

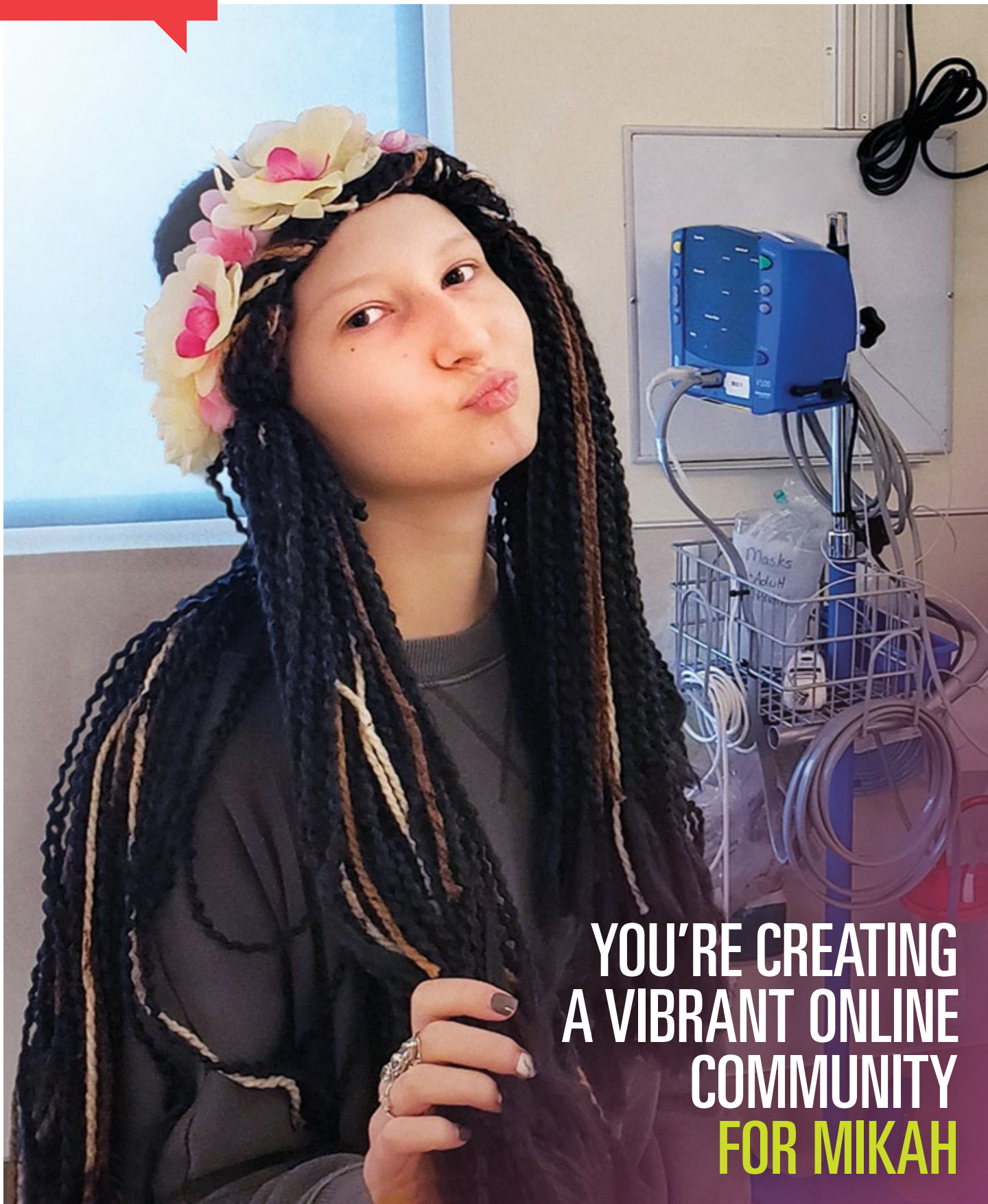
**kids  
candidly**

YOUR GIFTS AT WORK, TRANSFORMING  
THE LIVES OF CHILDREN WITH CANCER

**25**  
YEARS  
+you | **kids  
cancer care**

SPRING 2020 ISSUE

[kidscancercare.ab.ca](http://kidscancercare.ab.ca)



**YOU'RE CREATING  
A VIBRANT ONLINE  
COMMUNITY  
FOR MIKAH**

## CEO message



Unique Perspectives Photography

**25**  
**YEARS**  
**+you**

**The world is reeling and I imagine you are too. I pray you are safe and healthy.**

The families we serve live in constant fear of the slightest cold or flu. This pandemic is pushing their fear to unbelievable heights.

While we have had to temporarily suspend our face-to-face programs, our staff are busy moving programs online to support our families during this crisis.

As with many organizations, COVID-19 is having a devastating effect on our financial situation.

With a string of cancelled fundraising events and Camp Kindle rentals, our revenue streams are quickly drying up.

Still, our attitude is one of hope — hope for our families, hope for our future and hope for Albertans who have always been here for us for 25 years.

There will be a post-COVID-19 world and we must be ready to double our efforts to support children with cancer — our courageous fighters and bold future leaders. If you have any capacity to help, please do. Help us rebuild for the new and uncertain reality we are all facing.

With gratitude and hope,

*Christine McIver*

Christine McIver, M.S.M., LL.D (Hon), CFRE  
Founder and Chief Executive Officer

## outreach

# You're helping us survive isolation again

by Stephanie Boettcher

Fast forward to the COVID-19 crisis and the feeling is all too familiar.

Aria and I spent months at home with very few visitors, when she was on treatment for stage 3 hepatoblastoma — a rare liver cancer. She was 14 months old and, as a single parent working full-time, I was blessed to be able to take a leave of absence from teaching.

Aria endured countless blood transfusions, months of chemotherapy and an eight-hour surgery to remove the tumour and 70 per cent of her liver.

The treatments weakened her immune system, so I got into a daily routine of disinfecting our entire home, while listening to our favourite music.

Our only outings were scheduled admissions for chemotherapy and appointments at the hospital. We passed the time doing crafts, going for drives and walks.

Thank goodness Kids Cancer Care was there for us. I loved their weekly Pizza Nights at the hospital. It was so comforting to meet parents whose children had made it safely to the other side of cancer. Aria was beyond excited to attend their SunRise day camp. She still talks about how she rode on the school bus to go camping — at Camp Kindle.

Fast forward to the COVID-19 crisis and the feeling is all too familiar. Aria's immune system is still fragile. She is currently fighting an atypical presentation of mono — a rare case where the mono attacks the liver.



Aria on her home trampoline



All smiles even during treatment



Aria enduring one of many procedures

We're on protective isolation. The doctor fears her liver couldn't take it, if she were to become infected with COVID-19.

I've pulled out all the old tricks — balloon basketball, baking muffins and banana bread, basement fort-building, glow-stick baths, board games, crafts, our own little dance parties and walking in the fresh air every day.

We are fortunate to have Kids Cancer Care in our corner again. They are supporting families in isolation by moving programs online. These days, Aria and I are enjoying their online exercise classes for tots via Facebook Live.

After her first online class, Aria said, "Playing jump-over-the-snake and rescue-the-teddies game was so fun. It made me tired!"

She truly loved it and especially loved how Carolina mentioned her name in class. It brought a big smile to her face.

It's amazing to feel a part of a community, even in this time of isolation. Thank you!

**Thank you for being there for Aria during her isolation. ■**

community

built  
by you

### You're opening up the world to Mikah in her isolation

"We've been in isolation, social distancing, for close to a year. Now with the threat of COVID-19, we're even more cautious. And yet, in a strange and unexpected way, this pandemic is opening up the world to Mikah in a whole new way." — *Lina Dupuis*

It was the week of Mikah's grade-eight final exams when she started running a fever and complaining of a heaviness in her chest. After two visits to emergency, Mikah suddenly found herself in an ambulance, speeding towards the Alberta Children's Hospital.

"There was an entourage of medical staff waiting for us when we arrived," recalls Mikah's mother Lina Dupuis. "I knew in that moment it was serious."

That evening, on June 23, 2019, Mikah was diagnosed with high-risk acute lymphoblastic leukemia.

While undergoing harsh cancer treatments, Mikah is also experiencing the rarest of side effects — nerve and muscle weakness and brain swelling. Unable to walk, talk and even swallow, Mikah has endured long periods of recovery and rehabilitation.

"The hardest pill for Mikah has been missing her first year of high school," says Lina, explaining that in their district, high school begins in grade nine. "There's the fear and anxiety of

starting high school, but there's also the excitement and independence. Mikah is missing all of that."

Mikah wants so badly to go to Camp Kindle too, but each time she registers, a major side effect lands her in the hospital. And, just when she was starting to feel better, our spring Teen Camp was cancelled due to COVID-19.

Fortunately, with your support, we are building a vibrant online community to help teens like Mikah and her sister Kya in their isolation.

Shortly after COVID-19 was declared a pandemic, our exercise specialist Dr. Carolina Chamorro Vina began exploring innovative ways to deliver her PEER exercise program online.

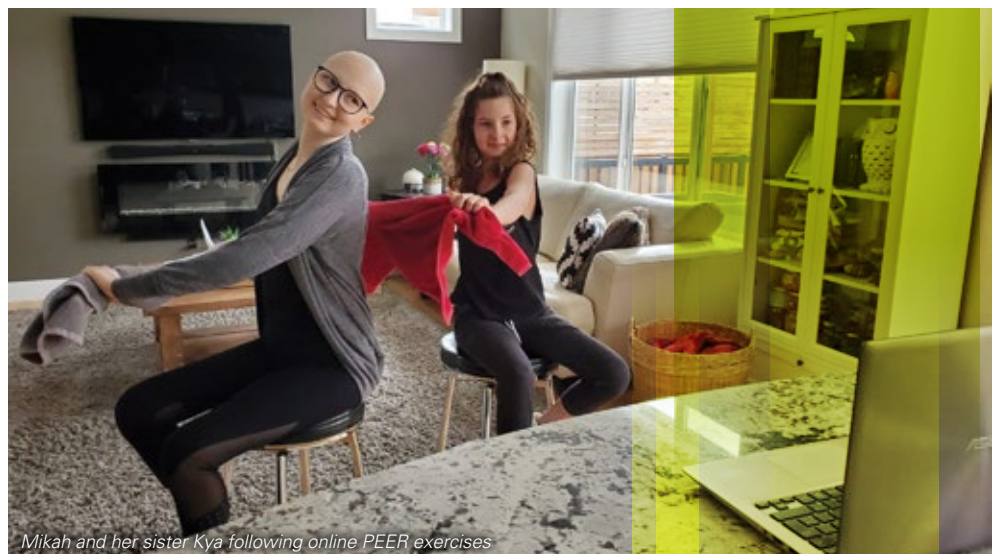
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Mikah recovering from treatment-related side effects



Photos courtesy of the Dupuis family



Mikah and her sister Kya following online PEER exercises

how to help

# 5 ways you can help us rebuild for a post-COVID-19 world



Aria

## BE A MONTHLY DONOR

For the price of a coffee, your monthly gift will add up over time and make a **lasting impact** in the lives of children with cancer.

## MAKE A ONE-TIME GIFT

Your gift will help ensure we're here to help kids in these uncertain times and in the **post-COVID-19** world.

## FUNDRAISE ONLINE

Start an online fundraising initiative to help kids, **living in fear of COVID-19**, to stay active through online exercise and tutoring.

## BE BRAVE

Join our virtual Big Brave event and **cut, colour or shave your lid for a kid**, while raising funds for our essential programs.

## CELEBRATE

Social gatherings may be off limits, but you can still celebrate. **Dedicate your birthday or milestone** to Kids Cancer Care and show kids living in isolation they're not alone.

Donate, register or learn more at [kidscancercare.ab.ca](https://kidscancercare.ab.ca) today.

## community

*Cont. from page 3*

With your generous support, last March, Carolina offered our first-ever online exercise program for teens.

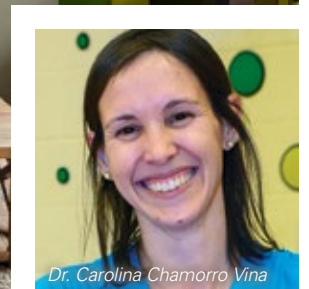
"This program was so good for her," says Lina. "There was even a little boy participating from his hospital bed. He may not have been able to do everything, but he could see this amazing community. No judgement. No staring. Just a big community of kids who get it."

Mikah and her peers are now rebuilding their strength every Tuesday and Thursday through these virtual exercise classes. They love the sense of community the program offers.

"The research is clear," says Carolina. "Regular exercise helps mitigate the deconditioning effects of cancer treatments and helps reduce the long-term health problems associated with cancer treatments. It also improves mental and physical well-being."

While acknowledging that cancer and COVID-19 have brought suffering, Lina is quick to recognize their blessings: "All of these things are opening up for Mikah now. PEER online is giving her something to look forward to every week and a community she can connect with."

**Thank you, Calgary Flames Foundation and other generous donors, for supporting our PEER exercise program.** 🍀



Dr. Carolina Chamorro Vina

25 YEARS +you **kids cancer care**

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