

# bella magazine



HOLIDAYS 2022 | ISSUE NO. 3

***ENDING THE YEAR WITH HOPE***

**BELL ASTERI PUBLISHING**

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*Crews*

# EDITOR'S NOTE

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

In September, my husband Bill and I attended CureFest with the American Cancer Society's Gold Together campaign. We have been given the honor of serving on the National Advisory Council (see more on page 9).

There are many stories to share, but I will just share the one from the blog post I wrote following the event:

## *SHOES*

Many years ago, I taught a six-week long unit on the Holocaust and I remember walking through the Holocaust museum and seeing a large display of shoes from victims at the death camp Auschwitz. Of all the displays, this one got to me the most because shoes tell us so much about the person wearing them. Shoes tell us their age, their hobbies, their job, their interests, their fashion sense. Shoes that were worn by real people who did not deserve this brutal death.

Yesterday, as we wrapped up CureFest for Childhood Cancer, I didn't think I had any more tears left in me. After all, I spent days hearing stories and meeting children battling diseases no one should have to battle and meeting parents who have buried their babies. I will share more of those stories later, but suffice to say, cancer is an evil monster that steals the lives of almost 2,000 kids each year and it makes me angry beyond imagination.

Just when I thought I was dried up of all my tears, I made my way to the Washington Monument and saw the display of shoes. There they were - 1,800 pairs of shoes. Shoes that were once worn by kids. Teenagers. Tweens. Babies. Shoes that were filled with real feet that should still be walking about, but instead are no longer here because every single year in the United States of America, 1,800 kids die of cancer.

Shoes tell us so much about the person wearing them. As I walked through the display, I saw many sizes and colors and shapes and I closed my eyes and thought about the feet inside them and the cruelty of the fact that those precious kids are gone.

This one obviously liked to play basketball. This one was a cowboy. This one liked to run track. This one was a pretty little princess. This one was a ballerina. This one liked to jump in puddles in the rain. This one liked Disney. This one rode horses. This one liked walking in the snow. This one was a fashionista. This one liked his cozy slippers. This one was too little to walk because her baby shoes were smaller than my pinky finger.

Piles and piles of empty shoes! I had finally had enough and sat on the ground to weep. I prayed for the families, many of whom were sitting there by their kids' shoes in dead silence, grief-stricken and almost in "shell shock".

A beautiful young mom came walking up to lay her daughter's shoes on the ground along with her photo. Her precious daughter, Trinity, took her final breath three months ago thanks to the hideous monster DIPG (Diffuse Intrinsic Pontine Glioma). Tears poured down her face. I hugged her and told her that Trinity is absolutely beautiful and she let me take her photo.

I talked to a young man who was taking a photo of his son's shoes. I asked him about his son and he smiled so big and proudly told me about his seven-year-old boy who took his final breath just months ago. He was such a cutie pie.



## Crews

## Editor's note

*continued from page 3*

As CureFest was coming to an end, the bereaved parents gathered around the shoes and we had a moment of silence before we walked around the monument with these parents in the lead. We all have vowed to never forget these little lives. They mattered. They still matter.

Before I walked away, I took one final peak at those shoes and it struck me that all of these tiny feet are walking along streets of Gold with Jesus. It is hard to grasp and not everyone shares my faith, but I believe that as I am here wearing gold for them, they are on those gold streets and they are free of cancer. They are not suffering. They are shining with God's glory and someday I will meet them face-to-face.

I wish those shoes were still filled with the feet of the precious humans who wore them right here on planet Earth. I wish no child had to suffer at the evil hands of cancer. I wish no young parent had to watch their child suffer from this devastating disease. I wish that the legislators in that town would wake up and increase funding to bring these diseases to an end. I wish I could take the pain of every single parent there away and set them free. Until that day comes, I made a promise when I was a seven-year-old girl that I would fight for them. So, I will return next year and sadly, I know there will be another display of 1,800 shoes because the fight is nowhere near finished. Another 1,800 kids will go on to the streets of gold and I will wear my gold for them.





**GOLD TOGETHER**  
FOR CHILDHOOD CANCER



The Gold Together movement was created by childhood brain cancer survivor **Cole Eicher**, whose dream was to have a Gold Together team at every Relay For Life event, starting with his event in St. Petersburg, Florida. His vision is to raise childhood cancer awareness, support families facing childhood cancer, and connect those families to a lifetime of resources through the American Cancer Society.

Millions of dollars have been raised since Cole made this dream come true. Bill and Dana-Sue, Bell Asteri founders, were honored to meet him face-to-face in Washington D.C. along with his mom, Laura Eicher, who manages the campaign. It is a true honor to join forces with them and the ACS as members of the National Advisory Council. Together, we will see an end to childhood cancer!

Visit **GOLD TOGETHER** at  
<https://www.cancer.org/goldtogether>



# MEET THE AUTHORS

*Meet some of our newest authors  
and get a peak into 2023*

**Shari Ann Almeida** is one mighty voice in the childhood cancer community. When her six-month-old baby girl Dakota was diagnosed with leukemia, this tiny mom with a mighty voice knew she had found one of her greatest missions - fight for her baby and for all the moms out there who feel overwhelmed with pain and grief. Her organization "Warrior Moms" has spread like wildfire. As one who knows how tough these battles are for parents of kids with cancer, she has made it her goal to reach these young parents and help them feel seen. Her book "I See You" will be released in February 2023.

**Cole and Laura Davis** are a mom and son duo writing about Cole's experience as a teenager with leukemia. Diagnosed at 14, Cole has just finished three years of treatments. He is part of that "AYA" group of patients (you can read more on page 8) who have their own set of unique challenges when diagnosed with cancer. Cole and Laura's book "One Day At A Time" will come out in the Fall of 2023 and will share insight from the perspectives of both parent and child.

**Leia Hunt** is a two-time childhood cancer survivor who founded her own charitable organization as a teenager. Today she is a 22-year-old executive director at Leia's Kids. 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 at [leiaskids.org](http://leiaskids.org). Leia is also working on a very inspirational children's book about Princess MaryGold, a childhood cancer survivor who helps other kids with cancer find their purpose. The book should be out in early 2023.

**Estella Patrick** is a college student in North Texas and a lifelong patient at Cook Children's Hospital in Fort Worth. She was born with spina bifida and has endured many surgeries and procedures throughout her life. As a talented artist, she has created many animated works of art on behalf of her beloved second "home" at Cook Children's. As an illustrator at Bell Asteri, she is working on several projects including the Princess MaryGold book series.

# The Optimistic Angel



Hayley and Justin Dickens

# FIGHT LIKE THE DICKENS

## *The Optimistic Angel*

On October 31, 2022, Hayley and Justin Dickens' book *The Optimistic Angel* was released. Written from the perspective of both mother and father, the book gives a very honest look into a young family in a heated war against childhood brain cancer.

When their three-year-old daughter Kallie was diagnosed with diffuse midline glioma (DMG), the Dickens family started a Facebook page called "The Optimistic Angel" where they kept friends and family updated on Kallie's fight. Eventually, this 11-month journey became their book which takes the reader through the many dark days, weeks and months of trying to save Kallie's life.

Through it all, their precious child remained strong and filled with courage, hope, and optimism until taking her final breath on May 7, 2022 at the age of four.

Her legacy lives on in her parents, her little sister Kora, and all of the people who knew her and loved her. Her parents not only published their book, but they also launched a nonprofit organization in Kallie's honor called *Keeping A Light For Kallie*. All of the proceeds from their book sales are going to the organization which will help other families enduring a childhood cancer diagnosis. More information can be found at [www.keepingalight.org](http://www.keepingalight.org).

For anyone wondering what it's like to be forced into a childhood cancer journey, this book is a must read. Although it takes the reader on a trip through every painful emotion, it remains true to its title, offering hope and joy and laughter even in the darkest of days.

Be sure to purchase the book and if you want to donate to the foundation, it would mean so very much to the authors and to all of us at Bell Asteri Publishing. Visit the bookstore here: [www.bellasteri.com/bookstore](http://www.bellasteri.com/bookstore).



# THE "TWEENS" OF THE CANCER COMMUNITY

## *AYA Cancer Patients & Why Oncology Care Is Unique In This Group*

Not a child and not an "older adult", the Adolescent and Young Adult (AYA) cancer community, also known as the "15-39" group is a unique in-between group of cancer patients with their own unique needs when it comes to cancer treatments and psychosocial concerns.

For patients in this group, their life concerns are vastly different than those of small children and older adults. Many of these patients are finishing school or getting married or having babies. They are building careers and still at the "start" of their life when cancer strikes.

In a majority of cases, these patients are diagnosed in the most advanced stages and grades of cancer due to "delayed diagnosis". Many times, cancer presents itself as something else, so this age group is treated like their pain in their knee is a sports injury or like their constant symptoms are mono or sinusitis. Once they are finally diagnosed, most patients in the AYA group have had cancer for a long time and sometimes, it's just too late to do anything about it.

This group also has very specific needs that differ from children and older adults when it comes to the social aspects of life. Where work or school are concerned, they often have to finish school with a tutor or put off going to college for months or even years, causing a harsh setback when it comes to getting "started" in life. For young adults in their 20s and 30s, they are very often overlooked for promotions at work and even more disturbing, many of them end up losing their jobs due to missing work for cancer treatments.



**Cancer Doesn't Care About Your Age.  
All Cancers Must End.**



Many of the nations cancer hospitals recognize the challenges with this "in between" group and have developed programs to help them through the cancer journey. Researchers are also looking for ways to improve therapies for them as their physical bodies are very different than children or older adults.

Since 1972 when President Nixon signed the National Cancer Act, this group has seen the least amount of improvement in long-term survivorship. Furthermore, just as childhood cancer survivors suffer life-long, permanent side effects from treatments, this group is also forced to endure profound effects mentally and physically. Damage to their brains, heart, and other internal organs is common. High rates of anxiety and depression are common. Inability to maintain a steady job or build a career is common.

Thankfully, this "tween" group has been seen. Research continues to work toward helping this very important age group conquer cancer and live a full, healthy life.

Bell Asteri Publishing has a strong mission of putting a spotlight on the AYA group. One of its very founders was a part of this group. We are excited to be partnering with some authors and illustrators in the AYA cancer group. Look for more in late 2023. And learn more about the AYA cancer community on our resources page at [www.bellasteri.com/resources](http://www.bellasteri.com/resources).





# Cash's Corner

## Indoor Entertainment

It's winter now and you might be stuck inside. But you know you can do some fun and creative activities even if you're stuck inside! Kids (and grown ups), don't let being inside or being sick keep you from having a good time.

### INSIDE STUFF YOU CAN DO:

- Dance. Yes, that's right. You don't have to be "good" at dancing. Just turn on some music and have a family dance party!
- Color. No matter your age, grab a few coloring books and have a family coloring party.
- Cook something. Cooking is a great skill for everyone to know. Pick a recipe the whole family can enjoy and cook together. Then, enjoy eating your delicious food. And don't forget that cleaning up the kitchen can also be a fun family activity!
- Play a board game. This is a family fun activity that should have never gone out of style. Bring out the games and play.
- Indoor picnic. Oh, yes, put out a blanket and turn on a video of a lovely waterfall (or a lake or beach or mountain, etc) and enjoy your picnic from anywhere in the world.
- Build a snowman. There are many simple ways to do this, but if you want something really big and fun, check out this video (*copy and paste the link into your browser*):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZrOFp5uyFw>
- Build a tent and go camping. You should never get too old to build a fort in the living room and tell stories around your pretend campfire. Be sure to check out this link for making S'mores in the oven too:  
<https://butterwithasideofbread.com/smares-in-oven>
- Sing. Sing loud and proud! And record a video so you can always remember your family music.

# COMING IN 2023



Princess MaryGold is "the world's first princess childhood cancer survivor" and she is on a mission to help kids with cancer find hope. In this first of the series, author and childhood cancer survivor Leia Hunt, helps kids understand that even if they have cancer, they can find a very special purpose in their pain. Princess MaryGold helps twin girls fighting cancer in this first of the series set to be released in early 2023.



"I See You" is the first in a series of books by author Shari Ann Almeida who captures the painful darkness of having a small child with cancer. Her captivating prose-style pulls the reader in and even makes you feel like you are walking in her shoes through the horror of cancer, treatments, and the life-long aftermath of leukemia. Her daughter Dakota Ann was diagnosed at the age of six months and just recently celebrated her fourth birthday. As anyone who has seen the devastation of childhood cancer face-to-face will tell you, it never ends and for moms of these kids, they often feel unseen as they struggle along. Shari Ann's message to them: "I SEE YOU". This powerful book is a life-changer.



"Seventeen in Stanzas" by Zach Cook will be released in late Spring 2023. A high school senior, Zach has written a book filled with poems, songs, and artwork that capture the challenges of being a teenager in the 21st century. When Zach was a small child, his younger brother was diagnosed with leukemia. Siblings of childhood cancer patients endure great trauma and experience great fear and anxiety that can last well into their adult years. Zach has taken many of the struggles of his 17 years of life and turned them into incredible works of poetry and art.



"Hope Over Despair" is in the works for a 2023 release date. Author Mariah Forster Olson was diagnosed with neuroblastoma as a baby in 1980, at a time when treatments were very experimental and long-term, permanent side effects were virtually unknown. Now in her early 40s, Mariah has spent her entire life in excruciating, debilitating pain. But instead of giving up, she pushes herself to rise above the pain to choose hope. A strong advocate in the childhood cancer community, she serves on the boards of many nonprofit organizations and raises awareness and funding to bring childhood cancer to an end. Her story will inspire readers to choose hope every day no matter what.



"One Day At A Time" is a unique look into the lives of a teenager with cancer and his mom. Written from the perspectives of both mom and son, this book details the journey of Cole Davis who was diagnosed with leukemia at the age of 14 and endured three years of treatments. Cole discusses the unique challenges of being a teenager with cancer while his mom discusses what it's like to be the parent of a teenager with cancer. The book is scheduled to be released in the Fall of 2023.

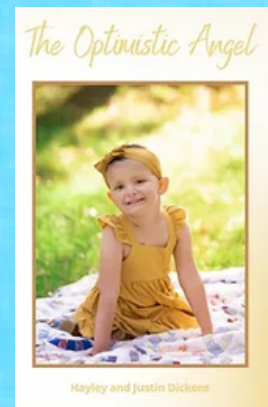


"I Miss My Sister" by author Jacklin Spark is a children's book based on the real-life story of a little boy who lost his sister to leukemia. It will be released in early 2023.

# BOOKSTORE

Be sure to stop by our bookstore for some holiday shopping!

[www.bellasteri.com/bookstore](http://www.bellasteri.com/bookstore)



**WISHING YOU THE HAPPIEST OF  
HOLIDAYS AND A NEW YEAR FILLED WITH  
COMFORT, PEACE AND JOY**

♥  
*Bella*

