

# bella magazine

FALL 2022 | ISSUE NO. 2

stronger than  
**CANCER**

kids deserve to grow up

## OUR AUTHORS

Meet some of our newest authors and see what's coming out soon

## CHILDHOOD CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

How you can get involved in advocacy during September and beyond

BELL ASTERI PUBLISHING

# CONTENTS

BELLA MAGAZINE FALL 2022

## 03 EDITOR'S NOTE

*A whirlwind that blew through our home and tried to knock us down, but spoiler alert; it did not succeed and we are making lemonade from these lemons*

## 04 FEATURED ORGANIZATION

*Meet Leia Hunt, the inspiring 22-year-old childhood eye cancer survivor who is making a difference in the lives of kids with cancer and their families*

## 12 RESOURCES

*Helpful resources for cancer patients of all ages as well as organizations to get involved with for Childhood Cancer Awareness Month*

## 05 MEET THE AUTHORS

## TAKE A SNEAK PEAK INTO BOOKS COMING SOON!

## 06 CHILDHOOD CANCER AWARENESS

*Ways you can get involved and make a difference in September and beyond*

## 07 STORY STARTERS

*Fall contest for all ages- we've started the stories and we can't wait to find out how they end. YOU get to show off your creative ability!*



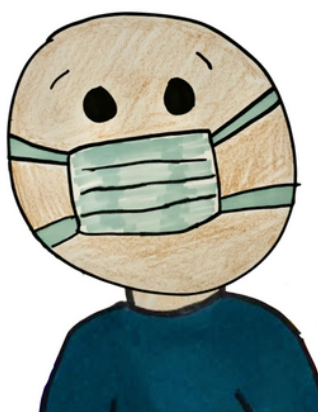
## 10 STARCAST, A PODCAST OF STARS



## 08-09

## CASH'S CORNER

On those days you're stuck at home, you don't have to be bored! Check out these activities the whole family can enjoy.



## WHAT'S COMING?

Take a sneak peak into our upcoming books and stories and meet our inspiring new authors and illustrators



209 W 2ND STREET #177  
FORT WORTH TX 76102 CONTACT:  
BELLASTERIPUBLISHING@GMAIL.COM



WWW.BELLASTERI.COM

*Crews*

# EDITOR'S NOTE

*Editor's note**by Dana-Susan Crews*

These past few months have been a whirlwind for my family. Life has a way of just knocking you down sometimes and when this whirlwind swept through our home, it left us knocked down and exhausted.

What do you do when this happens? Honestly, sometimes it just seems like the easiest thing to do is just lay on the ground and cry (and also honestly, I did some of that). Ultimately, though, the better option is to get back up and show the troubles that they did not defeat you.

With her permission, I am sharing a little bit about my daughter. Three weeks before her wedding day, her fiancé walked out on her. This is a long story that could fill many pages of a book, but the bottom line is that he just wasn't able to be the man he needed to be for her. This alone would have been enough for us to fall apart, but adding to the destruction was the fact that my 24-year-old daughter had also discovered a large swollen lymph node on her neck that would not go away with antibiotics and in fact, has continued to grow.

About two weeks after her fiancé left, she and her dad went for further tests at a local cancer clinic. She was given two options: one was an invasive surgery on her neck to remove the lump for biopsy and the other was to do a "watch and wait" protocol and monitor for growth and changes over the next few months. After consulting with my husband's oncologist as well as a couple of physician friends, she wisely decided to do the "watch and wait" protocol.

Through all of the whirlwind, I have had the incredible privilege of seeing my very brave and strong daughter rise above the ashes. She decided to get up and move forward and not allow the painful events of her life to totally destroy her. My own daughter is one of my heroes!

Her beautiful wedding gown was still hanging in the guest room at my home and I was going to sell it or donate it when she had a most inspired idea. She and I were in Mexico about to take a dinner cruise when she asked me if we could dye her dress blue so she could dress like a princess for some photos. Additionally, she determined that she could use this dress to be a princess and entertain kids with cancer. I turned that dress blue and we are scheduled for some fabulous photos. And I introduced her to Leia Hunt whose organization *Leia's Kids* is our featured organization this month. I cannot wait to see my amazing daughter turn lemons into lemonade, wearing this beautiful dress.

And you know what? Not everything has been tragic. On another personal note from Casa Crews, my 22-year-old son was accepted into Officer Candidate School with the U.S. Navy where he will soon head to be a naval aviator. He will be flying high above the clouds at great speed and I will be down here praying and proud.

Lastly, none of these events in our personal whirlwind have stopped us at Bell Asteri. We are so thankful for all that is on its way as we continue to highlight childhood cancer.



## Featured Organization



Leia Hunt was two years old when she was diagnosed with Retinoblastoma, a form of eye cancer. She endured 31 surgical procedures, chemotherapy, and the insertion of a radioactive plaque in her left eye. The radiation ultimately defeated her cancer, but left her blind in that eye.

Today, at the age of 22, she is the founder and executive director of Leia's Kids whose mission is to provide hope and support to children and their families battling childhood cancer. These kids are given financial support and are treated to a "Crown A Kid" celebration in which they are designated a prince or princess. Leia gives out journals to children battling cancer and she is currently working on a children's book which we hope to publish in the coming months. Learn more about her and her incredible vision by visiting her website and please consider donating to this amazing organization.

**Visit Leia's Kids at [leiaskids.org/](http://leiaskids.org/)**



# MEET THE AUTHORS

*Here is a sneak peak into some of  
the authors we are working with*

**Zach Cook** is not your typical high school senior. At 17, he has endured some truly harsh life circumstances that could have easily defeated him, but he has chosen to conquer the fears and doubts and troubles of life and do something positive. Zach is the sibling of childhood leukemia survivor, Caleb Cook who was diagnosed at the age of six and endured years of treatments. Today, Caleb is alive and thriving and celebrating the accomplishments of his big brother Zach right alongside us.

*Seventeen in Stanzas*, Zach's book of poetry, songs, and art is in the works at Bell Asteri so be sure to check our website for more information coming soon.

**Hayley and Justin Dickens** are finishing up their book about their daughter Kallie who lost her life to brain cancer in May 2022. Kallie's brave fight against a disease no child should have is one filled with pain and devastation, but it is one that needs to be shared. Through the pages of the book, you will meet a precious little girl, her baby sister, and her young parents who have suffered at the cruel hands of childhood cancer. You will see how truly tough these families are and you will learn why it is so important to fund research specifically for kids with cancer.

**Mariah Foster Olsen** is an adult now, but she has suffered for decades from the vast side effects and complications from treatments for neuroblastoma which she was diagnosed with as a baby. Her life and story will change the way you live! She is proof that nothing, not even life-long pain and suffering physically, has the power to stop a determined soul. We hope to have her book complete and ready for you to read in 2023.

**Leia Hunt** is a childhood eye cancer survivor who founded her own charitable organization as a teenager. Today she is a 22-year-old executive director at Leia's Kids (read more on page 4). Leia wrote a journal called "My Battle Plan Journal" which gives kids newly diagnosed with cancer an opportunity to write, draw, and journal their thoughts as they battle their illness. If you would like to help cover the cost of these which she distributes free to these children, visit her website. Leia is also working on a very inspirational children's book which we hope to publish in 2023.

**J. Scott Kirian** is a stage four cancer survivor and advocate for children with cancer. His memoir, *Blessings of a Cancer Survivor and Child Advocate*, will go live by the end of the year. Scott is determined to bring an end to childhood cancer.



# CHILDHOOD CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

*kids deserve to so much better*

September is National Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, but sadly, you won't see as much gold as we believe you should. In fact, our opinion at Bell Asteri is that the entire nation and even the world should suddenly be filled with gold as a reminder that kids get cancer. Cancer kills kids! Cancer changes kids' lives forever. And cancer is a great thief, robbing parents of their children, robbing siblings and grandparents and friends, and stealing health and happiness every single day. More than 15,000 people under the age of 19 are diagnosed with cancer each year in the United States alone. More than 1800 of these kids die each year. This is unacceptable. You have the power to bring a change and **END CHILDHOOD CANCER.**

## ATTEND CUREFEST IN WASHINGTON D.C.

*"CureFest's mission is to make childhood cancer research a national priority by uniting the childhood cancer community, the general public, the medical community and our elected leaders.*

*Over the years, the childhood cancer community has struggled to find its voice because there are thousands of foundations and groups spread out across the country. These organizations have not historically worked together therefore their impact has been very diffused. CureFest brings many of these groups together in our Nation's Capital and around the world to take a united stand against childhood cancer."*

You can attend this in person or virtually September 21-25. More troops are needed to raise their voices and let our legislators know that federal funding for childhood cancer needs to increase. No child should have to get cancer at all, but when it does happen, they deserve to have access to therapies that do not leave them permanently damaged.

Find out more about CureFest by visiting their website: [www.curefestusa.org](http://www.curefestusa.org)



### **Other ways to raise awareness:**

- 1. Wear your gold ribbon all month**
- 2. Change your social media profile to gold**
- 3. Donate to an organization (page 12)**
- 4. Host a fundraiser**

# Story Starters

Writing can be so fun. But are you stuck with a blank page before you not sure what to write? These Story Starters are just for you! Use them to get you started because once you start, you never know where all you can go...

1. Jennifer was a 12-year-old who was determined to change the world with her invention. Her only problem was that she was shy and she would have to present her invention to the Science Board to get them to agree to invest. For her, there was only one option...
2. Eddie the Elephant was one of the happiest in the zoo. He had a mom and a dad who loved him. He had many friends. His days were filled with eating and playing and watching children come by for a visit, but Eddie was so very curious about all of the wonders of the world and he knew he would never know about them unless he could escape from the zoo and get back to Africa where his parents had come from. So, one day...

Want to share your completed story with us?  
Email [bellasteripublishing@gmail.com](mailto:bellasteripublishing@gmail.com)

# Cash's Corner

## Theme Days

Here are some theme ideas for your family. Take them and make them your own. And send us photos from your fun family time to [BellAsteriPublishing@gmail.com](mailto:BellAsteriPublishing@gmail.com)

### **ZOO DAY**

It doesn't matter what the weather is doing outside and it doesn't matter if you're sick and stuck at home or the hospital. Zoo Day can happen anywhere!

Supplies: *stuffed animals and/or printed photos of animals; blankets and sheets; popsicle sticks; snacks*

How it's done: put the stuffed animals into "forts" made from blankets and sheets spread out around the house. If you're in a small area or only have one room for this, build cages using popsicle sticks and use printed photos of animals to place in the cages. Pack a bag of snacks (pop corn is one of our favorites). Pretend to drive to the zoo. Along the way, sing some songs about animals ("Going on a Bear Hunt" is a good one)



Make sure there are plenty of funny adventures while you drive (you see a gorilla crossing the street or a zebra sitting on the freeway eating string cheese). Be sure to take a pretend train ride when you arrive and on the ride, be sure you get to see plenty of funny sights (lions playing a game of tag or owls playing Candy Land). Begin your journey of visiting the caged animals and since imagination rules this trip to the zoo, remember that these animals can TALK! Ask them to tell you their names and a little bit about their adventures in the zoo. Be sure to write some of those stories down because those might be fun bed-time stories later on. Eat your snacks on a blanket as a picnic and on the way "home", the kids can take a nap or even more fun, mom and dad can take a nap while the kids "drive" home. And while we are at it, you don't have to have a normal car. You can drive a flying car or a magical flying carpet or even ride a talking Tiger. After all, your imagination owns the day! Don't forget to take lots of photos!





## The Wheels on the BUS go round and round...

### "B Day"

Supplies: *anything that starts with the letter "B" - examples include bandanas, bananas, balls, balloons, boxes, and so much more.*

How it's done: when the kids wake up in the morning (or from their nap), Mom and/or Dad is dressed like Batman or like a butler or baseball player (come up with something that starts with "b" of course). Tell the kids "today is B Day and everything we do and eat has to start with the letter B". What are some foods that start with the letter B? Ask the kids for some suggestions so they can use their brains (see, the word brain starts with B too).

Food Ideas: blueberries (or blueberry pancakes), broccoli, bread with butter, baked ziti, etc.

Activity Ideas: basketball, biking, ballet, baking (banana bread), bed-making (chores count, right?), book-reading (at Bell Asteri, we love this one), etc.

Arts and Crafts: Bee pics (take photos of everyone and cut out their heads and turn them into bees); Butterfly art, box painting (yes, just grab a box and paint it and then later on, pretend it's a bus and drive it somewhere fun like Boston or a boat and head to the Bahamas); Buildings (again, use some boxes and build a downtown and make up some fun stories about the businesses in your new buildings)

Games: Bear Hunt (you know the song, right?), Boom Box (ask if your kids know what a boom box is and then pretend you have one and do some fun dancing);

Don't forget to take plenty of photos of your day and send them our way. Let us know what kinds of fun "B" things you did.





# a podcast by bell asteri coming soon

[bellasteri.com/starcast](http://bellasteri.com/starcast)



Due to unforeseen circumstances, we have had to push our start date for the podcast back to late 2022. Check out our website and Facebook page for updates.

# 10 CHILDHOOD CANCER FACTS & STATISTICS



- 1** More than 15,000 kids under the age of 19 are diagnosed with cancer every year in the United States
- 2** Cancer is the number one disease killer of children, with 1800 dying of cancer every year in the United States
- 3** Almost all childhood cancer survivors endure long-term or permanent side effects from therapies to treat their disease
- 4** Second cancers are common for pediatric cancer survivors and can occur within months or up to several years following treatment
- 5** Federal funding for the at least 12 types of childhood cancer combined is less than 4%
- 6** Worldwide, more than 400,000 children are diagnosed with cancer every year
- 7** A majority of pediatric cancer patients are not diagnosed until their cancer is in an advanced stage (delayed diagnosis)
- 8** Childhood cancer incidence is increasing each year
- 9** Children with cancer need therapies specifically developed for their growing bodies instead of simply "tweaking" adult cancer therapies
- 10** The cause of childhood cancer is not known and more research is needed to determine the causes and treatments which will lead to the cures

*Resources for the above information came from the National Institutes of Health, the World Health Organization, and the National Cancer Institute*

# resources

GET INVOLVED WITH CHILDHOOD CANCER  
AWARENESS MONTH!

[www.cancer.org/involved/fundraise/gold-together.html](http://www.cancer.org/involved/fundraise/gold-together.html)

[leiaskids.org](http://leiaskids.org)

[lls.org](http://lls.org)

For a list of more organizations, visit  
[bellasteri.com/resources](http://bellasteri.com/resources)