



# THE HOPE REPORT

LATEST HAPPENINGS AT SOFIA'S HOPE

FALL 2023 EDITION

## Are You Ready to Run?

Lace up those sneakers for this year's 16th Annual Reason to Run 5K on Saturday, October 28th where participants will run (or walk) through the gorgeous Deering Estate area, and enjoy the Family Festival overlooking Biscayne Bay, complete with food and drinks, music, activities, and prizes for our top fundraisers!

Can't make it out that day? We have you covered through the virtual race option, where you may walk or run anytime/anywhere between October 21st – 28th, and tag Sofia's Hope using @sofiashope. The first 650 participants, whether in-person or virtual, will receive an official medal and shirt.

Registration is only \$35 for adults and \$30 for all under the age of 18. Participants are encouraged to start a fundraiser individually or as a team! Those who raise \$100 will receive a refund of their registration fee! To register, please visit <https://www.sofiashope.org/reason-to-run>.



## ATTENTION: Childhood Cancer Warriors

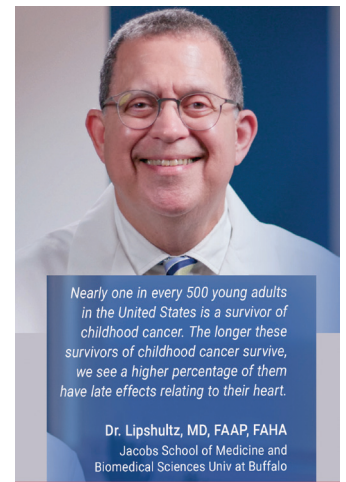
At this year's Reason to Run 5K, we are celebrating the launch of the Sofia's Hope Warriors Circle – all local childhood cancer warriors and families are invited as our guests to enjoy a day of wellness, sun and fun. A special VIP tent will be stationed to welcome these amazing families.

Let's show these families that there is an entire community walking (or running) alongside of them and fighting childhood cancer with HOPE! Warrior families interested in setting up their FREE registration for up to four, can email us at [info@sofiashope.org](mailto:info@sofiashope.org).

## Trailblazing to Protect Our Warriors' Hearts

Sofia's Hope is considered the leading funder in pediatric cardio-oncology. When we first began this partnership 8 years ago with Dr. Steven Lipshultz, the world's leading authority on the topic, we helped to fund a Clinical Research Coordinator to conduct educational outreach like presentations and journal articles. Then the work stretched to create the first-ever bio-medical journal focused on the topic, Cardio-Oncology. We then moved into quarterly educational webinars and finally launched the First International Pediatric Cardio-Oncology Conference last fall. The second conference is slated for 2024, and now our sights are set on establishing a first-ever Fellowship for Pediatric Cardio-Oncology.

We are making incredible progress toward our goals. President and Founder, Marta Blanco, shared at the spring Wine & Cheese event, "This partnership means so much to Sofia's Hope and me personally—I know because of the research that we can honestly say we have helped save the lives of children facing a cancer diagnosis. Besides my children it is my proudest accomplishment." There is much to do, but we will continue trailblazing to protect our warriors' hearts.



## Letter from the President

Dear Friend,

Happy Childhood Cancer Awareness Month! September is always an incredible time for our community to spotlight the plight of childhood cancer and raise awareness and support of this all-important cause.



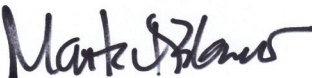
As you know, Sofia's Hope turned 10 in January, and we have been celebrating all year long. It's been a bittersweet journey for me – from grieving mother with a fierce hope to give back to President of an organization that has provided over \$1M in support to the pediatric cancer community. I truly believe that Sofia has organized people along my path to grow Sofia's Hope.

- A friend of a friend who saw a Facebook post, called me early on to announce he was going to adopt Sofia's Hope as his company's charity of choice. Ten years later, Jamie Doherty of R2 Unified Technologies serves as Vice President on the Sofia's Hope Board, donates quarterly as a corporate sponsor, and organizes the annual Denim & Diamonds event.
- Melissa Wetzel and I had a connection from the start. She listened and accepted all of me—my hopes for the organization, my pain and emotional scars, my fear to put myself and my girls out there, and my determination to make a difference—and slowly worked alongside of me to teach me how to fundraise, and to have the courage to tell our collective story to inspire a community of support. Melissa, who is now our Director of Development, has raised nearly \$300,000 for the cause.
- When I first met with Peg Hairston of the Miami Cancer Institute at Baptist Health in 2018, she gave me the chance to dream about what more we could do. MCI has funded our Field Trips programs to Zoo Miami and Whispering Manes ever since providing beautiful experiences and memories for our patients and families. Under Patty Gaona Hernandez's leadership, the partnership continues to expand into the Newly Diagnosed Family Kits and Treasured Moments.

There are simply too many names to list here, but I pray that I have shown my gratitude to each and every one of you throughout this journey. It is only together that we support almost 2,000 children and families each year throughout all of South Florida and beyond!

Sofia's Hope may have begun with the Blanco family, but it has become something much bigger...here's to you, our dear village, and here's to Sofia's Hope!

Best regards,



Marta Blanco  
*President & Founder*

### Sofia's Hope Board of Directors

Marta Blanco  
Founder and President

Jamie Doherty  
Vice President

Linda Villena  
Treasurer

Silvia Stazio  
Secretary

Sandra Bruno, M.D.  
Medical Advisor

Sandra Berenguer  
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Mariana De Michele, M.D.  
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Andres Hidalgo  
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Jorge Martinez  
Board Director


Linda Martinez  
Board Director



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# ADVOCACY

## Voice of the Patient Report

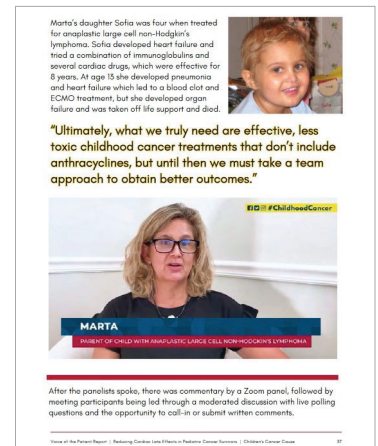
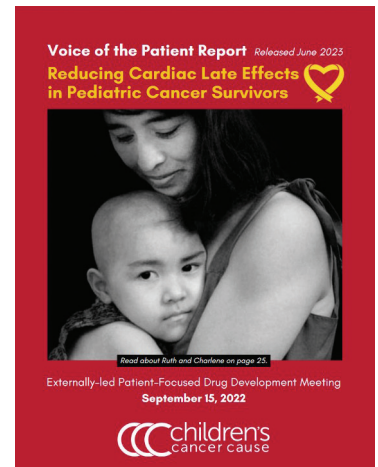
On June 15th, the Children's Cancer Cause published their Voice of the Patient Report on Reducing Cardiac Late Effects in Survivors. The report stems from an Externally led Patient-Focused Drug Development (EL-PFDD) meeting on reducing cardiac late effects in pediatric cancer survivors, held in September 2022. This virtual meeting was an opportunity for childhood cancer survivors and caregivers to speak to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and other experts about the need to develop new drugs that protect the heart and reduce cardiac late effects caused by harsh chemotherapy and radiation treatments.

Sofia's Hope Founder and President, Marta Blanco, was one of those invited to share Sofia's story and is proud to be a voice for so many childhood cancer survivors facing these issues.

*"I learned to advocate for Sofia at every turn and continue doing so today. I think it's important for oncologists and cardiologists to be better prepared to see and treat other Sofia's. They need to know how to diagnose them properly, early and provide the best treatment possible. Ultimately, what we truly need are effective, less toxic cancer treatments that don't include anthracyclines. And if a cardio-protective agent had been available in 2003, Sofia could be alive today with or without less severe cardiac issues. Either way she would've had a better chance for a longer, more impactful life."*

Marta Blanco

To read the full report, (and check out page 37 for our contribution), please visit <https://www.sofiashope.org/featured>



## Give with Confidence!

Sofia's Hope has been given a Four-Star rating by Charity Navigator and the Candid's 2023 Platinum Seal of Transparency. Please know that you can give confidently because we have been independently evaluated. To learn more and access our profiles visit links below:



[charitynavigator.org/ein/461900752](https://charitynavigator.org/ein/461900752)



[guidestar.org/profile/46-1900752](https://guidestar.org/profile/46-1900752)



# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

## 5 Years of Awarding College Scholarships!

Since 2018 Sofia's Hope has awarded 36 scholarships to childhood cancer warriors and siblings. We began awarding two recipients in each category and have been fortunate to be able to grow to three apiece plus Honorable Mentions. Every year we receive hundreds of applications which our Review Committee diligently reviews to determine the winners. Congratulations to all of this year's awardees and a big thank you to the members of the committee for their dedication and hard work:

|                  |                 |                |
|------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Jennifer Allen   | Adrian Bruna    | Carla Rivas    |
| Sandra Berenguer | Julie Grennan   | Anthony Wroten |
| Gabriela Blanco  | Carolina Planos |                |

Next year's application cycle opens January 1, 2024. For more information on eligibility, please visit [sofiashope.org/scholarships](http://sofiashope.org/scholarships).

## Congratulations, Nataly!

We had an employee shuffle this summer when Melissa Perez, our Program Coordinator, decided to return to being a full time Kindergarten teacher this year. Her last day was July 15th and while we were sad to see her go, we are very happy for her and wish her all the best.

We are happy to announce that Program Assistant, Nataly Prieto, has been promoted to Program Coordinator! "Nataly has been an incredible member of the Sofia's Hope team," said Marta Blanco. "Her compassion for the children and families we serve fuels an incomparable work ethic. She goes above and beyond every single day for our families, hospital partners, vendors and me. It's fantastic!" Nataly will continue to work closely to manage our programming and support alongside President, Marta Blanco.

*Congratulations!*

**2023 Sofia Blanco**  
Childhood Cancer Warriors  
College Scholarship Recipients

Lena Baker (MA)  
Johnny Kirkpatrick (KY)  
Eleanor Sultan (TX)  
Honorable Mention: Sarah Brunskill (NY)

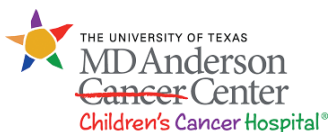
**2023 Gabriela Blanco**  
Childhood Cancer Siblings  
College Scholarship Recipients

Chase Arment (RI)  
Jlsabella Walsh (CO)  
Ryan Weissman (NJ)  
Honorable Mention: Biyun Cui (SC)



## Program Expansion

Our reach continues to grow by providing support to families receiving treatment at El Paso Children's Hospital, MD Anderson Children's Cancer Hospital and Nemours Children's Hospital in Orlando, FL. Support has included special occasions, birthday and Congratulations balloons, helium tanks, gift cards for groceries, help in paying for a PET scan and funeral assistance. While it's sad to see so many families in need, we are grateful that because of your support we can provide a helping hand.



## Newly Diagnosed Family Kit Gets a Facelift

After 8 years, the Newly Diagnosed Family Kits packaging has received an upgrade! Check out our new packaging, which is brightly colored and branded, includes an area for a personalized signature from a Sofia's Hope staffer, and a QR code. Families can now learn more about our programs easily, quickly and at their pace. The reception has been extremely positive! A shout out to Brian Burkhardt from the Oliver Patch Project for bringing creativity and collaboration and helping make this possible.



## Virtual Summer Camp Another Success!

Sofia's Hope hosted the 3rd Annual Virtual Summer camp with 21 patients and siblings participating during the week of July 12th. We had families from all over South Florida join us as well as a family of four from Cincinnati, Ohio!

This year campers did various arts & crafts projects including Father's Day cards and origami plus fun science experiments like creating tornadoes and rain clouds in a jar. They also made slime and ice cream from scratch which they used to make their own sundaes!

A big THANKS to Ane Guerrero for again developing the calendar of activities, recruiting camp counselors from her alma mater, Our Lady of Lourdes Academy, and overseeing camp on a daily basis. We could not do it without her, or the Kirk Foundation for their continued support of our art programs.



**THE KIRK**  
FOUNDATION

## Lions, and Tigers and Bears, Oh My!

After a couple of years of sidelining field trips because of COVID, we were finally able to host patients and their families for an in-person visit to Zoo Miami. On Friday, March 17th, complete with perfect weather and lots of green for St. Patrick's Day, Sofia's Hope hosted 18 families (65 patients and family members)!

Activities included a tour of the Everglades exhibit, lunch at the Oasis Grill, and a tram ride around the zoo while learning lots of facts along the way. Families were also given tickets to either feed the giraffes or the parrots as well as an Adopt-An-Animal crate for every patient and sibling. These include a gift certificate for a free annual, family membership to the zoo and a huggable animal plush. We are looking forward to our return later this year when the weather cools down.

And we continue with our virtual visits, too. The latest in July was all about the bald eagle. The 20+ participants learned a lot about this amazing bird of prey and enjoyed making their souvenir clay eagle with ClayWorld.

Shout out to The Miami Cancer Institute at Baptist Health for their help in making this program possible.



 **Baptist Health**  
Miami Cancer Institute



# IN THE COMMUNITY

## 2023 Hispanic Women of Distinction

Sofia's Hope Founder and President, Marta Blanco, was recognized as a 2023 Hispanic Woman of Distinction — one of the nation's largest celebrations of Latinas. An estimated 1,000 guests attended the 22nd annual awards luncheon on August 25th to pay tribute to Latina professionals strengthening the social fabric of this country and making inroads in the leadership pipeline for a growingly diverse America.

Founded in 2001 by the late Erwin M. Vasquez, M.D., a Venezuelan-born cardiologist, philanthropist and publisher of the pioneer Spanish newspaper, El Heraldillo de Broward, the celebration empowers Latinas and recognizes the influence they have throughout our communities. This year's Hispanic Women of Distinction celebration is presented by Latina Style Magazine in partnership with the Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center.



## It's Tie Time of Year!!

In honor of Childhood Cancer Awareness month, Go Gold ties will be available at Christopher Columbus High School for a donation of \$25. Through September, students can make their donation through Hubert Ramirez or any member of the CCHS Golf team to receive their tie. The team will be accepting donations every morning before school at the main gate. You can also make your donation by scanning the QR code. Go Gold tie will be delivered to you directly.



## NCH Summer Oncology Camp

This year's summer camp for patients at Nicklaus Children's Hospital was held from July 15th - 23rd. Thirty-four patients and survivors participated and this year they were finally able to return to Orlando for fun at Universal Studios and more!

Sofia's Hope helps this camp annually by supporting their art activities that included a session with Kim Williams from Nailed It DIY Studio and a tie-dyeing session. Congratulations to Dr. Athena Pefkarou and her team for always coordinating a fabulous camp and helping these kids make fabulous memories.

We are grateful to our art program partner, The Kirk Foundation, that provides the funding necessary to provide distraction therapy and art therapy to children and families battling cancer throughout the year.



## JOIN US AS WE CELEBRATE 10 YEARS and fight childhood cancer with HOPE!

For an overview of all we have accomplished, please check out this video <https://youtu.be/PEKzvgkr4jo> With your help Sofia's Hope has provided over \$1M in support of the childhood cancer community with 16,595 families served and counting!!



## Partners Fighting Childhood Cancer with HOPE

For several years, The Big Cheese of Miami has sponsored our Wine & Cheese and Reason to Run 5K events as well as donated lunch for many of our horse camps. We have always been grateful for the partnership and are truly humbled to share that Sofia's Hope has been named their official charity of choice! A big KUDOS to William Archer and Garry Duell, the owners of The Big Cheese of Miami, for their generosity and belief in us and our mission. Look for us on their LED board!



## Pizza Mia to Celebrate Childhood Cancer Awareness Month

During the month of September, in honor of Childhood Cancer Awareness, The Big Cheese of Miami patrons dining in, picking up or ordering for delivery will be able to round up their check and donate to Sofia's Hope. And The Big Cheese will match ALL donations! Make sure to stop by soon to enjoy yummy eats for the cause! <https://www.bigcheesemiami.com/>



## RSM's Power of Love Charitable Campaign

RSM's Miami office has chosen Sofia's Hope as this year's Power of Love charity recipient! Through the Power of Love, RSM's people, backed by generous donations from clients and the firm's communities as well as a matching donation from the RSM US Foundation, raise funds for organizations where they live and work to help the quality of life for children and families. Employee champions are tirelessly advocating and fundraising in August and September. THANKYOU to everyone at RSM, friends new and old, who are involved in this initiative and supporting childhood cancer families. We always say it takes a village and we are glad you are a part of ours!



## 6th Annual Denim & Diamonds

R2 Unified Technologies is working hard to create an amazing Denim & Diamonds gala benefiting Sofia's Hope. The last five years have resulted in over \$250,000 in support! This year's event will be held on Thursday, September 28th at 6:30pm at The Addison in Boca Raton. The evening will include cocktails, dinner, music, silent & live auctions, and inspiring speakers. Tickets are \$200, and tables of 8 are available for \$2,000. For more information and to purchase your tickets, please scan QR code.





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## Amazon Wish List

As you shop on Amazon, please consider taking a moment and adding a few needed items to your cart for the children and families facing childhood cancer. Just search for Sofia's Hope Wish List under Your Lists > Your Friends. Purchased items will be delivered directly to our doorstep!

Prefer to shop locally? Here are other much needed items:

- Publix, Winn-Dixie, Target, Uber, Shell, Amazon gift cards
- DumDum Lollipops
- Fun band-aids
- Tissue boxes
- Kids Stickers
- Travel size toiletries
- Squishy toys and Pop Its
- Small toys

Please reach out to [info@sofiashope.org](mailto:info@sofiashope.org) to coordinate drop off.  
Thank you so much!

