

BELLA MAGAZINE



HOLIDAY 2023 | ISSUE 07

HOPE FOR THE HOLIDAYS

WWW.BELLASTERI.COM

CONTENTS



IN MEMORY OF
KAIA

HOLIDAY 2023 | HOPE FOR THE HOLIDAYS

03 EDITOR'S DESK

We are at war and some battles are won while others are lost, but we continue to wage war and we will not give up

04 BELLA AND HER BRAVE BEADS

Beautiful, brave, and a shining light, meet Bella Cervantes, one of our new authors

06 FAITH, HOPE AND CANCER

Childhood cancer survivor, author, and advocate Carolyn Breinich comes to the Bell Asteri family to celebrate her cancer anniversary and bring some exciting new ideas to us

08 KALLIE AND HER KINDNESS

Remembering Kallie Dickens and her kindness as we introduce Kalliegator and Kora Chicken

10 IN MEMORY OF KAIA LAURO

EIGHT-YEAR-OLD KAIA FOUGHT CANCER LIKE A CHAMPION AND WE GRIEVE THIS LOSS

17 ART AT BELL ASTERI

A children's book is nothing without illustrations. We have been blessed with artists like Estella, Eva and others. Creating illustrations for children's books is fun, but hard work. We invite aspiring artists to contact us to learn more about our 2024 projects.

19 NEW AND UPCOMING

Take a sneak peak into 2024 and some of the cool projects we are working on



11

CASH'S CORNER

In this edition of Cash's Corner, we offer some fun arts and crafts and activities for the whole family from now through New Year's Day. There might even be some seriously amazing recipes you can make with your friends or your siblings.



18

BOOKS AS GIFTS!

Books make the BEST gifts for the holidays. Here, we offer our top ten reasons to gift books. Be sure to visit our bookstore and place your order in plenty of time so your books make it into the stockings of your family and friends.



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EDITOR'S DESK

by Dana-Susan Crews



Christmas is so magical for many of us. Even in the darkness, the lights of the season fill us with hope and joy.

This year is a strange one. We see many troubles around the world and it feels like that magical hope is fading. War abounds. And when we see images on the news of children being harmed, it is hard to feel that joy. You see, in the midst of war, as much as we don't want to see grown adult soldiers being slaughtered, what bothers us the most is seeing the tiniest of humans, the most innocent of all, being destroyed by war.

One of the reasons I (and so many of you) compare cancer to a war is because when cancer attacks, it feels like a terrorist has attacked. And like all terrorists, cancer doesn't care about the young and innocent lives of children. Cancer is viscous and cruel.

Today, I cannot help but reflect upon the year. Today, although I keep my hope, I feel the weight of war. I feel the pain of grief as too many children around the globe have been slaughtered at the cruel hands of cancer. In fact, in 2023, almost 100,000 kids around the world perished because of cancer.

I don't know what tomorrow will bring. I don't know what 2024 has in store for us. What I do know is that even in the midst of the darkness, I can still see the twinkling lights on a Christmas tree and be reminded of hope.

Hope means I look forward to a time when cancer no longer can harm kids or anyone else. Hope means I keep on fighting on behalf of those who are too weak to fight. Hope means believing even when I cannot see. Hope with me, Friends.

BRAVE BELLA

by Julie Frampton



Bella is a smart, bright, beautiful 11-year-old girl from Louisiana who is on a mission to raise as much awareness and funds as she can for her type of cancer, retinoblastoma.

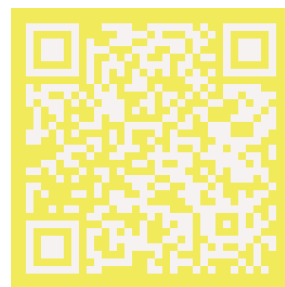
Bella was diagnosed in February 2015 at just two and a half years old. By happenstance her mom, Robin, read an article about a child in Australia who had been diagnosed by her mother. They noticed that every picture taken of the child with a flash resulted in her eyes appearing white instead of what we know as red eye. That resonated with Robin, who then went back and looked at pictures of Bella. In every picture taken of Bella from the age of one on, her right eye looked white.

Her pediatrician told them it was nothing to worry about, which could not have been more wrong.

Ultimately a trip to the ER resulted in them finding out that Bella was completely blind in her right eye, and she had tumors.

Their fight would lead them to St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital. Her treatment included a total eye enucleation (eye removal). Bella was not a candidate for chemo or radiation due to the number of tumors that were in her eye. The removal of her eye saved her life. She is cancer free today!

Bella is all of the good in the world we hope our children will be. Since her diagnosis, she has created **Brave Bella Bead Co.**, a bracelet-making business. She takes orders and hand beads each bracelet. And she donates proceeds to St. Jude's Research Hospital. You can find out more on her Facebook page (*use the QR code below*).



One of her prosthetic eyes is a soccer ball, paying tribute to her favorite sport in which she dominates. She had been told she would not be a good fit for playing this sport due to the loss of vision on her right side. But she is proving that she can't be stopped.

Her soccer ball eye creates conversations that change lives by bringing awareness to this disease. At just 11 years old, Bella is writing her first book! She hopes to help other children who will go through the same process and feelings. Bella is making her mark in this world, and we are so proud to be a part of it!

Look for more about her children's book in 2024 which will be illustrated by her brother Leo (more about him and Bella's other siblings coming soon). Proceeds of book sales will benefit St. Jude's Research Hospital.

Bella, Leo and everyone in the Cervantes Family, we joyfully welcome you into our Bell Asteri Family!



FAITH, HOPE, CANCER

welcome new author **CAROLYN BREINICH**

by Julie Frampton



Carolyn is a soon to be 30-year leukemia survivor!

In November of 1993, an 8th grade basketball accident would ultimately reveal her cancer diagnosis. She was kneed in the back which caused her pain. Her original X-rays indicated things were normal, but, she would end up having to quit the basketball team due to the pain getting progressively worse. When the pain was not subsiding for months, she was eventually diagnosed with acute lymphocytic leukemia.

"I was literally diagnosed in the 9th hour. My bone marrow was 99 plus percent leukemia cells. This was five days before my 14th birthday," Carolyn said, "My diagnosis will always be a celebration of life".

Among other trials and tribulations, including an arterial issue with her broviac catheter that would have

been fatal if it had not been replaced, she had to endure the five phases of treatment to make sure all the leukemia cells had been eradicated. This took two and a half years.

Throughout her diagnosis and treatments, she also had to deal with isolation from her classmates and peers and their lack of understanding and empathy, an unfortunate common thread within the cancer community.

Carolyn wrote her first book detailing her journey with cancer and the many paths life can take you on. Her faith in God, which is first and foremost in her life, has had an immense impact on her. *(continued on page 7)*



As her 30th “Cancerversary” approaches, Bell Asteri will be publishing the second edition of her book, “Faith, Hope and Cancer”. This edition will add new details and updates including another cancer diagnosis, skin cancer. Her advocacy work and her “cancerversary” emails, her way of celebrating her diagnosis, will also be included in the new book.

Carolyn walks fiercely in her faith and her humanity while continuing to tell her story, which we can’t wait to share with the world.



Carolyn with Congressman Michael McCaul at the Childhood Cancer Caucus Childhood Cancer Summit, Washington D.C.



Carolyn's high school yearbook photo



With her very supportive husband, Lee, and her beautiful pets



visit www.leukemiagirl.com
or click on the QR code to the left to learn
more about Carolyn and her work to help
bring an end to childhood cancer



Kallie Dickens was only four years old when brain cancer took her away from her family on May 7, 2022. Her parents, Hayley and Justin Dickens published a book about her five months later. "The Optimistic Angel" became one of Bell Asteri's first international books with sales in the USA, Canada, and across Europe.

The Dickens family continues to shine Kallie's light by bringing much needed hope and joy to families with a child with cancer. Their nonprofit organization, Keeping A Light For Kallie, based in their home state of

Louisiana delivers beautiful care packages called Bright Boxes to kids with cancer. In addition to the many gifts in the box, they include a coloring book called "Kalliegator, Colors of Kindness".

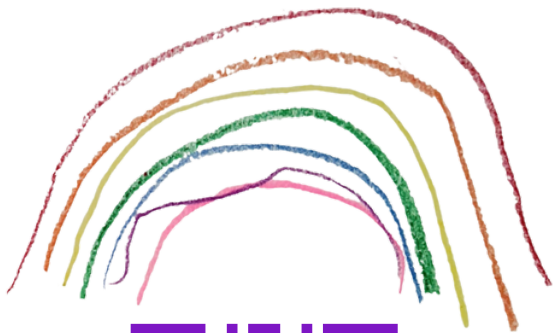
Kalliegator was one of their nicknames for Kallie and she is now the star of our latest Bell Asteri book "Kalliegator and the Magic of Kindness". The book was written by Hayley as a way to honor Kallie's legacy of kindness to everyone she met. It joyously came to life thanks to illustrations by Estella Patrick who according to Hayley "most certainly captured Kallie's essence".

In our last issue of Bella Magazine, we highlighted siblings of children with cancer. The impact that cancer has on siblings is very profound and life-altering. For Kallie's sister, Kora, who was only a toddler when she lost her big sister, a hole has been left in her heart that cannot be filled. Kora was able to include some of her own art in the book and all of us at Bell Asteri believe that Kallie is smiling from Heaven to see what her family has done to shine her light.



Proceeds from book sales help support the mission of Keeping A Light (you can visit the website by using the QR code below). All three of the books published by the Dickens family can be purchased by visiting our website:

www.bellasteri.com/bookstore





IN MEMORY OF KAIA

"Kaia will be remembered as the brightest light in the room. To know her was to adore her. Her joy for life radiated from within her and was felt by all around her. Her positive spirit was contagious and her laugh was infectious. She fought her medical battle with the tenacity of a lion and all the while displayed nothing but grace, dignity and positivity that lifted anyone around her. For all she dealt with, she never complained once. She is a superhero like none we have ever known. Her legacy of courage, strength and bravery will live on forever in our hearts. She will always be with us guiding us as she always has." ~ from her obituary

*K*aia Elizabeth Lauro was a beautiful, strong, brave 8-year-old who fought like a champion against neuroblastoma for many years.

Kaia was born on June 11, 2015 to Heather and Brian Lauro who signed on as authors with Bell Asteri just months ago. Along with Kaia, they were working on a children's book called "Kaia's Brave Scar". It has broken our hearts that Kaia never got to see her book published.

Kaia passed away on October 28, 2023, surrounded by her loving family. They will never stop grieving this loss.

This precious little girl was an equestrian. She loved horses and she loved her cat Ollie. All she wanted was to beat cancer and get to grow up.



CASH'S CORNER

2024 will include some super fun educational and activity books for all ages (see more on page 19). On these next few pages, you can see a “sneak peak” into some of those. While you check it out, make some cookies...

Recipe: No Bake Cookies

INGREDIENTS

- ½ CUP (OR STICK) OF BUTTER CUT INTO PIECES
- ½ CUP MILK
- 1 CUP BROWN SUGAR
- 1 CUP SUGAR
- ¼ CUP COCOA POWDER
- ⅔ CUP CREAMY PEANUT BUTTER (OR ALMOND BUTTER)
- 1 ½ TEASPOON VANILLA
- 3 CUPS OATS

instructions

- Put some parchment paper on a cookie sheet
- Combine the butter, milk, sugars, and cocoa powder in a saucepan and put the heat on low
- Stir everything til the butter is melted
- Slowly increase the heat while you stir and get it to a boil for about a minute
- Remove the saucepan from the stove and keep stirring
- Add the peanut butter or almond butter and vanilla and stir til everything is mixed well
- Add the oats and stir
- Now you can create little bite-sized balls and lay them on the cookie sheet to cool down
- Once they are cooled down, pour yourself a glass of milk or lemonade and enjoy your yummy treat

Let's learn SPANISH together!

First you have to translate the words from Spanish to English and then find the English words in the puzzle. If you need some help, the answer key is on the next page, but try figure it out with your family first!

N T L O V E D O G M U Z
X A B A L L A S S M S L
S K F A L L U M O O E Y
I A A A L L G O C U N Y
S H T E T P H U K T N Y
T A H A L E T T M R N Y
E N E A O A E H Y H E Y
R D R H L C R Z O H N D
R M S A L E R S T A R E
D M O T H E R F R I E N
B R O T H E R F R Y A N

Can you find the Spanish words below in English above?

amor

paz

hija

hijo

amigo

hermana

hermano

madre

padre

estrella

pelota

zapato

boca

ojo

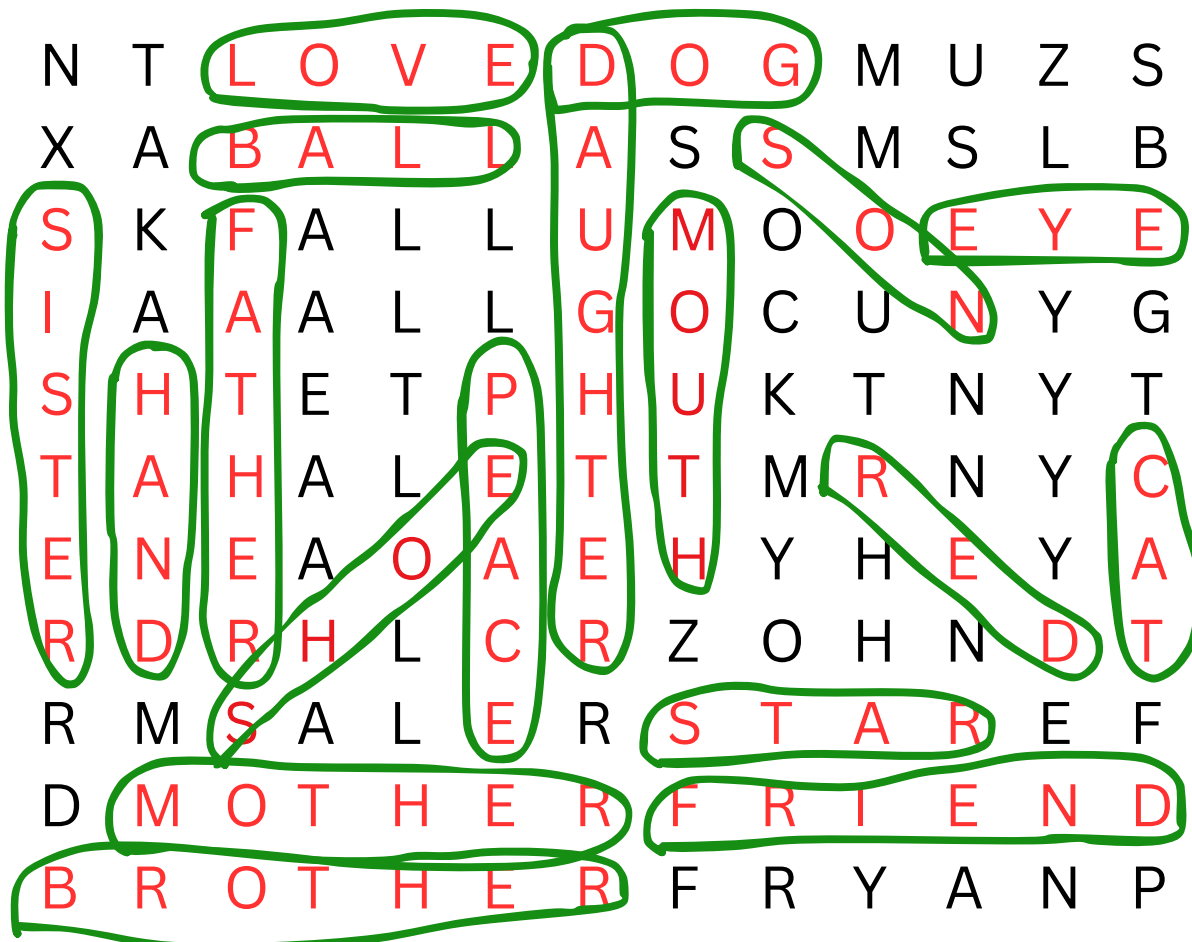
mano

perro

gato

rojo

ANSWER KEY



Can you find the Spanish words below in English above?

amor (love)

paz (peace)

hija (daughter)

hijo (son)

amigo (friend)

hermana (sister)

hermano (brother)

madre (mother)

padre (father)

estrella (star)

pelota (ball)

zapato (shoe)

boca (mouth)

ojo (eye)

mano (hand)

perro (dog)

gato (cat)

rojo (red)

Indoor Scavenger Hunt

A scavenger hunt at home, be the first to find everything on the list. What will your prize be?

TOY

CANDY CANE

TOWEL

HAIRBRUSH

DIRTY SOCK

BALL

SPOON

FRUIT

FLASHLIGHT

COIN

BLANKET

PHONE

PILLOW

SHAMPOO

VEGETABLE

BOOK

BLACK SHOE

PHOTO



All you need to make these are brown pipe cleaners, googly eyes and red pom poms. And of course, bottles of root beer!

Wrap the pipe cleaners around the tops of the bottles and then twist smaller pieces of pipe cleaners to form antlers. With a grown ups help, use a hot glue gun to add the eyes and pom poms.

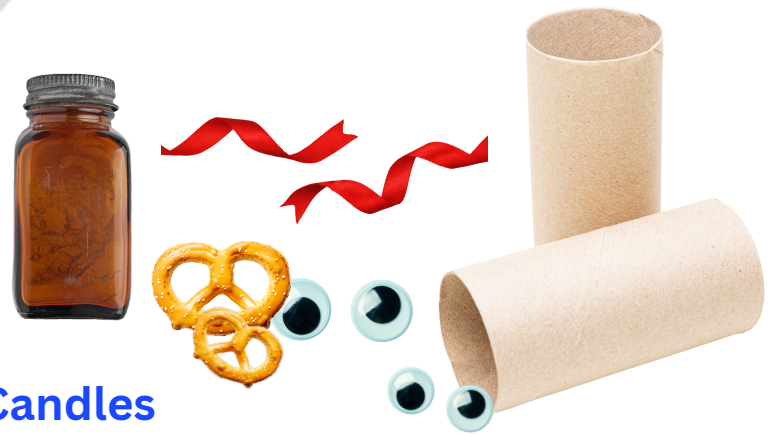


HOLIDAY CRAFTS



Reindeer cupcakes

Kids can help make chocolate cupcakes and once they are cooled down and frosted, turn them into reindeer using pretzels and candies



Candles



Make them any color. Use them for a menorah. Save your toilet paper rolls. Paint the rolls. Use craft sticks and construction paper to create the wick and flame. You can even add some glitter to make it sparkly. Glue the craft stick inside the toilet paper roll.

Cinnamon Scented Ornaments

You will need 3/4 cup of applesauce, 2 bottles (2.37 ounces each) of cinnamon, fun cookie cutter shapes, a straw and some ribbon.

Mix the applesauce and cinnamon in a bowl to form a dough. Roll out and use the cookie cutters to make the ornament shapes. Lay ornaments on a cookie sheet. Make holes in each ornament using a straw. Bake for 2 1/2 hours at 200°. Let them sit out for a couple of days and then insert pretty ribbon through the holes and hang them on your tree. They will smell amazing!



We have been blessed at Bell Asteri to have met people like **ESTELLA PATRICK** who can truly jump inside the minds of our authors and bring their vision to life. In our next issue of Bella Magazine, we will share stories from Estella and other artists like **Eva Larson** and **Leo Cervantes**. If you or someone you know is an aspiring artist and would like to know more about illustrating children's books, have them email us at info@bellasteri.com. We have many projects in the works for 2024 and we love using new illustrators with a heart for childhood cancer.





books as gifts

could there **BE** a better gift? ← *we said that like Chandler*

There are countless reasons that books make great gifts for people of all ages, but here are our top ten:

1. They expand your vocabulary.
2. They introduce you to new places.
3. They nurture imagination and creativity.
4. They can be read over and over again.
5. Stories bring families together.
6. They spark great conversations.
7. They teach important life lessons.
8. They help us learn about our own as well as others' cultures.
9. They promote deep thought.
10. They don't require electricity or batteries.

READING CAN TAKE YOU ANYWHERE. GRAB A BOOK AND GO!



The new year is bringing some new projects and new authors our way. In addition to some great novels and children's books written by childhood cancer warriors, we will be introducing some educational materials and activity books.

While some of these are already listed as free downloads on our website, we will be increasing our collection. Included in this will be two teacher guides:

- The anniversary edition of "Hope, Faith & Cancer" by Carolyn Breinich sparked the idea of creating a middle school lesson plan booklet for educators. This booklet will be comprised of discussion questions, lesson plans, graphic organizers, and a full interdisciplinary set of ideas on how to teach junior high school students about cancer, empathy, and kindness.

- Another teacher guide will be geared more toward the elementary school age group to help kids understand cancer. It will include tips for teachers who have a student in their classroom who has cancer so that they can help their classmates understand what is happening. Additionally, it will include the topic of grief.
- We will be introducing two new coloring and activity books this year that have the added bonus of helping kids learn Spanish!

Look for these titles and more coming in 2024 and be sure to visit our bookstore at www.bellasteri.com to buy books to give out for the holidays or to celebrate a new year with a new resolution to READ MORE BOOKS!

COMING SOON:

"Cancerversary" edition of "Hope, Faith and Cancer" by Carolyn Breinich

Children's book by 11-year-old Bella Cervantes with her brother Leo

"Kaia's Brave Scar" from the Lauro Family

Activity and Educational Books



BELL ASTERI PUBLISHING WISHES YOU & YOUR FAMILY

HOLIDAY BLESSINGS

Smile when you think of the ones you love

