



FALL 2026



# THE HOPE REPORT

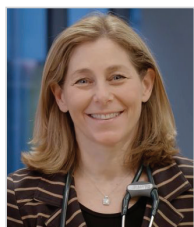
LATEST HAPPENINGS AT SOFIA'S HOPE



## Advancing the Future of Pediatric Cardio-Oncology

**The 3rd International Pediatric Cardio-Oncology Conference** taking place next month on October 23-24, in Cincinnati, OH will explore some of the most pressing topics in the field, including the cardiovascular effects of emerging cancer therapies, artificial intelligence and machine learning in drug development and epidemiology, precision approaches to preventing cardiotoxicity, survivorship, nursing leadership, care transitions, and global collaboration. Attendees will hear from internationally recognized physicians, researchers, nurses, and patient advocates representing many of the world's leading pediatric cancer and cardiovascular centers.

A special highlight of this year's conference will be the inaugural **Sofia Blanco Memorial Lecture**, honoring the legacy of Sofia Blanco, whose journey inspired the founding of Sofia's Hope and helped ignite the global movement to advance Pediatric Cardio-Oncology.



Presented by Dr. Elizabeth Blume, Division Chief of Advanced Cardiac Therapies at Boston Children's Hospital and Professor of Pediatrics at Harvard Medical School, the lecture, **Helping Patients, Parents, and Providers Navigate Advances in Pediatric Cardio-Oncology**, will focus on palliative care and family-centered approaches that ensure children and their families receive compassionate, holistic support throughout every stage of care. As groundbreaking therapies continue to improve survival, Dr. Blume will explore the equally important role of communication, quality of life, shared decision-making, and partnering with families to provide truly patient-centered care.



### Sofia's Hope Scholar Program Update

Under the mentorship of Dr. Steven Lipshultz, and with ongoing guidance from Dr. Thomas Ryan, our inaugural Sofia's Hope Pediatric Cardio-Oncology Scholar, Dr. Hugo Martinez is already making meaningful progress, developing a first-of-its kind framework to help pediatric cardio-oncology programs grow, identify barriers, and improve patient care worldwide.

In addition, Dr. Martinez serves on the steering committee for the 3rd International Pediatric Cardio-Oncology Conference. Scan QR code to watch Dr. Martinez's special message from our Evening of Hope.

We are incredibly proud of Dr. Martinez's early accomplishments and excited about the lasting impact his work will have on children and families around the world.



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear Friend,

As the seasons change, we are reminded that every step forward in childhood cancer research is made possible by a community that refuses to give up hope. During Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, Sofia’s Hope proudly GOES GOLD to honor every child and family impacted by pediatric cancer while continuing our commitment to advancing research and improving outcomes year-round.

As you’ll see throughout this issue, exciting progress is being made in pediatric cardio-oncology through groundbreaking research, strong collaborations, and the generosity of supporters like you.

Have you read my recent blog post, Childhood Cancer: The Ultimate Imitator, on the Sofia’s Hope website ([sofiashope.org/blog](http://sofiashope.org/blog))? I share our family’s journey from the first signs that something wasn’t right through Sofia’s diagnosis and treatment. If there’s one message, I hope every parent takes away, it’s this: trust your instincts. No one knows your child better than you do, and asking questions can make all the difference.

As we head into the end of the year, I wish you a wonderful fall season, a joyful Thanksgiving, and a holiday season filled with peace, hope, and cherished moments with those you love.

With gratitude,  
  
Marta Blanco  
Founder & President



Groundbreaking Research from Dr. Lipshultz, MD and Colleagues

Sofia’s Hope is proud to have supported three groundbreaking research studies co-authored by Dr. Steven E. Lipshultz that are advancing the field of pediatric cardio-oncology, by providing new insights into how the chemotherapy drug doxorubicin can affect the heart.

The research identified blood markers that may detect heart stress before changes appear on imaging, uncovered long-term mitochondrial DNA changes that may explain why some childhood cancer survivors develop heart disease years after treatment, and revealed an inflammatory pathway that could become a future target for protecting the heart during cancer therapy.

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Presented by  Nicklaus Children's  
Health System  
Where Your Child Matters Most™

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS** Join us at the 19th Annual Reason to Run 5K, presented by Nicklaus Children’s Hospital, on Saturday, November 7th! Whether you choose to run, walk, or participate virtually, every step helps bring hope and support to children battling cancer and their families.

Experience a scenic course, then celebrate with us at our Family Festival in Deering Estate overlooking Biscayne Bay. Enjoy music, family-friendly activities, booths, giveaways, and much more.

Can’t make it to the event? Register as a Virtual Participant and complete your run or walk anytime between October 31st and November 7th. All participants, both in-person and virtual, will receive an official race t-shirt and custom finisher medal.

**FUNDRAISE FOR HOPE** Take your impact even further by creating an individual or team fundraising page. Participants who raise \$100 or more will receive a full refund, making your race registration absolutely free while helping even more children and families.

**PACKET PICK-UP** Packet Pick-Up will be held at Florida Blue (8895 SW 136 Street, across from The Falls):

- **Thursday, October 29<sup>th</sup>** from 4pm - 7pm
- **Saturday, October 31<sup>st</sup>** from 9am - 1pm

Race-day packet pick-up will also be available beginning at 7:00 a.m. at the entrance to Deering Estate.

**REGISTER TODAY!** Online registration is OPEN and remains open through race morning, but prices increase by \$10 on Friday, November 6th at midnight. Don’t wait scan QR code to register NOW.

| RACE FEES | Adults: \$35 | Children (under 18 yrs): \$30 |
|-----------|--------------|-------------------------------|
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CALLING: Childhood Cancer Warriors

We invite all local childhood cancer warriors and their families to be our special guests. Warrior families receive complimentary registration (up to four participants) and exclusive access to our Warrior’s Circle, where they’ll enjoy breakfast treats, creative activities, special gifts, and a relaxing space to connect with other families.

To register your family, please email [reasontorun@sofiashope.org](mailto:reasontorun@sofiashope.org).

**Everyone has a reason to run, whether you’re honoring a child, celebrating a survivor, remembering someone special, or supporting children currently fighting cancer, every step helps create brighter tomorrows. Join us on November 7th!**



# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



Congrats to Isabella for ringing the bell and being the first recipient!

## Introducing the Sofia's Hope Celebration Gift Bag!

Finishing treatment is a milestone worth celebrating, and we are excited to recognize this special moment with our new Sofia's Hope Celebration Gift Bag! Each bag includes a personalized certificate, a \$35 Target gift card, a Dream Cap, and Sofia's Hope swag to help families celebrate this important achievement. These special bags will be distributed by Child Life Specialists at our partner hospitals, helping ensure every child completing treatment is recognized and celebrated for their courage and resilience.



## Making Our Family Kits Even Better

We continue to enhance our Newly Diagnosed Family Kits with thoughtful resources that provide comfort and practical support during treatment. We've added Port-Protects, an innovative device that helps minimize discomfort and ease anxiety before port needle access by keeping numbing cream securely in place over the chest port for more effective pain relief. Kits will also now include a larger Sofia's Hope branded tote bag, making it easier to carry medical paperwork, medications, comfort items, and other essentials to appointments and hospital visits. These additions reflect our commitment to making the childhood cancer journey just a little easier for the families we serve.



## A Bittersweet Farewell to a Beloved Program

For the past 10 years, Sofia's Hope and our partners at A Doll's Journey have provided more than 200 bald American Girl Truly Me dolls to girls experiencing hair loss during cancer treatment. These dolls helped young warriors see their bald heads as a symbol of courage and strength.

We primarily distributed the medium skin tone with brown eyes because it best reflected many of the children we serve, while also honoring requests for the light and deep skin tone dolls. Unfortunately, because American Girl has retired the medium skin tone bald doll, we have made the difficult decision to discontinue routine distribution while continuing to fulfill special requests whenever possible.

Although we are saddened to see this program come to an end, we are deeply grateful to A Doll's Journey and to every donor who made it possible. The good news is that our Build-A-Bear Support Teddy Bear program will continue, bringing comfort, companionship, and smiles to children throughout their cancer journey.



**Become a Hero of Hope**  
**And fight childhood cancer with HOPE,**  
**all year!**



## Magical Music with Nina Herzog

On Tuesday, July 16th we had the privilege of hosting Nina Herzog, singer, actress and the new voice of The Swan Princess for Sony Pictures Animation for a special meet and greet at Nicklaus Children's Hospital 6T Hem/Onc unit, with a special performance broadcast LIVE for all patients from the Seacrest Studio. We are so grateful to Ms. Herzog, Eliane Cristian, and all at NCH, including Jenny Oquendo, Grisell Canizales, and Emily Boulos, for making this event possible.



## Together in Care: A New Partnership Milestone

Earlier this year, Sofia's Hope expanded its hospital partnerships by supporting a newly established Child Life Specialist position at the University of Miami's Bascom Palmer Eye Institute. This role was created in recognition of the vital support Child Life Specialists provide to pediatric patients and their families during treatment. Through this partnership, we are helping enhance care for children diagnosed with retinoblastoma, who travel from across the state and beyond to receive treatment at Bascom Palmer, consistently ranked the #1 ophthalmology hospital in the country.



## Congratulations to 2026-2027 Sofia & Gabriela Blanco Scholarship Recipients!

We are proud to announce this year's incredible students, each impacted by childhood cancer, who continue to inspire us with their strength, resilience, and determination to pursue their dreams. Thanks to R2 Unified Technologies for generously donating laptops, and to the Bernot Family for funding one of this year's scholarships, your support helps turn dreams into reality.

To our 2026 recipients, we are honored to be part of your educational journey and can't wait to see all that you accomplish!

### Sofia Blanco Scholarship Recipients

Chan Park (MD)  
Logan Cake (FL)  
Amelia Corl (MD)

Honorable Mention:  
Edmond Wong (CA)

### Gabriela Blanco Scholarship Recipients

Taliah Wasserman (NY)  
Julianne Guarraia (CT)  
Jamie Perez (CA)

Honorable Mention:  
Kendall Woods (PA)



## Dreaming Big, Spreading Hope

Because of the generosity of the Sanchez Family, Sofia's Hope will now be distributing Dream Caps, created to encourage children battling cancer to dream big and never lose hope. These beautiful caps will be included in our end of treatment Celebration gift bags and distributed to families during our field trips to Zoo Miami and Tinez Farms as special reminders to keep believing in brighter days ahead.



RSM's Power of Love Continues to Shine



For the fourth consecutive year, RSM Miami has selected Sofia’s Hope as the beneficiary of its Power of Love Campaign. Throughout August and September, the team is raising funds through happy hours, a virtual auction, employee giving, and volunteer projects at Whispering Manes. This year’s volunteer effort has already doubled the number of service hours dedicated to sprucing up the barn. Every dollar raised will be matched by the RSM Foundation. If you’d like to contribute to The Power of Love, please scan the QR code and when making your gift include a note that reads “Miami Office – Sofia’s Hope”.

To date, RSM Miami has raised more than \$75,000, and we’re incredibly grateful for their continued partnership. Thank you to Cassandra Lee, Ryan Kerrigan, and the entire RSM Miami team for leading the way.

KIDZ Medical Services Gifts Treasured Moments



Through Treasured Moments, Sofia’s Hope fulfills meaningful one-time requests for families facing extraordinary challenges. For one young survivor, a nightly medical flush routine could take up to two hours...an exhaustive process for both the child and caregiver.

Thanks to the generous support of KIDZ Medical Services, Sofia’s Hope provided adaptive bathroom equipment to make the routine safer, more comfortable, and far more efficient. This is just one example of the many families we serve in partnership with KIDZ. This year we have already fulfilled 32 special requests for South Florida families. Life is made up of moments, and together, Sofia’s Hope and KIDZ are helping families find comfort and support when they need it most.

HOPE. GLAMOUR. IMPACT.



The 9th Annual Denim & Diamonds Gala benefiting Sofia’s Hope features Ambassadors Maria Cozamanis, Ro-Mina Ustayev, and Rosalyn Yellin of MEMBERS ONLY PALM BEACH, as seen on Netflix, and is set for Thursday, Sept. 17th at 6:30 p.m. at The Addison in Boca Raton.

Hosted by R2 Unified Technologies and The Addison, the gala will include a cocktail reception, gourmet dinner, open bar, live and silent auctions, PLUS a Casino Experience and a live performance by DJ Tumbles.



Tickets are \$350 each or \$600 for a two-ticket bundle and sponsorship opportunities are also available. Scan QR code for more information and to get your tickets.



2nd Annual BR+A Swing with Purpose Presented by XNRGY

Save the date! BR+A Consulting Engineers Miami will host its 2nd Annual Swing with Purpose golf challenge, presented by XNRGY, on Friday, September 18th, at Topgolf Doral. Teams will enjoy a day of casual golf, delicious food and drinks, exciting auction packages, and a reception where the top three teams will earn trophies and bragging rights. Proceeds will benefit Sofia’s Hope.

Special thanks to Marco DiRenzo, Sindy Perez, and the entire BR+A Consulting Engineers Miami team for making this event possible. We look forward to another wonderful day on the course!



Round Up for Kids with Cancer

This September, in honor of Childhood Cancer Awareness Month (CCAM), these incredible businesses are continuing their support of Sofia’s Hope.

**The Big Cheese** (bigcheesemiami.com) is once again hosting its “Round Up for Kids with Cancer” Campaign, inviting customers to round up their checks to benefit our programs. Every cent goes directly to helping kids with cancer and The Big Cheese is MATCHING every donation!

**MCharms**, creator of handcrafted jewelry (mcharms.com), is donating a portion of September sales to Sofia’s Hope. They’re also unveiling a limited-edition Sofia’s Hope necklace, with proceeds benefiting our programs. Be sure to get yours before they’re gone!

**Chill-N Ice Cream** (www.chillnicecream.com) is scooping up the cool for Sofia’s Hope, from September 21st to October 4th at the Pinecrest, South Miami and Coconut Grove locations. Indulge in their fresh, made-to-order liquid nitrogen ice cream and “Round Up for Kids with Cancer”.

Together, these partnerships help raise both funds and awareness, making a lasting difference for children with cancer and their families. Be sure to visit their websites and support these wonderful businesses!



ADVANCING HOPE. SHAPING THE FUTURE.

Thanks to all who made a gift to our Summer Research Campaign and to LCL McDonald’s for matching every donation up to \$5,000. Together we raised over \$17,000! Your support is helping us move closer to a future where every child can survive cancer and live with a healthy heart.



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## Help Us Spread Hope!

Sofia's Hope is on a mission to fight childhood cancer with HOPE, but we can't do it alone! You can help us make an even bigger impact simply by following and sharing our mission on social media.

Follow us to stay updated on events, stories, and ways to support children and families affected by childhood cancer. Your engagement helps us reach more people who can join our cause!



<https://https://www.facebook.com/sofiashope/>



<https://www.instagram.com/sofiashope/>



<https://x.com/sofiashopenpo>

Every like, comment, and share brings more awareness to the fight against childhood cancer. Let's spread hope together!

**Do you want to  
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