevention, Growing in Hope” will be structured as an interactive, garden-based educational experience. The event will feature:

1. Interactive Educational Stations Focused on Prevention and Early Detection

- Tobacco cessation education and counseling resources
- Education regarding HPV-related oropharyngeal cancer prevention, including information about the vaccination
- Early detection strategies, including instruction on oral self-examination
- Distribution of a curated list of free or low-cost dental clinics and local screening resources
- Nutrition education, including a smoothie-making demonstration emphasizing healthy dietary practices

2. Survivorship and Prevention Garden Activity

Participants will place labeled plants in the Hope Lodge healing garden to symbolize:

- Personal prevention commitments (e.g., smoking cessation, vaccination, routine screenings)
- Celebrations of survivorship and resilience

This symbolic and interactive activity reinforces our prevention messaging while honoring survivorship in a tangible, community-centered way.

3. Supportive Resources and Community Engagement

- Samples of supportive care products (e.g., dry mouth products, supplemental nutrition drinks, sunscreen)
- Light refreshments and hydration station
- Volunteer engagement from multidisciplinary clinicians and trainees

Expected Outcomes

Short-term outcomes include:

- Increased participant knowledge regarding oropharyngeal cancer risk factors, HPV vaccination, tobacco cessation, and oral self-examination techniques
- Increased awareness of accessible local screening and dental care resources
- Strengthened connection among survivors, caregivers, and healthcare professionals

Intermediate outcomes may include:

- Increased uptake of HPV vaccination among eligible individuals
- Increased engagement in tobacco cessation programs
- Increased utilization of preventive dental and oral screening services

Expected Impact on Community Health and Knowledge

This initiative directly addresses modifiable risk factors for head and neck cancer, particularly tobacco use and HPV-related disease. By providing culturally sensitive, accessible education in a community-centered setting, the project seeks to:

- Improve community understanding of head and neck cancer prevention and early detection
- Reduce disparities in preventive care access
- Promote survivorship wellness and empowerment
- Strengthen multidisciplinary collaboration in community outreach

Additionally, this event may serve as a scalable model for future AHNS-supported community engagement initiatives during Oral Head and Neck Cancer Awareness Week.

Estimated Cost

The estimated project cost is approximately \$2,000–\$3,000, allocated as follows:

- Educational materials and printing
- Plants and labeling materials for garden activity
- Sample procurement (dry mouth products, nutritional supplements, sunscreen)
- Light food and beverages
- Hydration station supplies
- Event setup materials

Efforts will be made to reduce costs through in-kind donations and volunteer participation.

Other Available Funding

We anticipate partial in-kind support through donated educational materials, product samples, and volunteer time from participating departments and community partners. We will also explore institutional or philanthropic contributions to supplement requested funds. At present, no major external grant funding has been secured, and AHNS Community Service Award support would serve as the primary funding source for implementation.

In summary, “Rooted in Prevention, Growing in Hope” represents an innovative, community-centered approach to advancing head and neck cancer prevention, early detection, and survivorship support. Through education, symbolism, and multidisciplinary collaboration, this event seeks to cultivate lasting impact in the Houston community.

Thank you for your consideration,
Team MDA Head & Neck.