

TEXT BY DR. ELIZABETH REPEDE

Meet *The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society's* 2015 Boy & Girl of the Year



Meet Buck Ranson and Caroline Churchill — two Charlotte children who can light up any room with their smiles and who are their families' pride and joy. Caroline is a cute, energetic six-year-old with curly hair, bright blue eyes, and an easy, infectious laugh. She spends most of her time playing with her twin brother, Hunt, and enjoys singing and dancing. Buck is a curious eight-year-old boy who loves cooking and exploring life. He is an only child who wants to grow up to be a doctor or a chef. Life for both Buck and Caroline was like any other typical children until their lives were forever changed by one word: leukemia.

Both Caroline and Buck were diagnosed at an early age with blood cancers—Caroline at age two with T-Cell acute lymphoblastic leukemia and Buck at 18 months with high risk acute lymphoblastic leukemia. With both patients facing rigorous treatment, the Churchill and Ranson families rallied around their children and began long journeys towards recovery.

Caroline battled leukemia for two and half years before hearing the word remission. She went through a rigorous regimen of intravenous and intertheical chemotherapy, experienced more “pokes” than most people do in a lifetime, and shortly thereafter, began a course of cranial radiation. Her parents went from teaching Caroline letters to focusing on numbers: blood counts, dosages, and bone marrow test results.

Buck battled leukemia for five years before hearing the word remission. He spent two years in and out of the hospital before he relapsed and had to increase his doses of chemotherapy and steroids and start cranial radiation. Today both children are living healthy lives and are trying to move past the word cancer.

Caroline and Buck are two local kids who join over 1.1 million Americans who are living with or in remission from leukemia, lymphoma, or myeloma today. Inspired by them and many others who battle blood cancer, The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS) exists to find cures for leukemia, lymphoma, Hodgkin's disease and myeloma, and improve the quality of life of patients and their families.

With the help of donors and participants, LLS funds lifesaving blood cancer research around the world and provides free information and support services for patients. LLS research grants have funded many of today's breakthrough advances, including targeted therapies and immunotherapies that are saving thousands of lives every day. But we are not there yet. We need permanent cures — not someday, but today.

LLS engages in multiple fundraising efforts including the Man & Woman of the Year campaign. Each year, in communities across the country, dynamic, passionate candidates engage in a spirited competition to earn LLS's “Man & Woman of the Year” titles by raising funds to help patients like Caroline and Buck. The candidates compete in honor of children who are local blood cancer survivors. This year Caroline and Buck are the honored patients who will serve as the Boy & Girl of the Year. As our honored patients, Caroline and Buck have a unique opportunity to help impact the LLS mission by sharing their stories and struggles with blood cancer. During the campaign,

the lives of candidates are forever changed, not only by the experience, but also through developing relationships with the Boy & Girl of the Year and their families.

Every dollar raised by candidates counts as one vote, and the titles are awarded to the man and woman with the most votes at the end of ten weeks; the top local fundraisers in the country win the national titles. This year, the ten weeks in Charlotte will begin with the Kickoff Party on March 31 and will culminate at the Grand Finale Gala on June 6, where the winners will be announced.

Last year in Charlotte, nine amazing and passionate men and women raised over \$450,000 for research and patient services. These remarkable candidates along with the men and women candidates from all over the country raised \$30.8 million in 2014. Man & Woman of the Year candidates play a vital role in raising funds and awareness for blood cancer research and patient services. Every dollar raised brings LLS one step closer to funding life-saving research and finding a cure for kids like Caroline and Buck.

For more information on the Man & Woman of the Year campaign, please contact Anne Reitzes at Anne.Reitzes@lls.org or 704.705.1816. More information may also be found at www.mwoy.org/cht. *

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