

# ZARA TAKES OFF

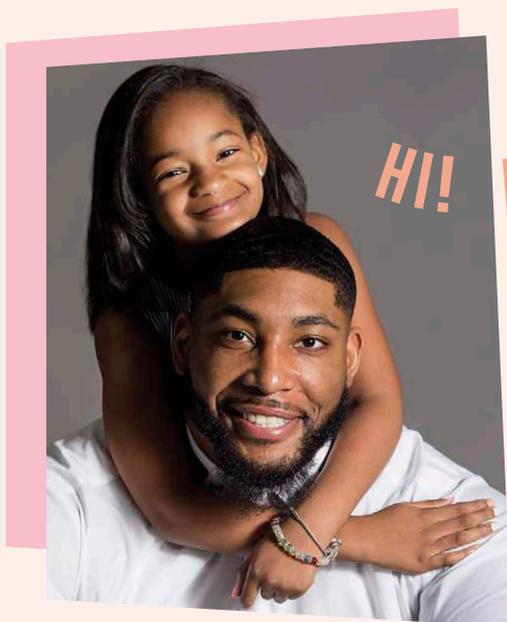
A story of a young cheetah  
and her family's journey after  
neuroblastoma treatment



BY  
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ILLUSTRATED BY  
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a FOREWORD by LEAH STILL



HI! MY NAME IS

# LEAH STILL

If you're reading this book right now, chances are we have a lot in common. When I was four years old, I was diagnosed with high-risk neuroblastoma. It's a rare form of cancer that mostly affects young kids. I'm eleven years old now, but back then, I had no idea what cancer was. I just knew it wasn't good because my family would cry a lot. I'm sure you know what that's like.

**Fighting cancer was scary and sad sometimes.** It was scary because I didn't like when the nurses had to stick me with needles. It was sad because the chemotherapy the doctors used to beat up the cancer, not only hurt my stomach, but it hurt my self-confidence. When the chemotherapy made my hair and eyebrows fall out, I didn't think I was beautiful anymore. **At first, I didn't tell anybody how I was feeling.** But eventually, I told my family and they let me know that beauty comes from within, and with or without hair, I was still beautiful. If you feel that way too, **know you are beautiful—and make sure you tell your family**, because they always know the right things to say to make you feel better.

I really think that this book may help make your fight with cancer less scary and less sad. **Zara's journey after she finished treatment reminded me so much of my own journey with cancer that the book could've been named *Leah Takes Off!*** When you're first diagnosed with cancer, it can be confusing because your life changes so fast and you don't know what to expect. **But as a neuroblastoma survivor**, I can tell you that this book gives you tips on how you may overcome your fears and what to expect after treatment ends. It even has helpful resources at the end for you and your family.

I used to dream of all the fun things I could do when I beat cancer like Zara did, but **it's no longer a dream—it's my reality.** I want to encourage you to **believe in yourself as you Brave NeuroBLASToma. Stay strong, my friend!**

Sincerely,  
Leah Still

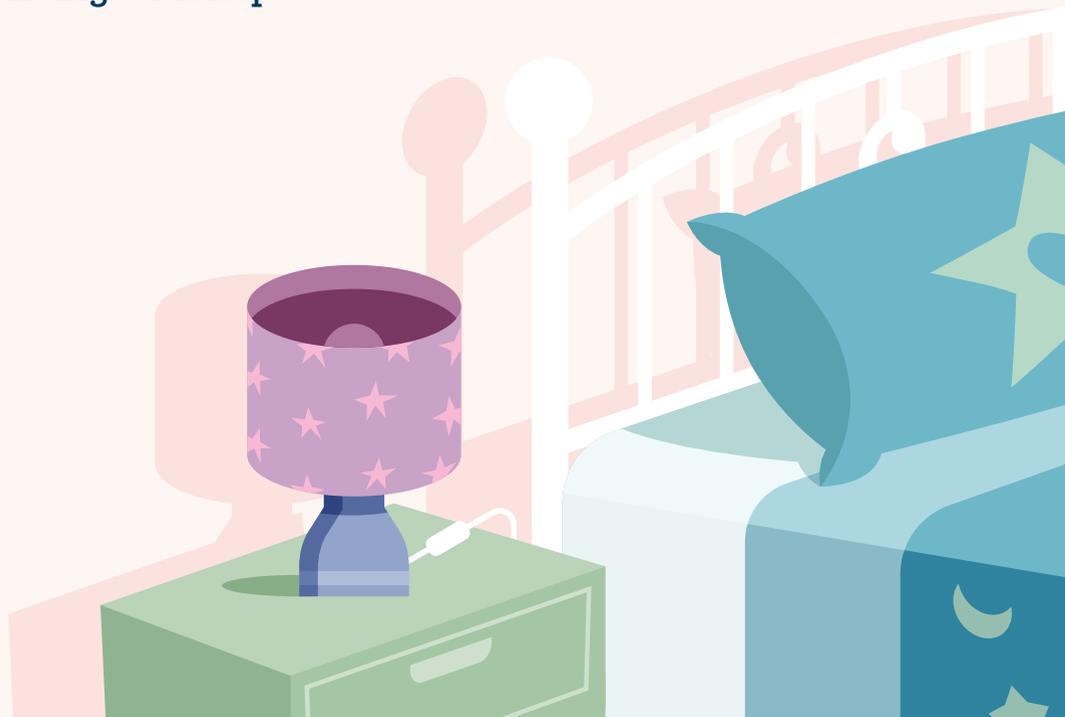
**P.S.** To read more about my dad's story as my caregiver and my own experiences with neuroblastoma, go to [BravingNeuroBLASToma.com](http://BravingNeuroBLASToma.com).



United Therapeutics Oncology  
is honored to serve the pediatric  
neuroblastoma community and is  
committed to supporting patients and  
families touched by neuroblastoma.



This book is dedicated to brave  
neuroblastoma patients and their  
families living with hope.



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*Zara is a cheetah.  
She is 6 years old.  
Zara is all finished with her  
treatment for neuroblastoma.*

Zara just had tests and scans for her checkup with Dr. Kono next week.



*Tests and scans are  
very important  
after treatment*

“That’s our last stop,” says Mom, smiling at Zara.  
“Are you ready to walk home?”

Zara nods eagerly and takes Mom’s hand.

They pass Skivolo and his mom on their way to the hospital lobby. When Zara and Skivolo see each other, they wave their arms excitedly. Zara remembers all the fun they had playing together when they stayed at the hospital.



◀ AUDIOLOGY 

◀ ENDOCRINOLOGY 

◀ DENTAL 

 CARDIOLOGY ▶

 RADIOLOGY ▶

 LABS ▶



*Zara and her mom arrive home. Nana and Papa are making lunch.*

“Papa and I have been waiting for you to scoop the avocados, Zara,” says Nana.

“That’s right,” adds Papa. “How were your tests?” he asks and gives Zara a hug.

Zara looks a little sad. Nana asks, “Are you feeling okay?”

“My tests were all right, but I miss seeing the nurses and playing with Skivolo,” Zara says quietly.

“It’s okay to feel sad when you’re not sure when you will see someone again,” reassures Mom.

*“Now that your treatment is finished, you have lots to look forward to, my dear.”*

“Your mom is wise,” Nana whispers, “and we are so very proud of you, Zara. Would you like to go for a scooter ride in the park after lunch? Maybe Papa will race you,” she suggests.

Zara smiles a bit. She wonders what this new adventure might be like.

“Come on, my dear,” says Mom. “Wash your hands and let’s have some lunch.”





*Zara is tired, but she can't sleep. She tosses and turns thinking about going to school.*

**“Rise and shine!”** says Mom  
as she opens the curtains.

**“Mmrrr,”** groans Zara. **“I don't  
feel very good.”** Mom kisses  
Zara on the forehead.





“You sound tired,” says Mom.

“I couldn’t sleep. My mind was swirling and my tummy was fluttering. I don’t want to go to school. I don’t want to see my friends. They don’t understand my hearing aid superpowers,” Zara says, feeling upset.

“I understand you’re worried, my dear,” says Mom.

“Do you remember what the nurses taught you to do with swirls and flutters?” Mom takes a deep breath in to push out her belly as a clue.

**“Belly breathing!” exclaims Zara.**

**“Yes, I remember!”**

“Let’s sit tall and do it together,” Mom says calmly.



*Zara and her mom close their eyes and pay attention to their breathing.  
They belly breathe together until their bodies feel relaxed.*

Breathe in  
through your nose



and inflate your  
belly balloon.



Now out through  
your mouth



like blowing out your  
birthday candles

Count down...



*After belly breathing, Zara and Mom calmly talk about going back to school.*

“I know that you feel different, Zara,” says Mom.

“You are the bravest girl I know. And you can do anything you put your mind to. Your friends at school will be very happy to see you because you are so fun to be around.”



“But how will we know the cancer isn’t inside me again?” Zara says.

“You’ll have tests and scans like you did yesterday. And we’ll see Dr. Kono for checkups to make sure,” Mom explains.

“And we’ll see doctors for ears and hearts and growing, too?” Zara asks.

“Yes, my dear. They’re a team, just like us. We all want to make sure you’re growing healthy and strong so that you can be anything you want to be.”

“Even an astronaut?” Zara asks excitedly.

“Even an astronaut,” says Mom.

“Now, let’s choose a **special headband** to wear to school!”

“Okay!” Zara says cheerfully.





School

*At the end of the day, Nana and Papa are patiently waiting for Zara in the schoolyard.*

**“Look! Look!”** says Zara, skipping toward them.

“We painted pictures today! This is you, Nana, and you, Papa,” Zara explains.

“And this is Mom, and Dr. Kono, and Skivolo! And this is a penguin, and I’m wearing my favorite headband. We’re all happy because I feel healthy and strong!”

“What a wonderful picture, Zara,” says Papa.



Zara’s face lights up as she says,

**“I’m going to take it to the clinic next week to show Dr. Kono!”**

“That’s a great idea,” says Nana.

*Zara and her mom arrive early for their clinic visit. They take a seat in the waiting room.*

Zara is excited to show Dr. Kono the picture she painted at school. She is feeling nervous, too.

“Mom,” Zara says quietly, “are you scared?”

“I’m always a little nervous to hear about tests and scans, my dear.”





WHO'S IN TODAY:

DR. KONO

“Sometimes having courage  
means feeling scared and  
doing something anyway,”  
says Mom.

She gives Zara a hug.

“We can do *this* together.”

*Dr. Kono smiles as Zara and her Mom sit down in the exam room.  
Zara stretches out her arms to show him the picture she painted at school.*

“For me?” asks Dr. Kono. “Wow, what bright colors!  
Thank you, Zara.”

“I have a picture to show you, too,” Dr. Kono says.

“We took these scans last week to look at the inside  
of your body. You did a very good job holding still.  
See here and here?” he continues.

**“We don’t see cancer!”  
Zara and her mom grin widely.**

“All of your lab tests are what we expect  
for a healthy cheetah your age. You  
have even started to catch up on your  
growing,” Dr. Kono says, as he points  
to Zara’s growth chart. “You must be  
eating nutritious foods. Great job!”

“Now, let’s see how strong you are.”





First, Dr. Kono *listens to Zara's chest and tummy* with his stethoscope.



Then they play a copycat game to *test her balance and strength.*

They walk on tiptoes... and on heels.

They stand on one leg... and with their eyes closed.





Zara even shows Dr. Kono  
*a move she learned  
in dance class.*

*Dr. Kono asks lots of questions.*

He asks Zara about school... and her hearing aids...  
and her last dentist visit.

He asks if she is taking her thyroid  
medicine... and if she ever feels sad  
and worried.

Zara answers the best she can.





“What happens next?”  
exclaims Zara.

“We’ll keep seeing each other often, Zara,”  
Dr. Kono says.

“We want to make sure the cancer doesn’t come back,  
and sometimes neuroblastoma medicines can cause  
changes to the body months and years after treatment.

It is important that we check in on how you’re growing, how strong  
your heart is, and how healthy your teeth are.”



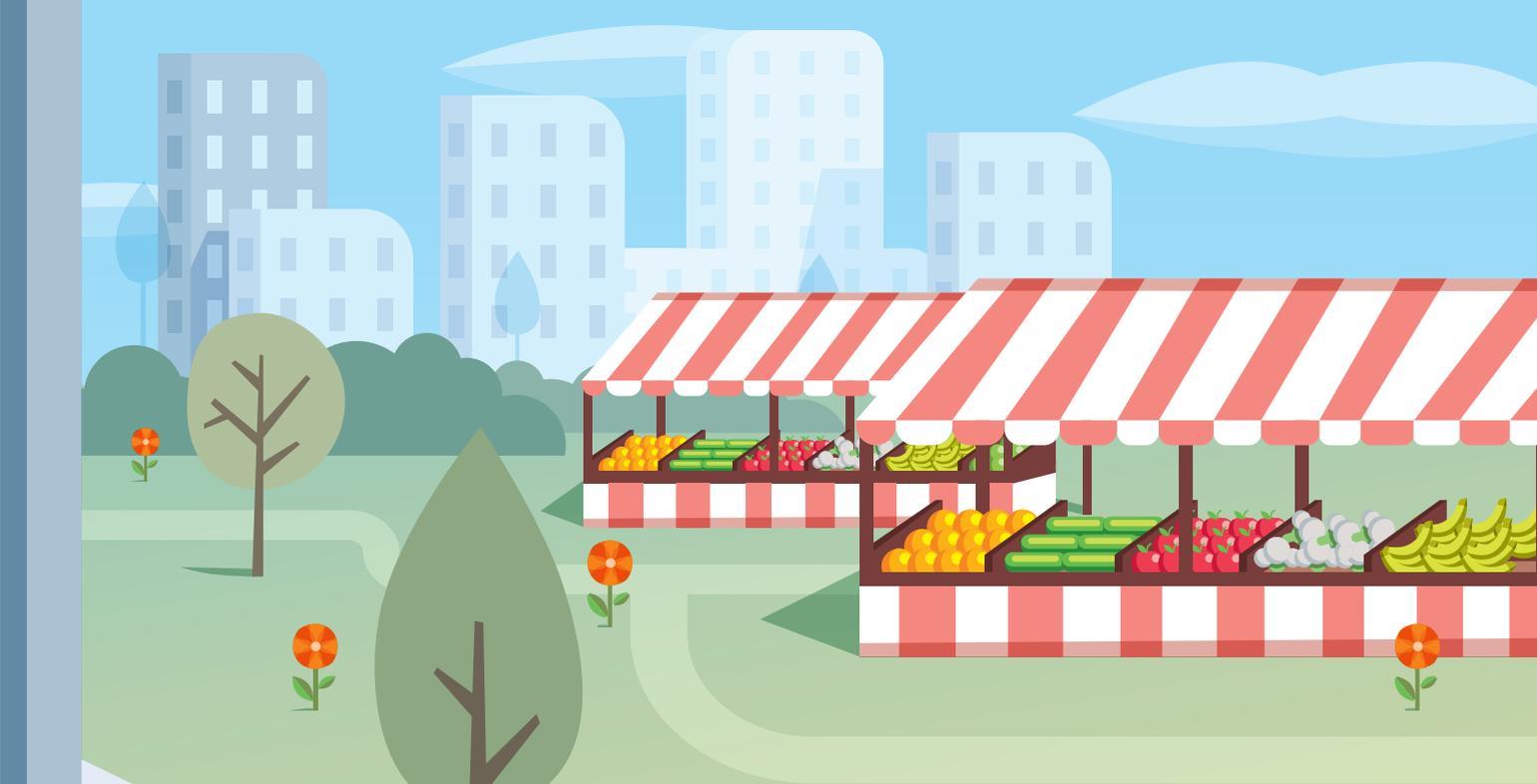
“I want to know how your hearing superpowers are working, and how school is going, too. If you don’t feel well or if you’re worried, we can have a checkup sooner,” he continues. “How does that sound?”

“Sounds good to me,” Zara replies.

“Excellent. Now, go have some fun. I’ll see you soon!” Dr. Kono says, as he leans over for a high-five.

*Zara and Mom feel relieved. They call Nana and Papa to share the good news. Then they head to their dance and yoga classes.*





“Thanks for a great class!”

Zara exclaims, as she and Mom wave  
goodbye to the teacher.

“How are you feeling after our day?” Mom asks.

“Much better now that we talked about my tests and  
scans with Dr. Kono,” Zara replies.

“I feel less scared and I’m excited  
for new adventures.”

“My brave girl, I’m so proud of you,” says Mom.

“I feel better, too.”

“Mom, can we get a treat to share with Nana and  
Papa?” Zara asks.

“Sure, my dear. This calls for a celebration!” says Mom.





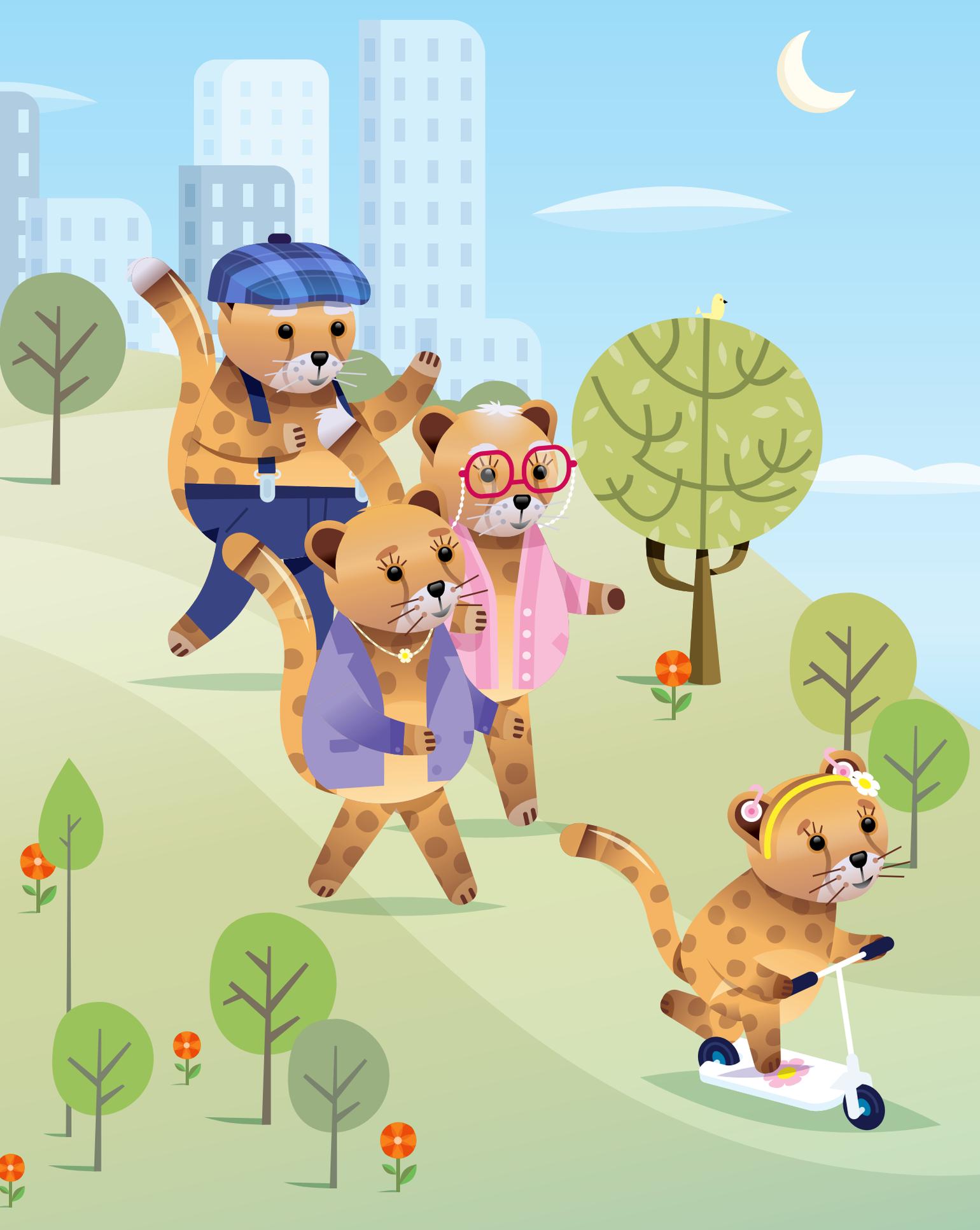
Zara and Mom find a fruit stand at the market.

Zara chooses a mango as a treat.

As Zara and Mom walk home, her mind soars.

She imagines all the fun adventures ahead. She imagines swimming in bright blue water, climbing tall mountains, helping others, and walking on the moon.

*Most of all she imagines herself **growing happy and healthy and brave and strong.***



FOR MORE RESOURCES

For support every step of the way on the neuroblastoma journey, visit

.....  
**neuroblastoma-info.com**  
.....

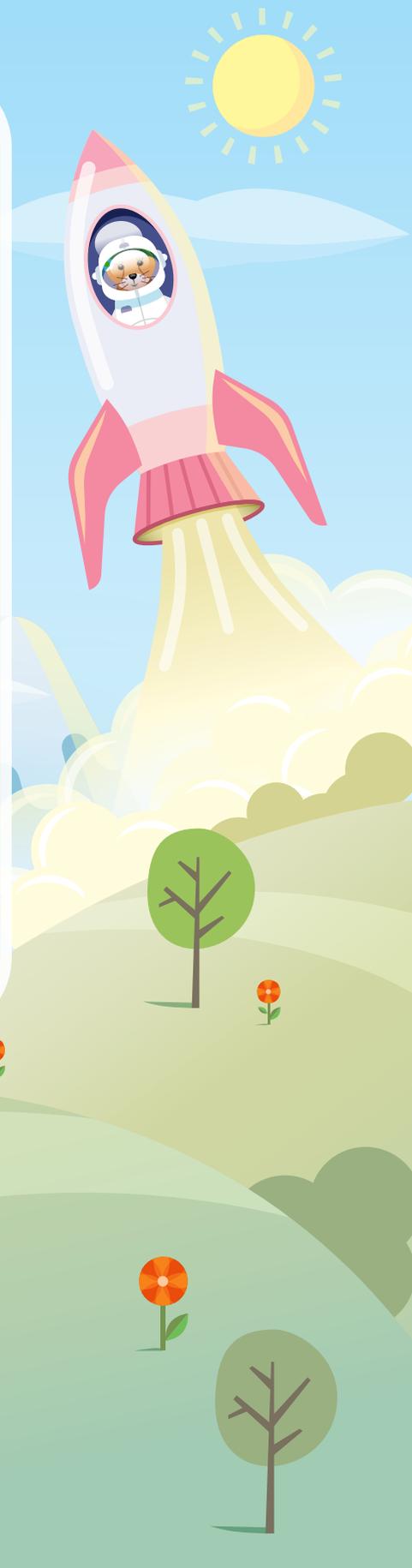
You can find answers to after-treatment questions, as well as helpful information and resources. Learn about:



The transition to follow-up care, and what to expect in the months and years after treatment has finished



The potential long-term emotional, physical, and cognitive effects of neuroblastoma and treatment

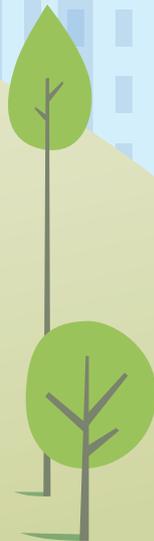


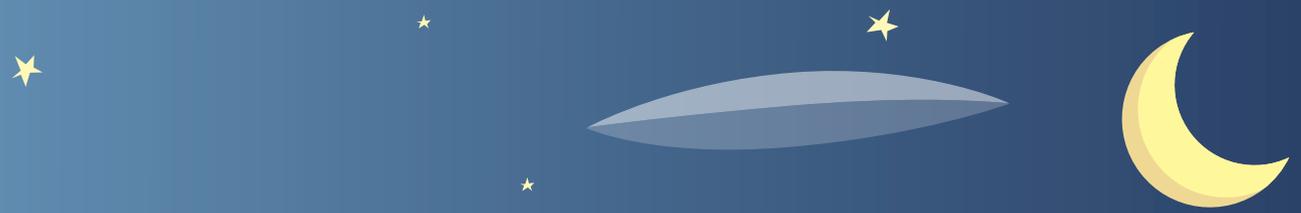


# WORD SEARCH



Find the words hidden in the letter grid.  
Words may be in any direction—across, up,  
down, or diagonal. Words may be spelled  
forward or backward.





G P M R E S M A L E K F Y F S  
 Q K T S T C V N A Y V E O Q C  
 W X R R D O H O T C L A I D O  
 K U O G C I E O I Q A L R E O  
 N N L A E P A L P B U N E B T  
 G M D A Y B D L S T W O D B E  
 H O N S C H B A O X N H Z L R  
 G O T A T B A B H X F K E H E  
 W D P W C I N B I R T H D A Y  
 V C I E T S D C H E E T A H U  
 E P O C S O H T E T S C G W J  
 H I E L H H E A R I N G D A R  
 D O C T O R T U A N O R T S A  
 D X A M O T S A L B O R U E N  
 Z H B I N I U G N E P O N J C

Neuroblastoma  
 Brave  
 Hospital  
 Nurse  
 Doctor  
 Hope  
 Scooter

Avocado  
 Astronaut  
 Belly  
 Balloon  
 Birthday  
 Candle  
 Headband

Strong  
 Penguin  
 Scan  
 Cheetah  
 Stethoscope  
 Hearing





**United Therapeutics Oncology is honored to serve the pediatric neuroblastoma community and is committed to supporting patients and families touched by neuroblastoma.**

**This book is dedicated to brave neuroblastoma patients and their families living with hope.**



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Join Zara the cheetah as she launches into her adventures after neuroblastoma treatment.



For more information about neuroblastoma, visit [neuroblastoma-info.com](https://neuroblastoma-info.com).

