

# BELLA MAGAZINE

## Celebrate

5  
Years  
of  
Storytelling



SPRING 2026 | ISSUE 15

SPRING  
is coming!

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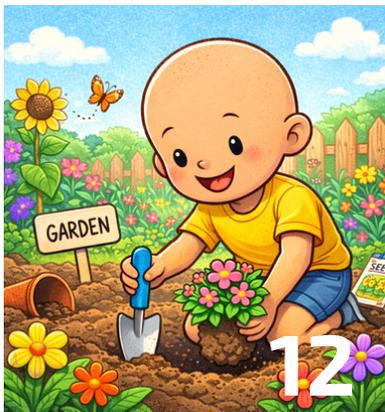
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### IT'S OK TO LAUGH

Guest writer Kate shares a touching story about what it means to share in a friend's grief as she learns that it is important to continue living after a loss. And in fact, that might be the best way to honor someone's memory.



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# Happy Anniversary



**T**hese past five years have been so much fun. We have made many amazing new friends, and we have been introduced to some of the greatest people on earth.

At the end of 2020, we formed the Bell Asteri Publishing imprint, and in January 2021, we published our first book. At first, we thought we would only be publishing children's books written by children with cancer and their siblings, but we discovered almost instantly that the mission extended way beyond that.

It has been such an honor publishing books written by kids with cancer, their siblings, their parents, their friends, and the people who love them.

The childhood cancer community is filled with a golden light. People from all different walks of life come together in a great spirit of unity to bring an end to these diseases, and it is a beautiful thing to witness.

Publishing your stories and putting a spotlight on kids with cancer and their families is a true blessing. Thank you for letting us do this. We firmly believe that our willingness to share our stories makes a real impact. You are all greatly cherished. Thank you for the honor of being a small part of your life and for letting us continue our mission...

**improving the lives of the children of the cancer community through the art of storytelling**



# The Mikaela Naylor Give Kids a Chance Act

What a wonderful celebration for us all when the news came on Tuesday, February 3, 2026, that both the House and the Senate finally passed the Mikaela Naylor Give Kids a Chance Act. Later that afternoon, it was signed into law by President Trump.

For many years, so many advocates made their voices known, pleading with our lawmakers to do the right thing for kids with cancer. Mikaela did not get her chance. So many kids did not, but we have so much hope for the kids of the future.

We are grateful to Representative Michael McCaul (pictured below with many survivors, including some of our authors).

Congressman McCaul has spent years fighting for kids with cancer. He has read many of our Bell Asteri books, and we are truly happy to see his Mikaela Naylor Give Kids a Chance Act become law, which renews a program that encourages drug companies to develop treatments for cancer and rare childhood diseases by allowing them to speed up FDA review of more profitable drugs. Since it began in 2011, this program has helped bring treatments to children with dozens of rare diseases. The bill also addresses a major gap in pediatric cancer care by allowing the FDA to require companies to study combinations of cancer drugs in children, so kids can benefit from the same advances already being developed for adults.



**NEVER  
GIVE  
UP**

# It's Ok To Laugh

by Kate, in honor of her friend Bailey and in memory of Tyler who was a really funny boy

When my best friend's younger brother died of cancer, the world felt like it split into two versions of reality. In one, everything stopped. In the other, life kept going, and I didn't know which one I was allowed to live in.

I remember sitting in my room, staring at my phone, rereading the message from my friend telling me he was gone. Just gone. One day he was fighting, the next day he wasn't here anymore. I cried until my head hurt, until I felt empty. And then, eventually, something strange happened. The sun came up. People texted me about homework. A song I liked came on, which made me smile. And suddenly, I felt guilty for noticing any of it.

The guilt followed me everywhere. If I laughed at lunch, it hit me right after, like I'd done something wrong. If my friends invited me to hang out, I wondered how I could possibly say yes when my best friend was barely making it through the day. When the boy I liked finally asked me out, instead of feeling excited, I felt sick to my stomach. How could I be happy when my best friend's heart was shattered?

The worst guilt came when I danced. Music has always been my escape, the place where my mind goes quiet and my body just moves. But after her brother died, every time I danced, it felt almost disrespectful. Like joy was something I needed to put on hold out of loyalty. Like if I smiled too big or laughed too loud, I was somehow betraying my friend and dishonoring her brother.

I started holding myself back. I stopped talking about the things that made me happy. I muted parts of myself. I thought that being a good friend meant sharing her sadness by giving up my joy. But grief doesn't work like that.

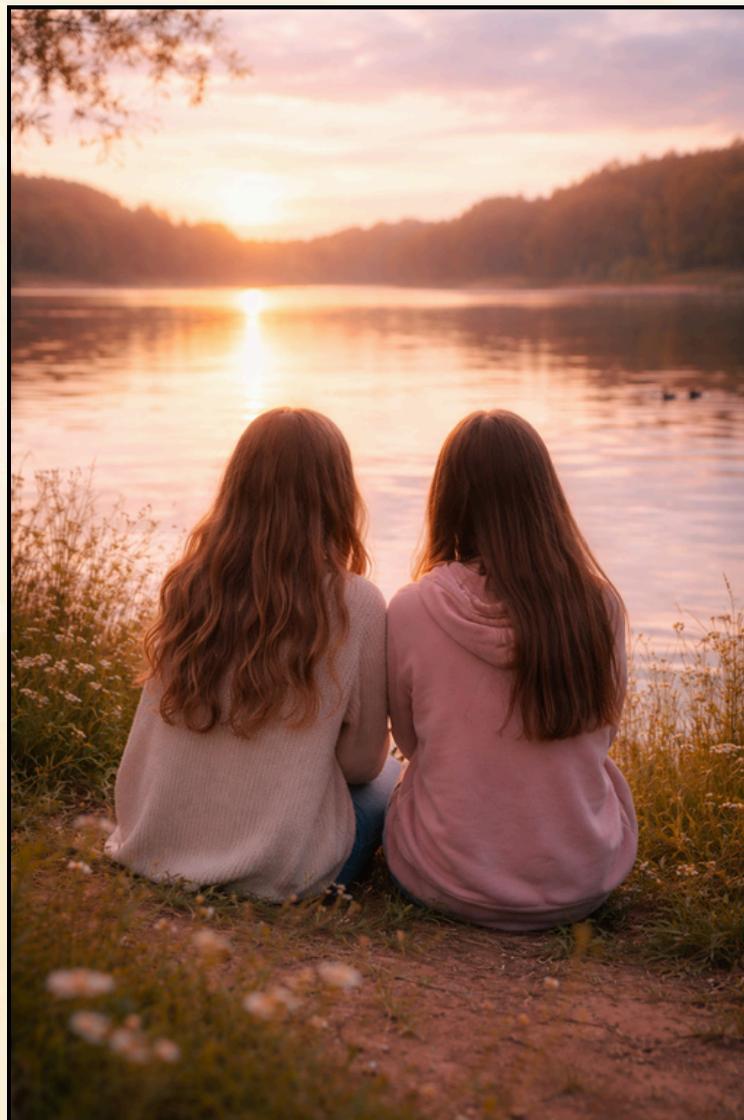
One day, my friend and I were sitting together by the neighborhood lake when out of nowhere, she told me a story about her brother, something funny he did on vacation once. And then she laughed. And for the first time since he died, I realized something important.

*continued on page 6*

Her laughter didn't erase her pain. It didn't mean she loved him any less. It didn't mean she had forgotten him. In fact, the opposite was true. It meant he was still part of her life. The funny things he did were still funny.

That was when it finally clicked for me. Her brother wouldn't want a world where everyone stopped living because he was gone. He wouldn't want her or her best friend to feel guilty for laughing, dancing, or falling in love. He would want us to live fully, because he didn't get the chance to.

I learned that being there for someone who is grieving doesn't mean you have to stop being yourself. It means you sit with them in their sadness, but you also help carry light back into the room when it's possible. It means understanding that joy is not a betrayal. It's a reminder of love.



**In honor of our 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary, here is a look back...**

### *The Optimistic Angel*



Hayley and Justin Dickens

One of the first books we published from the perspective of grieving parents was "The Optimistic Angel" by Hayley and Justin Dickens. It is one of the most powerful books and has a profound way of leading the reader through the devastation of childhood cancer while at the same time, shining a light of optimism and faith.

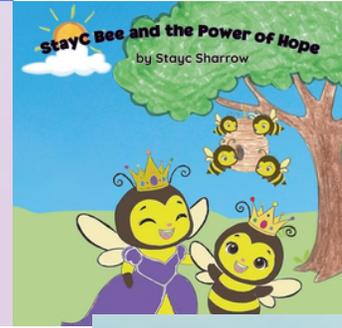
[WWW.BELLASTERI.COM/OPTIMISTICANGEL](http://WWW.BELLASTERI.COM/OPTIMISTICANGEL)

Now, when I laugh, I let myself. When I get excited, I don't apologize for it. When I dance, I dance for both of us. Because grief and happiness are not opposites. They can exist side by side.

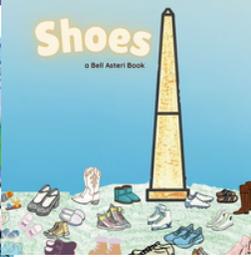
**It's okay to laugh.**

**It's okay to live.**

And it's exactly what the people we've lost would want us to do.

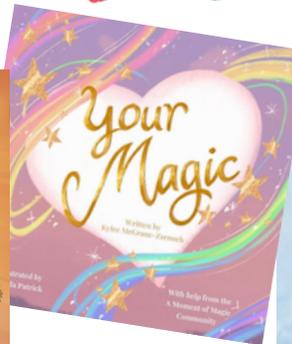
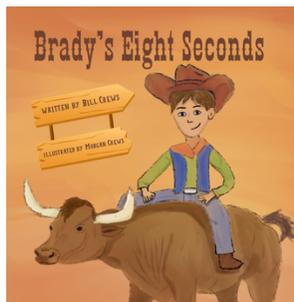


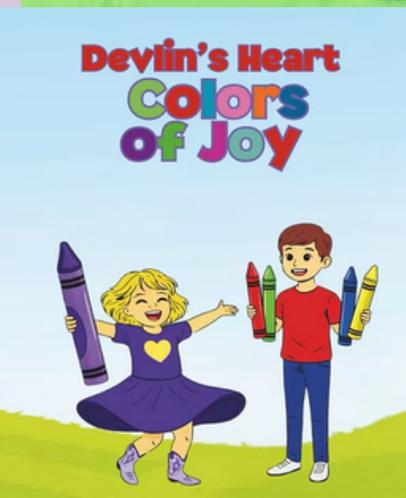
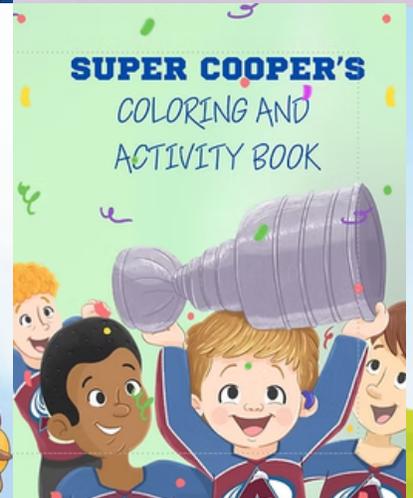
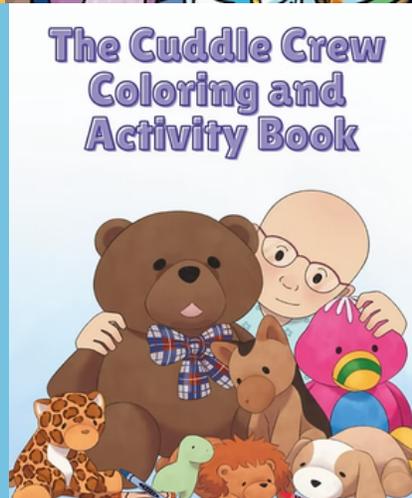
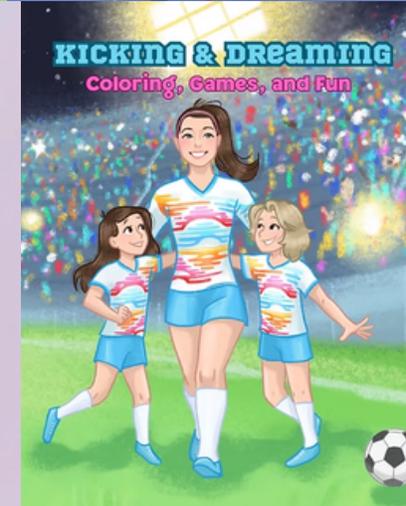
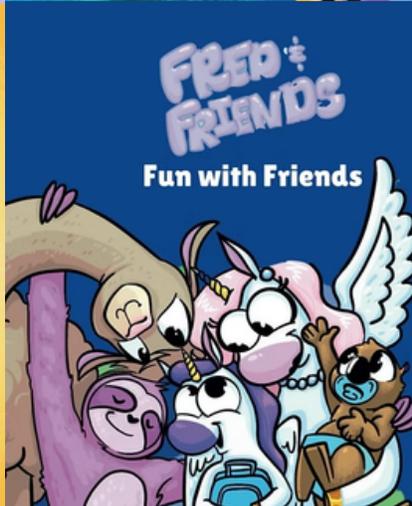
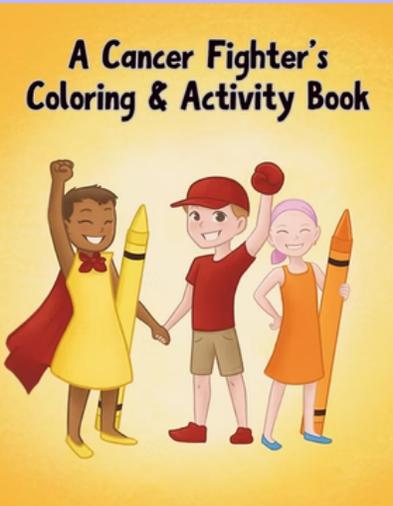
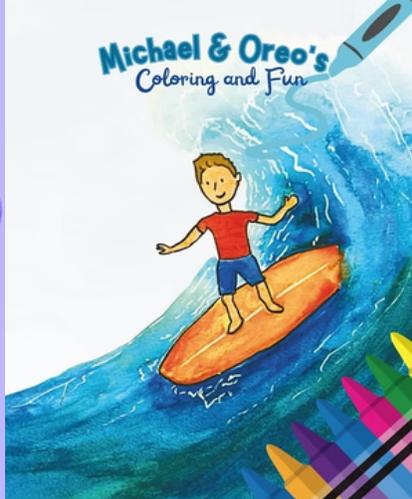
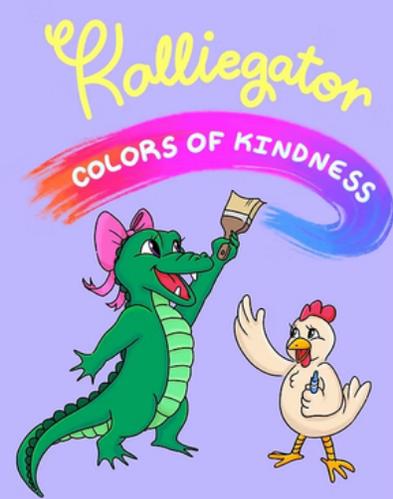
# 5 Years of Storytelling



From kind alligators to sparkling princesses, our characters all come to life and shine a beautiful golden light. Our books introduce you to the coolest characters you can imagine! From boys who dance on waves and bees who help their friends, they have taught us that we can find a purpose through childhood cancer. They have shown us how to be brave, courageous, and bold in the most challenging of times. They have given us hope through the pain of treatments. They have reminded us that even when a child we love goes to heaven, we can carry their memory in our hearts. They have taught us to find the magic within, to believe our greatest wishes can come true, and to find humor even in the halls of a hospital. They bring us comfort. They hold our hearts. Our books are **GOLD!**

♥♥ Thank you ☀️  
 ✨ for welcoming us ✨  
 ☁️ into your life. ✨  
 ✨ You make us ♥️  
 ✨ feel so loved! ♥️





# Coloring & Fun



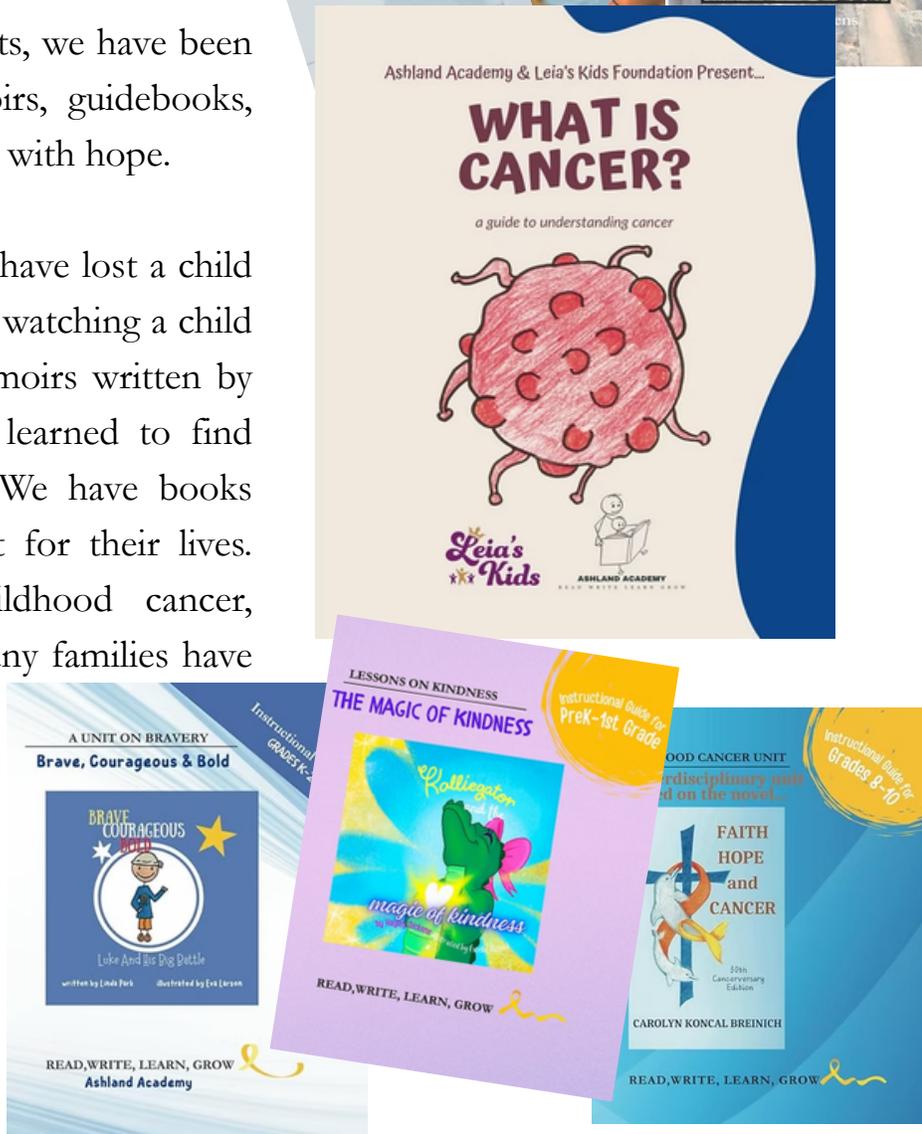
Our very first coloring book was *Kalliegator, Colors of Kindness*. It was so much fun, we decided to keep on creating them. Our coloring and activity books are filled with coloring pages, games, arts & crafts, recipes, and all kinds of fun related to our amazing characters. We have many more on the way soon. Until then, head to our websites and buy some for the kids (and adults in your life). [WWW.BELLASTERI.COM](http://WWW.BELLASTERI.COM)  
[WWW.ASHLANDINK.COM](http://WWW.ASHLANDINK.COM)

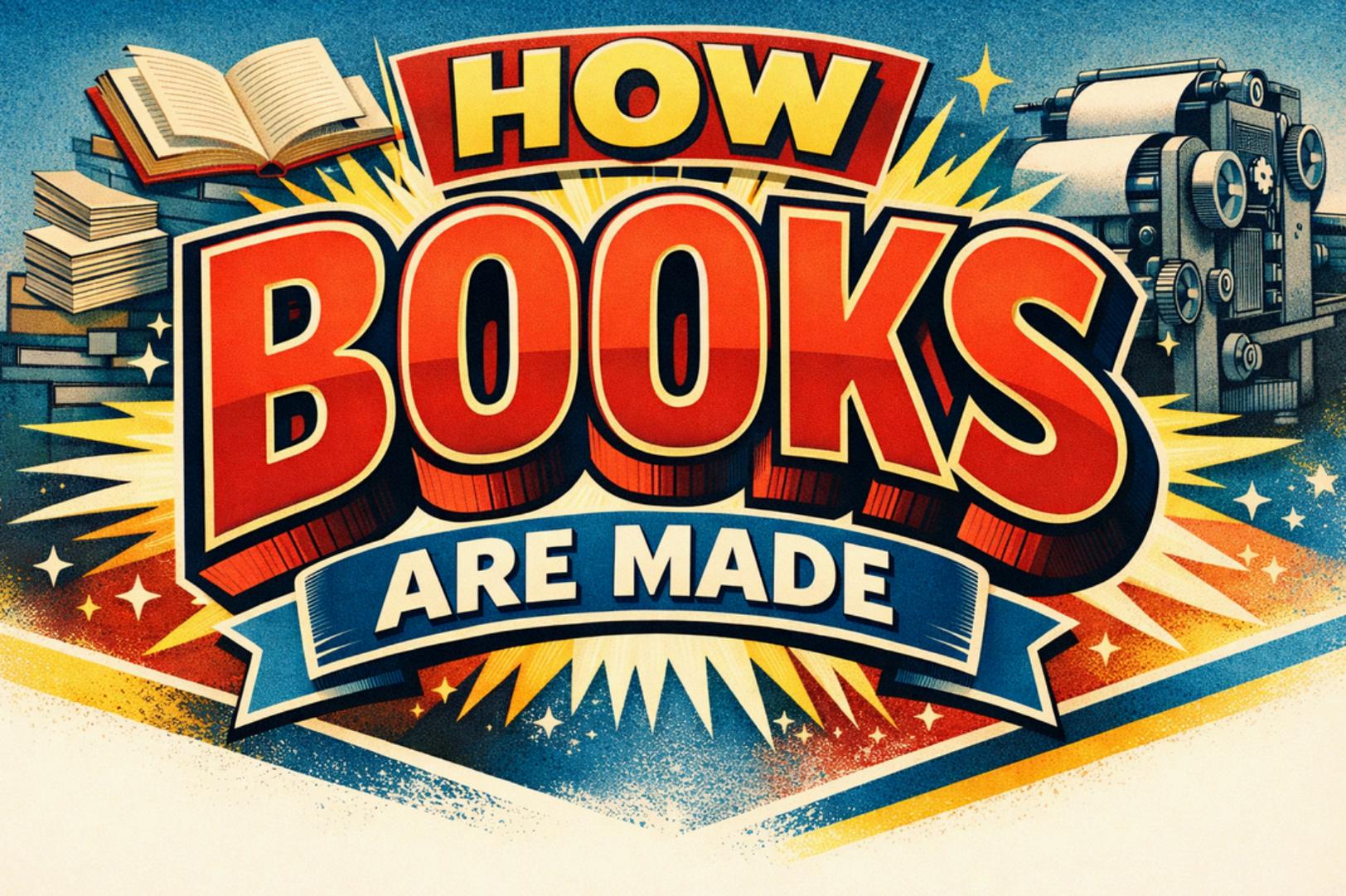


When it comes to teens and young adults, we have been able to publish some powerful memoirs, guidebooks, and stories that fill us with pain, but also with hope.

We have books written by parents who have lost a child to cancer, stories of the harsh reality of watching a child endure cancer treatments. We have memoirs written by childhood cancer survivors who have learned to find hope through a life filled with pain. We have books written by teenagers who had to fight for their lives. Every story shines a light on childhood cancer, reminding us of the harsh reality so many families have been forced into.

Our educational books offer teachers and parents special tools to teach about cancer, as well as other important topics for kids.





There is nothing like that first moment an author receives their book in the mail and holds it in their hands for the first time.

Behind the scenes, our volunteers work hard to take an author's idea and turn it into a book. But first, whether it's a memoir or a children's book, the writing has to get finished. Some authors come to us with a completed manuscript, while others only have an idea to pitch.

The writing process can take some time. Memoirs often take a lot of time and energy. Some require years of work. For many of our authors, they must relive the painful events they are writing about, and that can be heavy.

So, what happens when the writing and editing are done, and the artwork has all been finished?

Layout and design (LD) is a fun and creative process, but it is very time-consuming. Most publishers present their authors with a handful of cover designs and two or three interior options, but being small and very author-centric, we can work closely with each author to ensure they love the design of their book from the cover to each page inside. It is a lot of work, but in the end, it is always worth it.

But what happens when LD is done? Who takes it from there?

*continued on page 11*



Printing books, especially full-color children's books, is very expensive, and the cost continues to increase. Our goal is to bring in as much profit for our authors as possible. Most of them are heavily involved in childhood cancer nonprofits, and they donate all of their proceeds to help these nonprofits. The Bell Asteri Foundation also donates 100% of our proceeds to pediatric cancer nonprofits. For this reason, we use a print-on-demand (POD) service to print all of our books. This helps ensure that we are not charged for printing books that are not sold. When we first began, we learned a harsh lesson: not to permit books to be printed unless they were bought. We lost a lot of money those first two years!

Bell Asteri Foundation has a contract with a distribution company. This company ensures that all of the big and small retailers have the option of buying and selling our books.

When a retailer buys our titles, they buy them for a wholesale price and then sell them. A majority of our books are sold on Amazon or Barnes & Noble, as they are the retail giants. Of course, they are a for-profit industry, and they make the biggest profits from our book sales, but we do not feel sad about that at all. We are so grateful to have our books listed with them and with retailers around the world. We have sold books on five continents! We have books in both English and Spanish now, and we are hoping to publish in Arabic and Mandarin by 2027!

When you, our great supporters, buy our books, you truly are helping us and our authors fund childhood cancer research and programs that help kids with cancer and their families. Behind the scenes, the work is not easy, but we love it.

Our incredible volunteers, from those who help with art or editing to our board members and interns who do layout & design, press releases, marketing, and more, we are so blessed. Over the past five years, you all have helped us grow and accomplish so much more than we could have ever imagined. Thank you!

They say that the publishing industry is dead. People don't read. And no one wants to read about childhood cancer. They can say that, but we do not believe it. You are proving them wrong. Thank you for supporting us by buying our books. You are keeping our mission alive: improving the lives of the children of the cancer community through the art of storytelling.



# CASH'S CORNER

Thank you to Lisa for this fun idea for planting an indoor garden, even if it's in a hospital room! For each of these, you can use them in recipes or just enjoy their beauty! Have fun and be sure to get help from a grown up.

How to grow your plants...

- Put some dirt in a pot or cup
- Make a tiny hole
- Tuck the seed in like a blanket
- Give it a drink
- Place it where it feels happy

You don't have to hurry.

You can stop and start anytime.

Your plant will wait for you.

Grow some LETTUCE...

Butter lettuce is soft and gentle.

It doesn't have a strong taste or smell.

You can:

- Hold a leaf like a little cup
- Fill it with something soft
- Take a tiny bite
- Or just enjoy how it feels

Grow some MINT...

Mint smells cool and fresh.

It feels soft when you touch it.

You can:

- Smell the leaves
  - Gently tear one
  - Drop it in water
  - Mix a tiny bit into yogurt
- Or you can just let it grow.  
That's enough too.

Grow STRAWBERRIES...

Strawberries take time.

First comes a flower.

Then comes the fruit.

You can:

- Watch it grow
  - Touch the leaves
  - Share it with someone
  - Taste it when you're ready
- Even waiting is part of the magic.

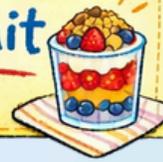
PLANT BOSS  
(ON MY GOOD DAYS)



Cash and some of his buddies want to share a couple of fun recipes you can make anywhere. Enjoy!

## Rainbow Yogurt Parfait

Layer & enjoy!



### 1. Add Yogurt



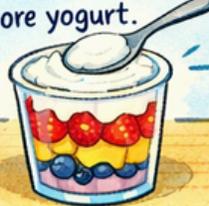
### 2. Layer Fruit

Add fruit.



### 3. More Yogurt!

More yogurt.



### 4. Top It Off!

Add granola.



## Peanut Butter Banana Bites

Easy & yummy!



### 1. Slice Banana

Slice pieces.



### 2. Spread PB

Add peanut butter.



### 3. Add Toppings!

Pick toppings.

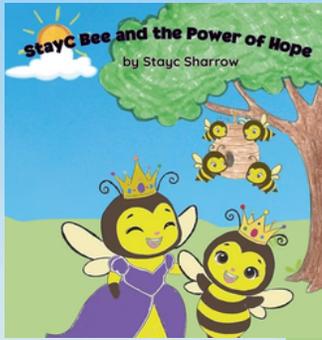


### 4. Time to Eat!

Yum! Enjoy!



# New Books!

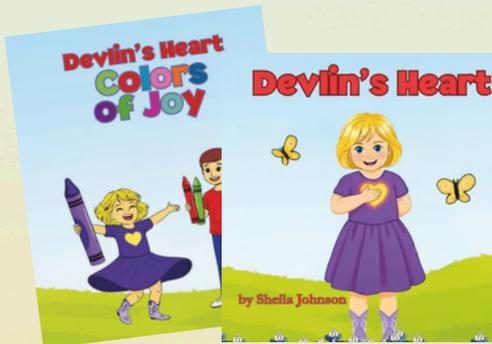


Little StayC Bee has a happy life. Her mom is the Queen Bee and her best friend is Sir Scot. StayC Bee and her pals enjoy a fun and joyful life, but then StayC discovers she has cancer and suddenly, the bees in the hive are filled with fear and anxiety. Soon, they all learn to rally around their friend in support while she undergoes treatments. StayC learns the powerful truth that our friends can help us get through the troubles of life.

\*This book has a companion coloring & activity book.



Tony was diagnosed with cancer as a two-year-old. He would undergo brutal treatments and suffer relapses through the age of 12. All of this happened in the 1970s, an era that did not see many kids survive. He lost a decade of childhood. His story is a quick read, but a powerful one. It also takes the reader on a guided history of childhood cancer from the 1940s through today.

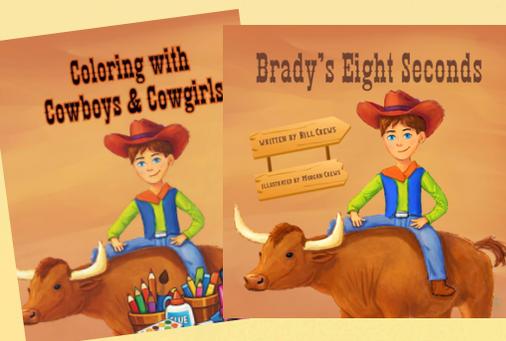


From our Ashland Ink imprint, meet Devlin, a spunky toddler with a brave heart. Books from Ashland highlight stories outside of the childhood cancer community, like Devlin's, but all of the proceeds are donated to childhood cancer research. Did you know that 40,000 kids are born with heart defects in the USA? Devlin's heart was one such heart, and her grandmother wrote this book to honor her courage. Find it at [www.ashlandink.com](http://www.ashlandink.com).

\*This book has a companion coloring & activity book.



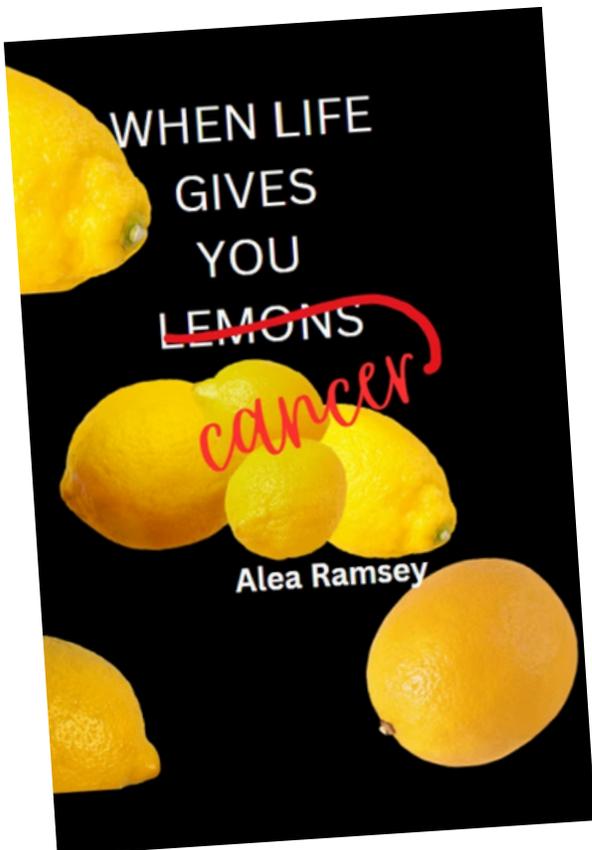
Author Brailynn Cumby may only be in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade, but her talents represent someone with incredible maturity and grace. This unique and beautiful book is based on Brailynn's journey with Ewing's Sarcoma. It is filled with color and joy while also sharing the gripping reality of being a kid with cancer, facing incredible fear. It is a truly unique story, one which both children and adults should read to grasp the heart of a kid battling a disease too heavy for anyone!



Brady dreamed of riding bulls his whole life. But before he could ride eight seconds, he had to learn how to be courageous in life first. This book is about determination and strength and learning to get back up when you fall. From Bill Crews and his daughter, Morgan, this tale is shared in memory of Chad, a brave leukemia warrior.

\*The Companion coloring & activity book is called "Coloring with Cowboys & Cowgirls."

# Remembering Alea



Dear Alea, I will love you forever. Thank you for letting me publish your book.

Love,  
Dana-Sue

from Dana-Susan Crews, Creative Director...

When I was introduced to Alea Ramsey a few years ago, I immediately loved her. She was strong, talented, smart, beautiful, and deeply kind. Alea was diagnosed with osteosarcoma at just thirteen years old. She wrote a book about her cancer journey filled with her story and her poetry, and when her mom sent it to me, I cried countless tears. She was such a powerful writer.

We moved quickly to publish her book, which she had originally written when she was only fourteen. In the years that followed, Alea endured relapse after relapse with extraordinary courage. I was supposed to have her autograph my book at CureFest in 2023, but she became too sick to attend. Just a few months later, Alea took her final breath at the age of eighteen.

When I heard the news, all the light left the room. I thought about her mom and dad, her siblings, her friends, and even her dogs. I thought about all the children whose lives she touched through her nonprofit, Bearing Hope 2U. I never did get Alea's signature on my book, but I carry her in my heart.

Every time I feel like I can no longer do the work at Bell Asteri, I remember one of my favorite authors, Alea, and I move forward. I never set out to do this work because I thought it would be fun or easy. I do it for Alea, and for all the kids like her who never got the chance to grow up and live a full life. It is profoundly unfair.

# OUR BOOKS ARE GOLD



We love kids with cancer, brave and strong,  
And siblings who cheer them all day long.  
We love their parents, caring and kind,  
With hopeful hearts and worried minds.  
We love sharing stories, soft and bright,  
Stories that glow with a golden light.  
They sparkle with hope, they whisper, "You're strong,"  
They remind us all where we belong.  
We believe, yes, deep in our heart,  
That one fine day, a brand-new start  
Will rise like the sun, warm and true,  
When childhood cancer is beaten, too.  
And until that day, we'll love and stand,  
Hand in hand, y'all, hand in hand.



*From all of us at the Bell Asteri Foundation,  
Thank you for helping us shine a golden light  
on childhood cancer. We hope for the day  
when no child gets cancer. Until we get to  
that day, we will fight for these kids. Your  
kids matter. Your stories matter.*

*Shine on, Friends!*