



Stronger Together Head & Neck 5K: Community-Based Cancer Prevention, Education, and Screening Initiative

American Head and Neck Society
Cancer Prevention Service Award Committee

Dear Members of the Award Committee,

On behalf of the University of Florida Department of Otolaryngology–Head & Neck Surgery, I am pleased to submit this proposal for consideration for the 2026 AHNS Cancer Prevention Community Service Award. We are hosting community-centered 5K event focused on raising funds and awareness for head and neck cancer in conjunction with Head and Neck Cancer Awareness Week. The initiative is aligned with the mission of the American Head and Neck Society (AHNS) to reduce the global burden of head and neck cancer through prevention, education, and early detection. This event integrates physical activity, free head and neck cancer screenings, HPV vaccination education, tobacco cessation messaging, and sun-protection outreach into a highly accessible public setting. By reducing barriers to care and engaging at-risk populations in a nontraditional environment, this initiative advances health equity, early diagnosis, and sustainable community impact.

HPV-associated oropharyngeal cancers are rising, particularly among younger adults who may not routinely access preventive healthcare services. Tobacco exposure and ultraviolet radiation remain major modifiable risk factors, and individuals from underserved communities often experience disproportionate exposure and face structural barriers to screening, vaccination, and specialty referral. Consistent with prior AHNS Community Service Award initiatives emphasizing prevention, early detection, and outreach to vulnerable populations, this program directly addresses modifiable risks and expands access to screening in a low-barrier, community-based format.

Before the 5K, participants and community members will receive free head and neck cancer screenings conducted by trained otolaryngology-head and neck surgery faculty and residents/fellows using standardized examination protocols. Individuals with concerning findings will be set up for clinical assessments in the UF Head & Neck Surgery Clinic. Educational booths will provide evidence-based counseling on HPV vaccination, tobacco cessation, and UV protection, and prevention materials will be distributed to reinforce learning beyond the event.

Our target population includes Gainesville and North Florida community members, including underserved populations with limited access to preventive services. We are also focused on University of Florida students and young adults at risk for HPV-associated disease and individuals with tobacco exposure or high ultraviolet exposure risk. With this



event, we are aiming to screen over 100 community participants in a single-day while increasing awareness of early signs and symptoms of head and neck cancer, promoting HPV vaccination uptake and risk-factor modification, and improving access to specialty referral pathways for individuals with abnormal findings.

Promotion will include partnerships with local running organizations, and University outreach initiatives to increase visibility and engagement. The organizers will also collaborate one month in advance to paint a public mural in Gainesville to further amplify awareness of the event. By embedding cancer prevention services into a community-centered event, this initiative is structured for scalability and long-term sustainability, with the goal of establishing an annual event aligned with Oral Head and Neck Cancer Awareness Week. The program model can be replicated and expanded to support broader regional outreach efforts.

Estimated total costs range from \$1,500–\$3,000 and include screening supplies, educational materials, permits, safety logistics, and race materials. Funding from the AHNS Community Service Award will directly support patient-facing screening activities and prevention outreach materials, ensuring that grant resources are maximally directed toward community impact.

We believe this initiative reflects the mission of the AHNS Cancer Prevention Service by combining screening access, public education, and innovative community engagement in a high-visibility format during Oral Head & Neck Cancer Awareness Week. We are committed to expanding awareness and prevention efforts within our community and are grateful for your consideration of our proposal.

Sincerely,

Rachel Janke
Second-Year Medical Student
University of Florida College of Medicine
On behalf of the Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery