

BELLA MAGAZINE

Holiday 2024
Season



HOLIDAYS 2024 | ISSUE 11



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All of the authors and illustrators at Bell Asteri Publishing have chosen to use their talents to help bring an end to childhood cancer. They do not write books for fame or fortune, but to honor the fight of the kids of the cancer community. Join us in thanking them and honoring their hard work. And then, go buy their books!



CASH'S CORNER

Check out the yummy treats you can make at home or in a hospital room! We also have a few arts and crafts projects you can do right from the comfort of your bed or couch. From easy, no-bake treats to coloring pages and art, Cash's Corner has got you covered.



BOOKS AS GIFTS

Now is the time to buy gifts for the holidays. We highly recommend BOOKS and Bell Asteri has two imprints with many great books to offer. All of the proceeds benefit pediatric cancer research and programs so it's a DOUBLE WIN!



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EDITOR'S DESK

BY DANA-SUSAN CREWS

You have much more to give than you can imagine. Today, as we are now into the holiday season and finishing out 2024, across the country and the world, the children of the cancer community are hurting and struggling to find joy.

When I talk about the kids of the cancer community, I am not only referring to the children with cancer but also to the siblings. Additionally, I want to highlight the young children who have a parent with cancer because, sadly, this group is very often overlooked and excluded from some of the incredible events that siblings of childhood cancer patients partake in.

The whole world is in a state of turmoil now. Wars, natural disasters, disease, you name it... we are all hurting and it might feel impossible to find joy. Sometimes we have to find joy within and create an atmosphere of happiness in the midst of the darkness. I share my own story with you today in the hopes that you will find joy or that you will help deliver joy to a family who needs it.

In 2003, my husband was fighting the horror of cancer. At the time, I had a 5-year-old and a 3-year old and I had been missing so

much of their lives while I was a full-time caregiver. Holiday season (and by this, I mean Halloween through New Year's Day) had always been my favorite time of year. I loved decorating and baking cookies and parties. But not that year. That year, my husband's ANC was very low and he was extremely sick.

Thankfully, I had a group of friends who surrounded me and my family with light and love. My kids attended a private preschool and kindergarten, and the women who worked there did not love us with words. No, they loved us with deeds. They made us meals. They gave my kids tiny, thoughtful gifts. They stepped in to babysit or run errands.

Then, there was Christmas, a holiday I'd always loved to go big on - to decorate the entire house in every room, to make homemade ornaments with my kids, to fill the house with lights and music and laughter. But, no. This year would be much different and if not for these amazing friends, very dark.

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They stepped in, calling to tell me they were coming over to put up Christmas lights in my home. Tell me, not ask me. They gave me a precious gift - a framed photo of my children dressed as angels (somehow they had managed to sneak my kids away for a photo shoot without my knowledge). They did all kinds of sweet things to bring cheer that otherwise would not have existed.

That Christmas, I sent my kids with my mom to her ranch home while I stayed with my husband, who began to spike a fever. For anyone in the cancer community, you know how dangerous that is and that it's life-threatening. That Christmas Eve, he was barely breathing. His skin was gray. He had no eyebrows or eyelashes, and he looked like he was knocking on death's door.

I remember that sinking feeling, wondering if Christmas Day would be his final day on earth and regretting that I had sent my kids away. They should be there to say goodbye if their daddy was about to go to heaven.

Somehow, we managed to make it through the holiday and into the new year, 2004. Because my husband's cancer is incurable, he had to endure three years of chemotherapy. Through incredible strength and determination, he not only survived his cancer, he rose from the ashes and took back his health.

Through the challenging years of treatments, cancer brought a mess of destruction to our young family. The AYA cancer community has a large age range, from 15-39. Many of the patients in this group have small children at home, just like we did. What I am about to tell you is not a complaint. I have zero complaints. But I think it needs to be said so that more people will be aware of the young children who have a parent with cancer.

The siblings of a child with cancer often have the opportunity to go on wish trips with the family or camps to be surrounded by other siblings. We have learned much over the decades about how to love on the siblings and I am extremely grateful for this because I know what it's like to be the sibling of a child with cancer!

But the young children who have a parent with cancer are so very unnoticed and I am determined to see that changed. All of the children of the cancer community (kids with cancer, siblings, and kids with a parent with cancer) need to feel loved. As we finish out the holidays and enter into a new year, find a way to bring love, joy and peace to a young cancer family near you. On the next page, you will see some thoughtful ways to love with deeds (these were submitted by real families who know the pain of cancer). The words we speak are important, but real love is what we *do* for others. Thank you for your love!

We talked to several caregivers of cancer patients of all ages to put together the following list of suggestions and ways to help families, all of whom have or had children at home when they had a cancer patient to care for whether that patient was a child, teenager or young adult. If you know a family hurting during this holiday season, there are so many ways to help and maybe the below ideas will spark an idea or way for you to help.



BRING A BOX FULL OF BAKED GOODIES OVER

TAKE THE KIDS A GINGERBREAD HOUSE KIT SO THEY CAN ENJOY CREATING SOMETHING TOGETHER

OFFER TO DECORATE THE HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS - BRING OVER ALL THE ESSENTIALS LIKE LIGHTS, ORNAMENTS AND MORE (AND LET THEM KNOW YOU WILL RETURN AFTER THE HOLIDAYS TO CLEAN IT ALL UP)

MAKE THEIR THANKSGIVING FEAST FOR THEM AND BRING IT OVER FRESH AND HOT

TAKE THE KIDS SHOPPING WHILE THEIR PARENTS HAVE A CHANCE TO REST

BRING SANTA OVER TO HANG OUT FOR A COUPLE OF HOURS, FILLING THE HOUSE WITH LOADS OF CHEER

HAVE SANTA DO A ZOOM CALL WITH KIDS WHO ARE UNDERGOING TREATMENTS AND CANNOT HEAD OUT TO MEET HIM

BUY FUN GIFTS FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY, WRAP THEM, AND THEN TAKE THEM OVER TO PUT UNDER THE TREE SO THEY ALL HAVE SOMETHING TO UNWRAP FOR CHRISTMAS

SEND A LIMO TO TAKE THE FAMILY ON A HOLIDAY LIGHTS VIEWING TRIP THROUGH THE CITY

GET A CLASSROOM FULL OF STUDENTS TO CREATE FUN GIFTS AND MESSAGES AND FILL UP A BIG BASKET OF KINDNESS TO CHEER THE FAMILY UP

SEND A GROUP OF CAROLERS TO ENTERTAIN THE FAMILY FROM THE FRONT YARD AND TO LEAVE BEHIND YUMMY TREATS

DROP OFF A LARGE BASKET FULL OF HOLIDAY MOVIES AND MOVIE SNACKS LIKE POPCORN

HOST A HOT CHOCOLATE STAND IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD TO RAISE FUNDS FOR THE FAMILY AND THEN BRING THEM THE CASH ALONG WITH LOADS OF HOT CHOCOLATE

Gifts for Mom & Dad

Cancer is hard on the entire family. Parents need extra love as they try to navigate the holidays with cancer in the home. They are worn out and overwhelmed. Following are some ways to love on the moms and dads during the holidays:



Host a spa day at home. Send over all the supplies including facial scrubs, massagers, spa music, towels, candles and eye masks. Take the kids out or bring over movies to keep them entertained at home while Mom and Dad relax for a while.



Get their shopping wish list from them and gather a group of friends to head out and buy everything on their list, wrap the gifts, and bring them all over to put under their tree (bring some extra surprise ones for them too).



Send over a cleaning crew to clean and sterilize the home as well as a lawn service to take care of the lawn.



If possible, send them out to get their hair and nails done (yes, for moms and dads both) or send a crew to their home to do their hair and nails if they can't leave the house.



Other great gifts for moms and dads who are exhausted include: Gadgets like robot window cleaners or vacuums; Smart eye masks (or smart goggles) to massage the head while relaxing; Digital photo frame; Robot lawn mower; Basket of tea and coffee; Comfy robes; Advent wine bottles; Noise-canceling headphones; Books; Brunch in a box (from a restaurant or homemade); Steaks from a local ranch; Suede slippers; Oura ring; Jewelry with their children's names engraved; Custom storybook or recipe book filled with photos and stories and recipes from their family



MEET FRED, HIS FRIENDS, & JAYCEE VALLIER

by Trish and Curtis Vallier

When our daughter Jaycee was diagnosed with brain cancer in 2020, we as a family did everything we could to make each doctor visit or hospital stay as fun and stress-free as possible. The height of the pandemic added another level of stress to overcome while being separated from family every time she needed treatment or a checkup. From decorating our hospital room to watching her favorite YouTube Channels, we worked hard to create an environment that felt as much like home as possible.

As parents, we took on the role of “friends” and alongside our incredible child life specialists and team, we instilled the value in our daughter Jaycee and others that true friends will always be there for you, no matter the circumstances or surroundings.

Being in the hospital can be scary, but it doesn't have to be. That's where the idea for “Fred & Friends” was born! Friends can be made anywhere, even in the unlikeliest of places, and our imaginations can create adventures to eliminate fear. This story was created to help children and families understand that even in the scariest of times, we can create laughter. Fred embodies what so many face on a daily basis, and along the way in his journey, he meets several of those friends, and together, they make it their mission to smile and help others smile too.

During Jaycee's Journey, we started a nonprofit called **Battlecorn Care Packages**, through which we send packages to children battling cancer. This was something that really helped to improve her spirits, and we decided that this was the best way we could

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give back to the community. She truly loved creating these packages to send whenever she was home, and today, we continue it in her honor.

Our story, filled with ups and downs, this book, is meant to relate to everyone and prove that friends can truly be made anywhere, and our organization, dedicated to sending smiles where they're needed the most, are all part of Jaycee's legacy, a legacy we are proud to share with the world!



Find out more about Battlecorn Care Packages at www.battlecorncarepackages.com (or scan the below QR code):





**YOU CAN HELP HONOR JAYCEE AND HER LEGACY!
BUY YOUR COPY OF "FRED & FRIENDS" TODAY.**



Get it on
amazon.com

Cash's CORNER



Whether you're at home or even in a hospital, these are some easy treats and crafts to make for the holidays (and a few coloring pages and a scavenger hunt too)...



Reindeer Cookies

Ingredients:

Nutter Butter Cookies

Pretzels

Candy googly eyes (or white chocolate chips to make eyes)

Red M&Ms or Red Hot candy

White frosting



Lay out the cookies on a tray. Use the frosting as glue and "glue" on the pretzels as antlers, the eyes, and the nose. Be sure to share with friends and even with nurses and doctors!



Angel Poop

Ingredients:

One package of white chocolate chips

2 small bags of butter-flavored corn puff snacks

Melt the chocolate chips in a microwave for a few seconds

Pour in the puffs and stir to coat

Pour out onto a tray and let it cool

Break into pieces to serve





Gingerbread House

Ingredients

Graham Crackers

Frosting

Candy - all different kinds

Use the frosting as glue and begin building your house as big as you want with graham crackers. Next, continue using frosting as glue (you can use more than just white frosting, but the white looks like snow) and add any kind of candy you want to make your house look exactly like you want. Be sure to have others join in on the fun and make a house too! At home, get the whole family involved. In the hospital, have other kids join in or even your nurses!



Holiday Cards

For this project, it doesn't matter where you are - you can cheer others by making them special cards for Christmas or Hanukkah or any other holiday! Use construction paper or cardstock. Grab some paint or crayons or markers. Draw pictures and write notes or songs or poems to spread special holiday cheer.

Here is a list of people you might want to make cards for:

Mom

Dad

Brother

Sister

Aunt

Uncle

Grandparents

Cousins

Friends

Kids in the hospital

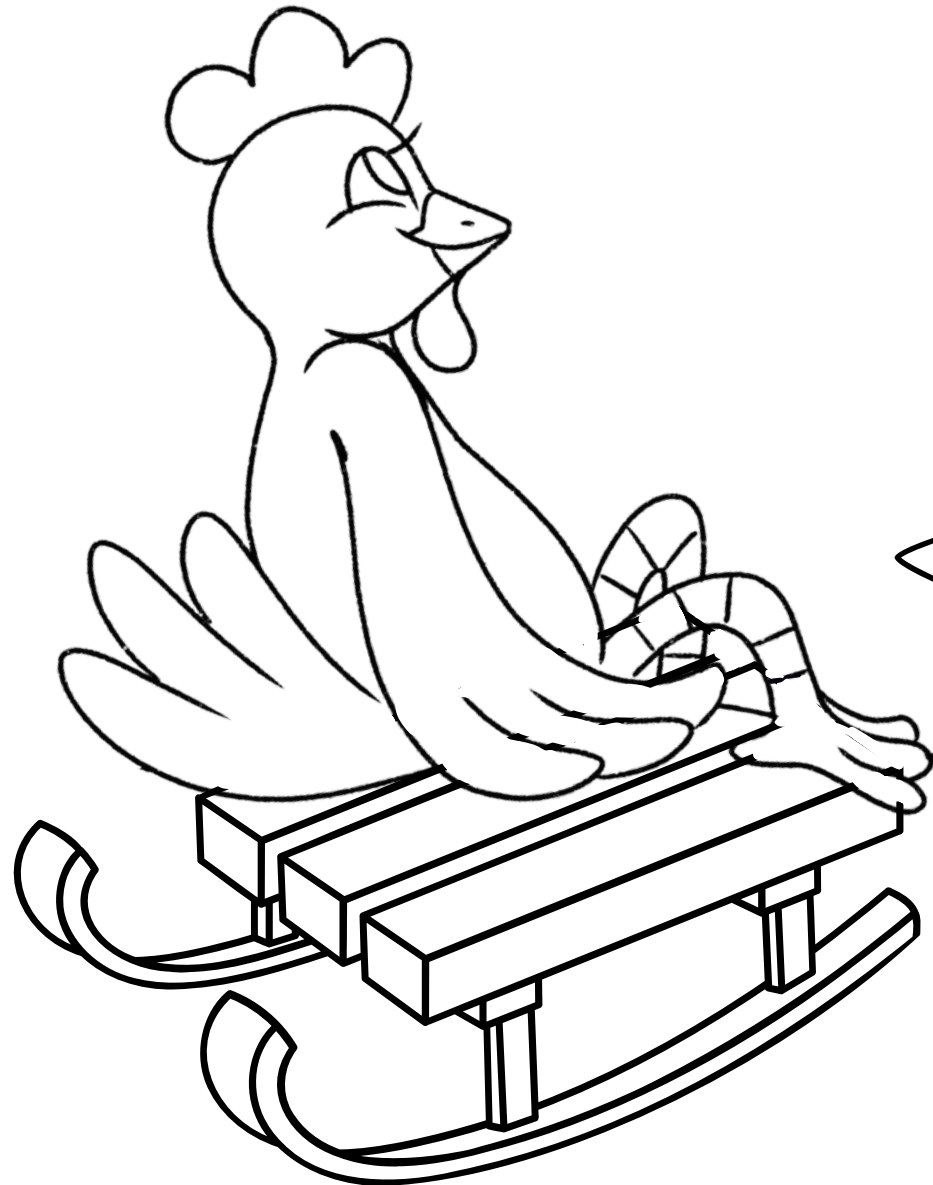
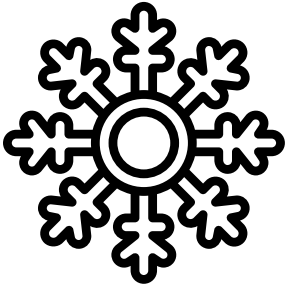
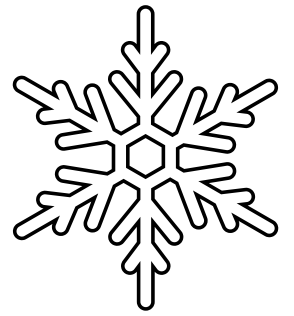
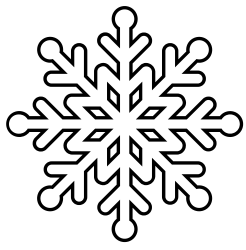
Your nurse

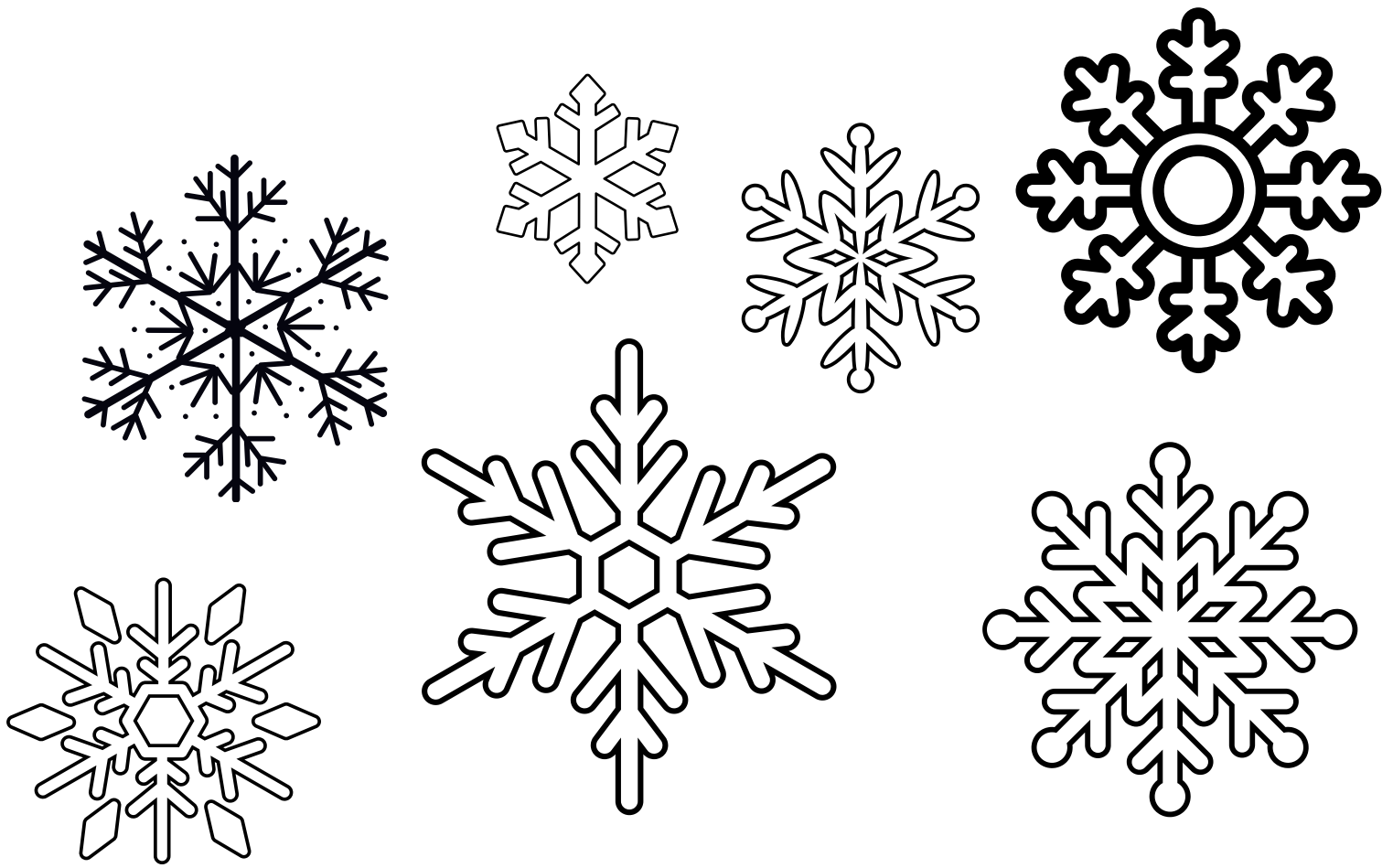
Your doctor

Your Teacher



let it
Snow





HOSPITAL Winter SCAVENGER HUNT



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**Dear Santa,
Send Books**

'tis the season

TO GIVE THE GIFT OF BOOKS!

Visit the Bell Asteri or Ashland Ink bookstores and find the PERFECT gift for your loved ones. Books are a gift they can enjoy all year long and for many years to come! Proceeds from all books purchased from Bell Asteri or Ashland Ink are donated to pediatric cancer research and programs
www.bellasteri.com/bookstore
www.ashlandink.com/books



MEET OUR AUTHORS!

Bell Asteri Publishing & Enterprises exists to improve the lives of the children of the cancer community through the art of storytelling. This mission is accomplished through two imprints - Bell Asteri and Ashland Ink. Proceeds of book sales benefit pediatric cancer research and programs. Meet our authors and illustrators who make this possible...



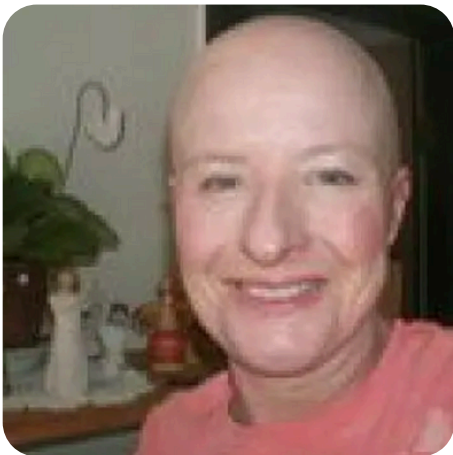
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Author and Artist



Terry Allen
Illustrator



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Stephanie Bowen
Cancer Survivor



Carolyn Breinich
Childhood Cancer Survivor



Bella Cervantes
Childhood Cancer Survivor



Leo Cervantes
Cancer Sibling



Zach Cook
Cancer Sibling



Ashlee Cramer
Cancer Mom

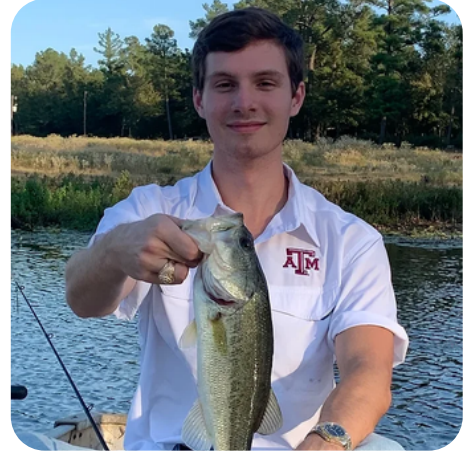
MEET OUR AUTHORS!



Bill Crews
Cancer Sibling & Survivor



Dana-Susan Crews
Cancer Sibling



Dylan Crews
Child of AYA Cancer Survivor



Morgan Crews
Child of AYA Cancer Survivor



Cole & Laura Davis
Cancer Survivor & Mom



Hayley & Justin Dickens
Cancer Parents



Sadie & Stacie Eirich
Cancer Survivor & Mom



Christian Englert
Childhood Cancer Survivor



Julie Frampton
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MEET OUR AUTHORS!



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MEET OUR AUTHORS!



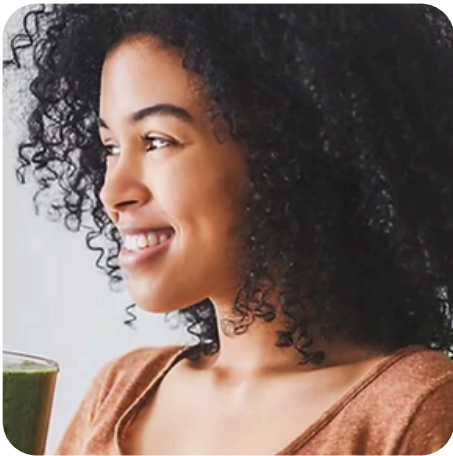
Macie Torres
Childhood Cancer Nonprofit



Brittany Traylor
Author



Alea Ramsey
Childhood Cancer Warrior



Jacklin Spark
Cancer Sibling



Trish & Curtis Vallier
Cancer Parents

Some authors and illustrators are updating their photos and bios, including Emily Simpson, our newest artist. Stay tuned for more and keep updated at www.bellasteri.com and www.ashlandink.com



IMPROVING THE LIVES OF THE CHILDREN OF THE CANCER COMMUNITY THROUGH THE ART OF STORYTELLING

**WISHING Y'ALL HOLIDAY BLESSINGS
FROM FORT WORTH, TEXAS!**

**CHEERS,
BELL ASTERI PUBLISHING**

