Ambassadors

Alyssa is a childhood cancer survivor, who was just 13 years old when she was diagnosed with Stage 2 Hodgkins Lymphoma. She had a large mass on her lower neck, the result of an inflamed lymph node. She said it didn’t hurt, but still went to the doctor to have it checked out. She went to Lucile Packard, where she was treated with 12 rounds of chemo and 17 rounds of radiation. Alyssa doesn’t remember much about that period of her life. She remembers missing an entire semester of school and that she spent her first year as a teenager being sick. She also remembers all the love, gifts, and support that she received on a daily basis. As a teenage girl, she recalls losing her hair as being one of the most difficult challenges of going through cancer treatment. She went from having beautiful hair that went to her knees to being completely bald. She’s been in remission for 11 years now, but the lingering effects of cancer are always there. She has ringing in her ears, ghost pain from the bone marrow surgeries and she checks daily in the mirror for lumps.

When asked what advice she would give newly diagnosed kids and their parents, she emphatically says “Utilize your resources! Cancer is a serious and terrible thing, and it is so easy to shut people out or forget to ask for help. Help is everywhere though, and you cannot (and should not) go through it alone. Besides friends and family, there is an army of willing hearts and organizations out there just waiting for the opportunity to serve you and your entire family.”

Alyssa feels cancer has shaped her into a person she is really proud to be and that love is important, and if you have it, not to let it go. Alyssa also realized that she shouldn’t waste another second of her life, and that she needs to live it to the fullest. She promised after her treatment that she would never take anything for granted, and to live the rest of her life without any regrets.

On this Mother’s Day, Alyssa says her mom is special because “She willed me to live. Between her positive thoughts, prayers, hard work, advertising, advocacy and determination to get me healthy again, there was no way she was going to let cancer beat us.”

An American Cancer Society Voice of Hope Speaker, Alyssa continues to give as an entertainment lead for the ACS’s signature event Relay for Life. She says she will continue to offer her time toward Relay until the day she dies because ACS has always been there for her.
Claire is a chatty kindergartner with a smile that lights up a room. She was recently diagnosed on February 9th of this year with Anaplastic Large Cell Lymphoma, stage 4. Claire is your typical six-year-old who can be found bouncing around or dancing to the music in her head. She wasn’t experiencing any discomfort prior to her diagnosis, but she had experienced a lingering fever that lasted 16 days, an enlarged lymph node and some small spots on her body. Her doctor recommended she see a dermatologist to have the spots evaluated. A biopsy was ordered, which resulted in her diagnosis. It was because of her dedicated team of doctors that Claire was diagnosed. Claire is currently being treated at Lucile Packard, where she just finished her second round of chemotherapy. Whenever she is at Lucile Packard, Claire enjoys chatting with every person she meets. She loves to hear stories from her doctors and nurses and follows up with them when they visit. When she is in the hospital for extended time periods, she looks forward to the door opening to her room so she can make memories with her new hospital family. As a true extrovert, her spirit is always filled when she spends time with others.

The strain and stress of cancer treatment has been taking its toll on their family of five, but they choose to lean into the discomfort, knowing that growth happens during challenging times. Their mantra is “You can do hard things.” Claire’s mother Lindsey says “We know we can’t protect our children from the discomfort they experience, but we can remind them that this is part of their story and a wonderful strength will be revealed through this cancer journey.” Lindsey wants newly diagnosed families to know that there is a lot to learn when you receive a cancer diagnosis and to love continually through it all. She also recommends taking all the help that is offered.

When asked what she would like the world to know about her, Claire replied “I am brave, strong and courageous. I am also just a regular 6 year old. I want to be a scientist, cowgirl and a biopsy doctor when I grow up.” Claire feels her mom is special because “Every night at bedtime, she gives me the biggest kisses, hugs and sings me a song. Sometimes she takes too many pictures of me, but that’s okay, because I know she loves me.”
"My name is Zenaida and I'm Dania's mommy. Dania is the youngest of my three blessings, I have an 11-year-old girl, whose name is Jaretzy, and Scarlett, who at 5 years old, is only a year and 5 months older than Dania. Scarlett and Dania would always play together as they are so close in age. One Sunday, Dania was feeling sad and didn't feel like playing. We thought it would pass and she would feel better the next day. But that didn't happen, and it wasn't until Friday, June 23, 2017 that I would find out what was happening to Dania. I took her to the hospital and we were told that she would be taken to Stanford, because doctors thought she could have leukemia. I felt as if my life was crumbling down. She was transferred to Stanford, and doctors did a bone marrow test, which thank God, came back negative. I was told doctors had to attack this cancer as soon as possible with chemotherapy. Truth be told, I had no idea what leukemia or chemotherapy was. I was in the unknown. Everything was new to me. With great pain in my heart, I had to find strength to give Dania her medication, even more, because she was always showing her strength to us. She is a strong and happy little girl, who loves to jump around and go on walks to the park. She has the courage to be happy despite problems and continues to be strong, fighting this illness. Dania has been reacting positively to her medication, and as a family we like to play a lot, always encouraging her and cheering her up. She is always so thankful of my care. She thanks me for always taking care of her so she won't get sick, and this brings so much happiness to me."