

# Parker's Friendship Circle

Created by Jennifer Moliterno, MD, FAANS and  
Trisha Gupte, BS



# About the Authors



CHILDREN'S  
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Dr. Jennifer Moliterno is the Chief of Neurosurgical Oncology for Primary Brain Tumors in the Yale Department of Neurosurgery and Co-Director of the Yale Brain Tumor Center at Smilow Cancer Hospital. She is a board certified, fellowship-trained neurosurgeon who devotes her career entirely to treating patients, mainly adults, with brain tumors.

Dr. Moliterno wrote and illustrated the first book, “Parker’s Brainstorm,” when she was a medical student and first touched and humbled by the strength and courage of patients with brain tumors, especially children and their families. Based on the overwhelmingly positive response and how it has helped so many children, she was fortunate enough to collaborate with an immensely talented future doctor, Trisha Gupte, in creating additional books.

Trisha Gupte graduated from the University of Texas at Austin with a degree in Neuroscience. She first became interested in oncology while volunteering for a cancer care service program at Texas Children’s Hospital, where she formed many special relationships with pediatric patients and their families. Later, Trisha took part in a charity bike ride, cycling from Texas to Alaska to raise funds for cancer research.

After graduating, she worked as a postgraduate research associate under the incredible guidance and mentorship of Dr. Moliterno in the Yale Department of Neurosurgery. Trisha is currently a first-year medical student at the University of Michigan Medical School and is very excited to continue developing her passion for art throughout her journey in medicine.



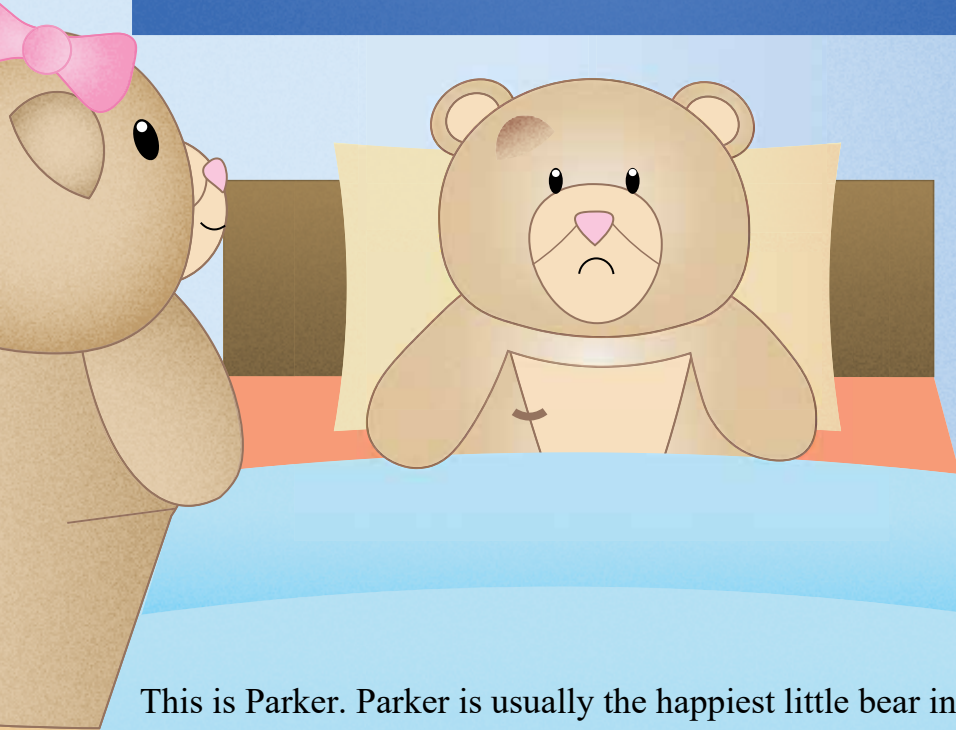
Dr. Jennifer Moliterno dedicates this book to her greatest loves, her pride and joy, husband Murat and son Aydin Gunel, and to her parents for their love and support and of course for giving her Snuggles, her teddy bear, whom Parker is based.

Trisha Gupte dedicates this book to her two loving parents, Sandhya and Parag Gupte, and all of the pediatric patients she met at Texas Children’s Hospital.

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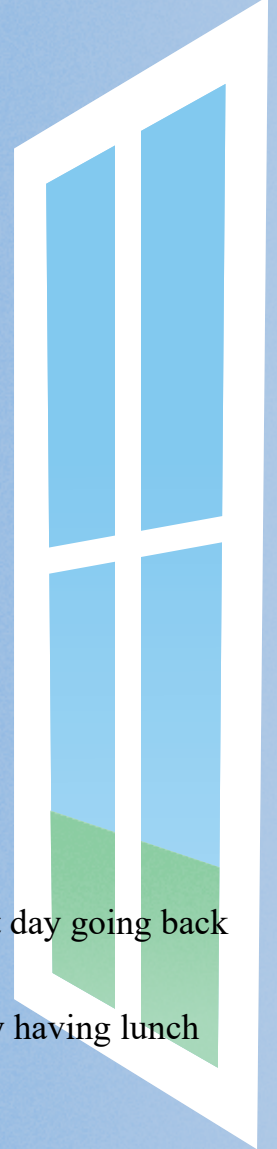
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This is Parker. Parker is usually the happiest little bear in the whole wide world. But right now, he's sad.

Parker has had a couple of surgeries to remove a brain tumor and to help shunt brain fluid from his head. It took him a lot of time to get better and he missed a lot of school.



Parker's mommy told him tomorrow is his first day going back to school.

Parker usually loves going to school, especially having lunch with his friends and playing during recess.

But this time, Parker just feels scared.

What if his friends don't remember him? It has been a long time since he has seen anyone except his best friend Bubba. And what if they are scared of his scars?

Parker's mommy understood. "Parker, they will be so happy to see you and how well you are doing. They won't even notice your scars."

Parker woke up the next morning. He was too nervous to eat his pancakes.

His daddy packed a yummy lunch of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for Parker and they all drove to school.



Parker was so happy to see his best friend Bubba and the head of the school, Mrs. Bluebell, were waiting for him outside the school.

“Welcome back, Parker!” exclaimed Mrs. Bluebell. “We have missed you and are so glad to have you back at school.”

“Thanks Mrs. Bluebell,” said Parker. Bubba gave him a big hug. All three walked into the school as Parker waved to his parents and they drove away.



Parker entered his school and though it had been some time, he still remembered the way it looked and smelled. He suddenly became happy. It felt just like how it was before he was sick.

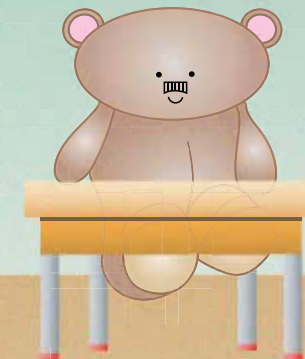
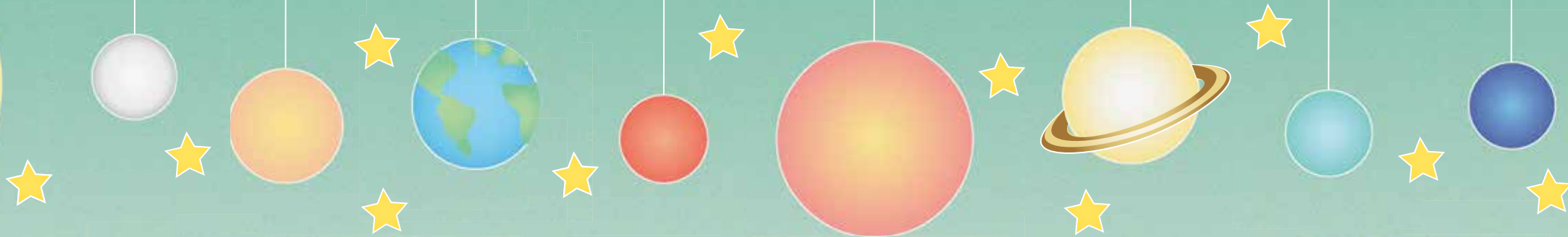


They walked down the hallway and entered Parker's classroom. As he walked in, he immediately noticed all of his classmates and friends.

His teacher, Mrs. Bluebell, said "Hi Parker! Welcome back!" She and all his classmates began clapping. "Come join us, we are just beginning to study the solar system."

Parker made his way over to his old desk and sat down. Though he had not been back in school very long, he was already pretty tired. His head hurt him a little bit too.

But he remained happy to be part of his regular school day. Bubba pulled his desk closer to Parker's. The two bears giggled as they colored their planets.



“Ok class, school is dismissed. You are all free to go outside and have some play time,” said Mrs. Blue.

Parker was excited. This was what he missed most about school. Being able to play with his friends.

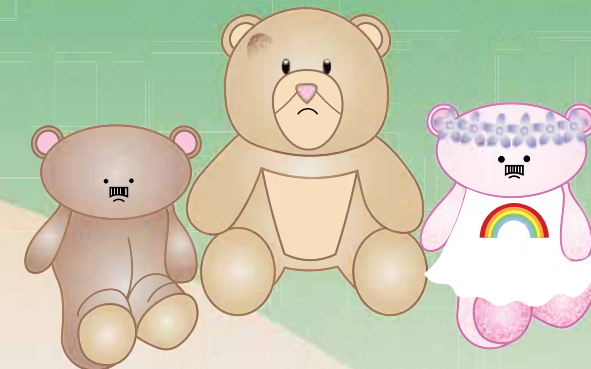
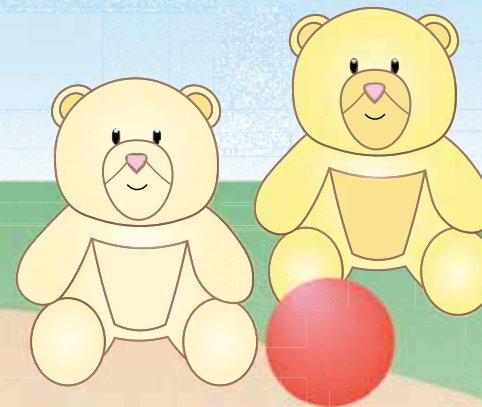
All the bears raced outside to the playground and they formed two teams to play kickball. Parker went to the team Bubba was on.

“Hey Parker,” said Randy, one of the bears. “We don’t have room for you on our team.” Bubba was confused.

“No problem,” said Parker and he went to the other team and stood next to his friend Mia who gave him a big hug.

“Um, Parker, we don’t have any room for you on this team either,” chuckled Emily. “You should probably just sit on the side or go on the swing over by the playground.”

Parker was sad. Bubba and Mia were confused. There was plenty of room for Parker on the teams. “Why can’t he play,” asked Bubba. The other bears chuckled. “We don’t want someone with those scars playing kickball with us. He might make us lose.” Most of the little bears laughed, even the ones who didn’t think it was funny. But Bubba and Mia did not.





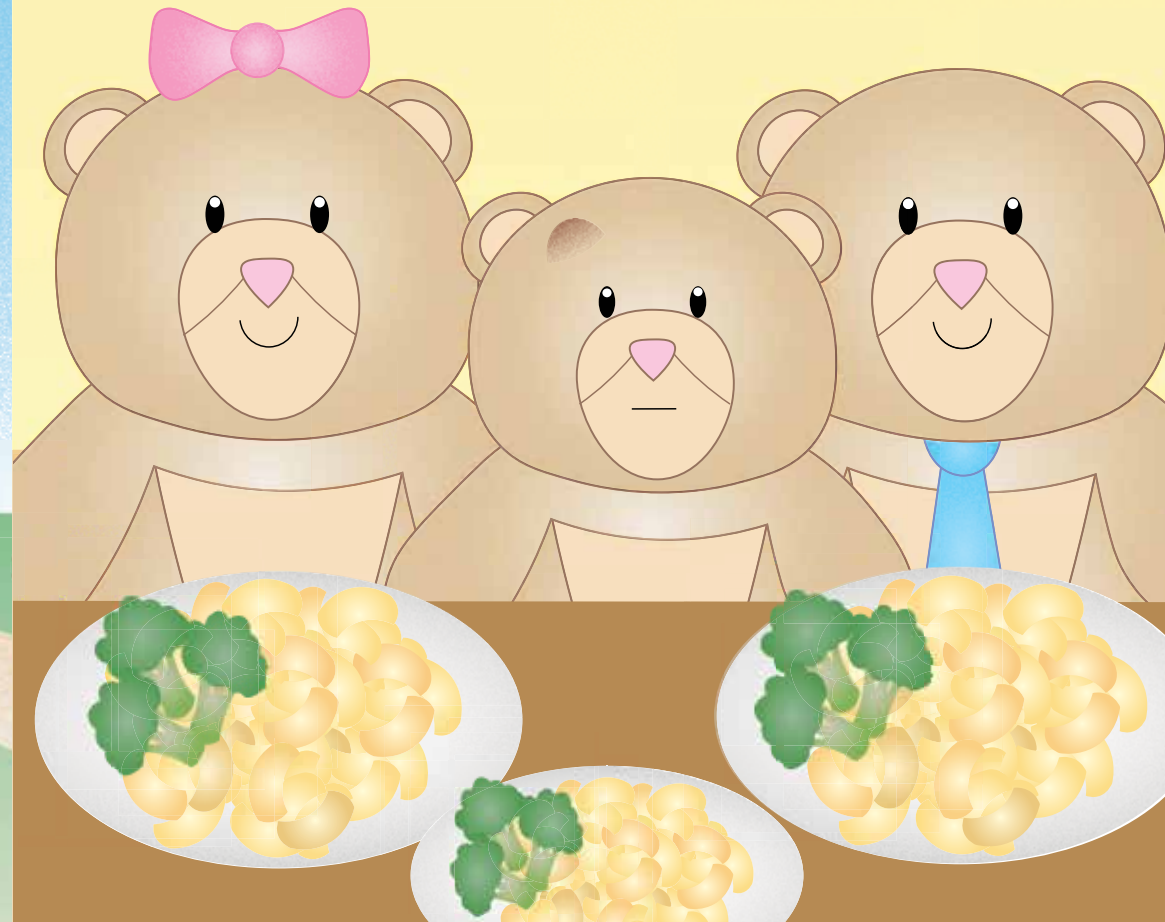
Parker said “It’s ok Bubba, I have to go home anyway. My mom needs me to help with dinner.” He turned and left and began walking home alone. The other bears continued on and played kickball.

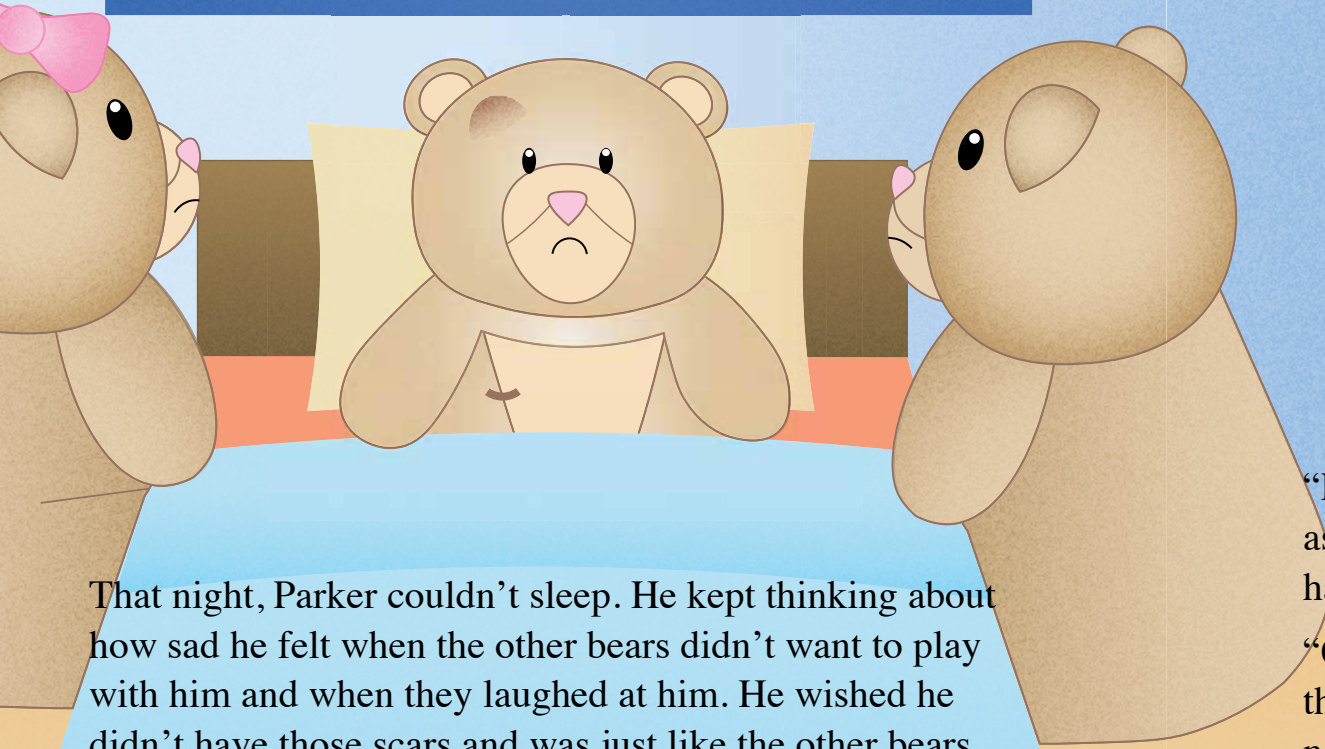
Bubba and Mia meanwhile, went inside to find Mrs. Bluebell. They thought she should know about how the other bears treated Parker.



At home, Parker sat down for dinner with his parents. His mom made his favorite meal, macaroni and cheese. “How was your day little bear,” his mom asked. “Fine,” replied Parker. “Just fine?” questioned Parker’s dad. Parker didn’t answer. “How was it to see your friends?” they asked.

“I don’t feel well,” said Parker. “I am going to go to my room and left the table. His parents were confused and concerned. Was his head hurting him?”





That night, Parker couldn't sleep. He kept thinking about how sad he felt when the other bears didn't want to play with him and when they laughed at him. He wished he didn't have those scars and was just like the other bears. He began to cry. His parents heard him and rushed over to his room.

“Parker, what's wrong? Does your head hurt??” they asked. Parker sobbed and began telling them about what happened at school. His parents hugged him and listened. “Oh Parker, maybe they are scared and confused themselves. Perhaps if they understood better, they would not treat you that way.” Parker and his parents decided the next morning they would go with him and all would talk with Mrs. Bluebell.

The next morning, they did just that. Mrs. Bluebell, who had spoken with Bubba and Mia, was happy to help. She was glad his friends knew to tell an adult what had happened and she had already spoke with the little bears who had bullied Parker.

“We are really sorry Parker,” said his classmates together. “We were scared ourselves while you were sick and we didn’t know how to act.” They all hugged.

All the bears sat in a circle. Parker told his friends about his surgeries and how scared he was. He also told them about all the really cool machines in the hospital and the great doctors and nurses who took care of him. His friends asked questions and realized he was still the same Parker. Nothing had changed. He had been sick but he was better and there was no reason to be afraid.



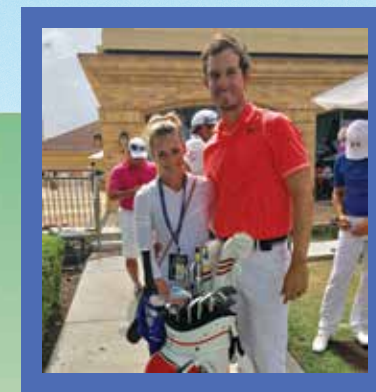
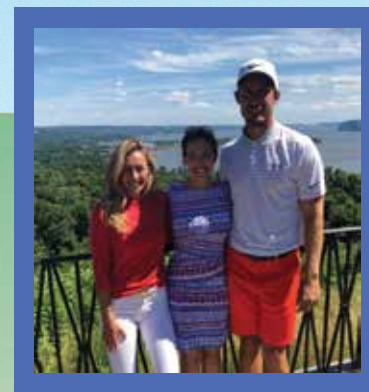
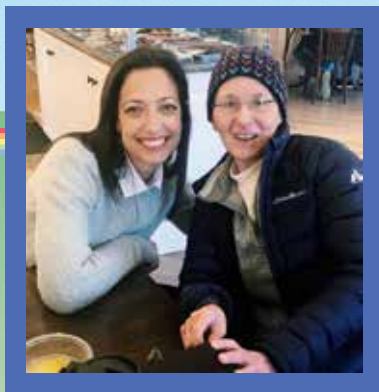
That day, after school they all ran outside to play kickball. Both teams wanted Parker to play with them and they had so much fun.

“Thank you for sticking up for me and for telling Mrs. Bluebell.” Parker, Bubba and Mia all hugged and then screamed “Let’s play some kickball!”



# Thank You!

We wish to acknowledge the generosity of Dr. Susie Beris. In 2018, Dr. Beris, a well-loved, Yale-trained, Connecticut pediatrician was diagnosed with a brain tumor and underwent surgery performed by Dr. Jennifer Moliterno. She was so grateful for the tremendous care she received that she started the “Susan Beris, MD Fund for the Yale Brain Tumor Surgery Program.” Part of her substantial donation has supported the publication of this book, combining her lifelong love of helping and comforting children with a more recent passion for raising awareness about brain tumors.



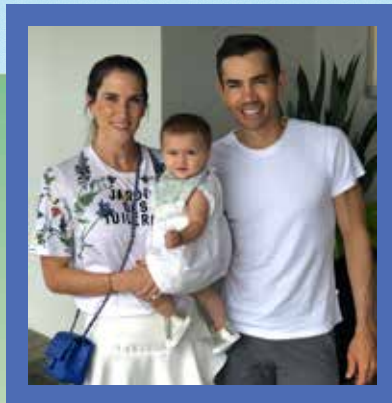
# Thank You!

We want to also express our gratitude to the Lovemark Foundation for their support of the publication of this book. Founded by PGA golfer Jamie Lovemark, and his wife Tiva, the mission of the Lovemark Foundation is to help patients with brain tumors, and their families, by providing support to allow them the opportunity to primarily focus on fighting their disease, as well as to assist in their travel to receive exceptional care. Since its inception, the Lovemark Foundation has graciously donated their significant proceeds to the Yale Brain Tumor Center at Smilow Cancer Hospital with every penny given directly to patients with brain tumors under the leadership of Dr. Jennifer Moliterno. The Lovemark Foundation’s empathetic commitment to ease the concerns of patients with brain tumors and their families is in complete alignment with the purpose of Parker’s books.

# Thank You!

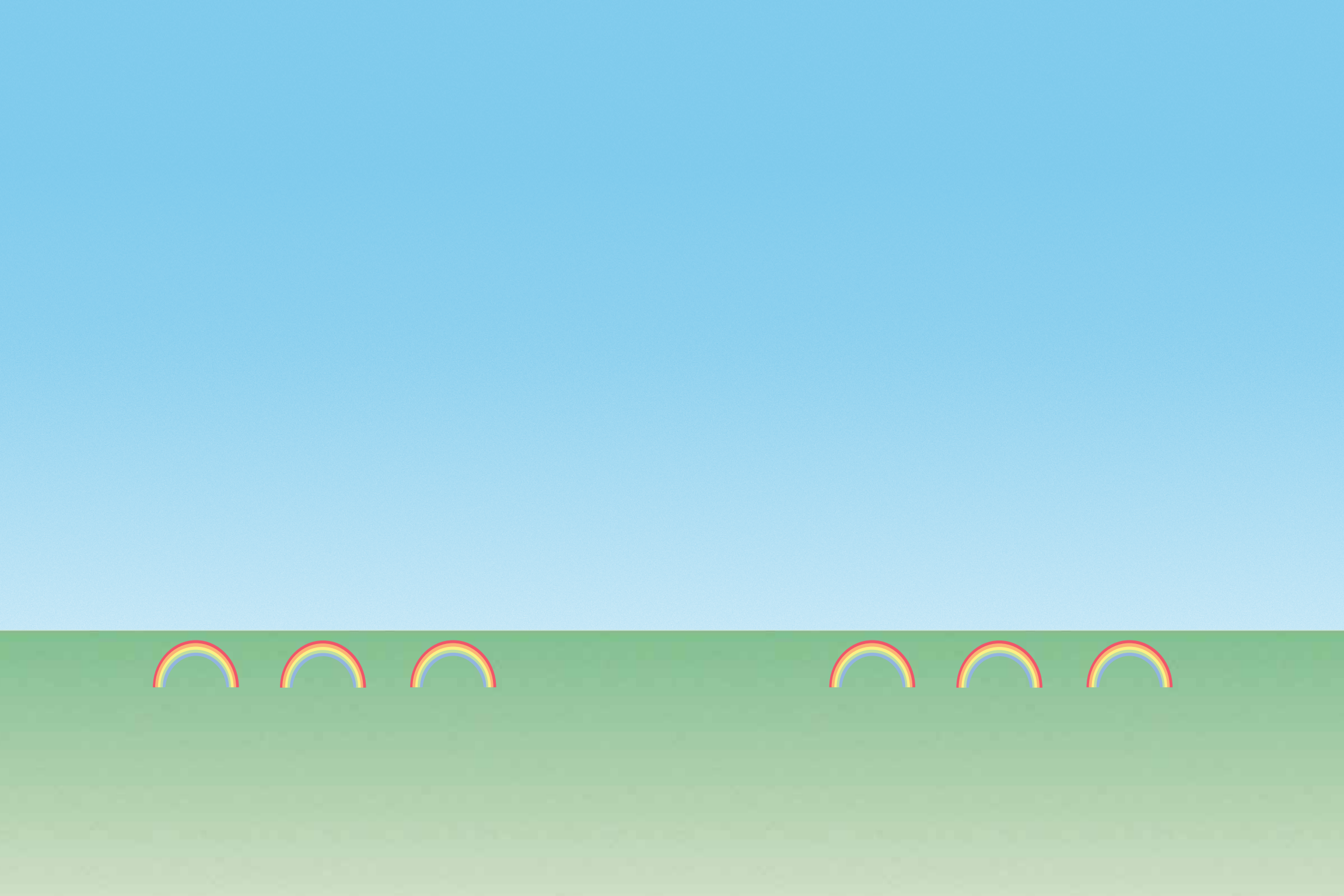
Founded by PGA Professional Golfer, Camilo Villegas and wife Maria Ochoa, Mia's Miracles Foundation provides small blessings with large impacts, bringing smiles and positivity to children and families facing challenging circumstances. This vision of Mia's Miracles Foundation is that all children and families receive access to reliable resources and a supportive network that leads to a hopeful future.

Mia lived a short life on earth, twenty-two months and two hours to be exact. Throughout this time, she brought light and joy to all that came into her presence. During her battle with brain cancer, the Villegas family lived at Nicklaus Children's Hospital for five months. After passing away on July 26, 2020, Camilo and Maria have continued to honor Mia's legacy through Mia's Miracles Foundation. Since its launch, Mia's Miracles Foundation has devoted resources to Nicklaus Children's Hospital in Miami, FL and a number of organizations in Colombia, providing vulnerable children and families with assistance to ease the burden of financial hardships and emotional stress during difficult times.



## Self-Care Tips for Parents

- **Taking care of yourself when your child has a chronic health condition frequently takes a backseat. Parents feel responsible for everything that happens each day. When things happen, which are out of anyone's control, parents still feel guilty. Stopping everything and taking time out for yourself, feels impossible. But when you don't take care of yourself, you will struggle to take care of others.**
- **Below are some tips to encourage self-care. Do not feel guilty about not always following them. The important thing is taking steps to care for yourself. Even finding 10 minutes a day is a good start. Find a partner or good friend who can remind you about self-care.**
- **Ask for support-Friends and family want to help, but often do not know how to. You may feel uncomfortable asking, but their desire to assist is genuine. Helping with siblings, housework, yard work, and even helping with your sick child are requests you can make.**
- **Take time out to eat-It is much easier to eat quick fast food when you are stressed and do not have time. However, thinking about eating a balanced diet and planning nutrition into your day will boost our resistance against the impact stress has.**
- **Acknowledge and address your feelings-Find space and time to acknowledge your feelings and "feel" them. Whether this is meditation, journaling, running, a short walk, talk with a friend, listening to or making music, or even just time for a hot bath.**
- **Sleep- Getting enough rest is essential to good health and stress relief.**
- **Children's Brain Tumor Foundation offers monthly groups for parents at all different stages of the brain tumor journey. People who have been and are traveling the same journey can provide tips and crucial support.**





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**CBTF is here to make sure  
no family goes through the brain tumor  
journey alone until we find a cure.**



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