

# Spotlight

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## Rescued from a ticking time bomb

Elizabeth with her  
husband Lowell.  
“Don’t forget!” she  
says. “My husband  
saved my life!”

Three random strokes of luck saved Elizabeth from the time bomb that was ticking away inside her chest.

### Elizabeth at 30: A diagnosis lost and found

Elizabeth never gave much thought to the results of a medical test she had in her 20s. She was super-fit, a great athlete, and she’d never had a single symptom. Still, when she chanced upon those test results while going through some papers, she figured she should show it to her new husband, Lowell, a preeminent New York City radiologist.

The echocardiogram showed she had an aortic aneurysm — an abnormal bulging of the aorta, the heart’s largest artery. Aortic aneurysms are sometimes called “silent killers,” because by the time a patient

experiences symptoms, it’s usually too late — the aorta is on the verge of rupturing.

Lowell didn’t waste a minute getting Elizabeth to a cardiologist for evaluation. Fortunately, her aneurysm hadn’t yet grown to the danger point.

For the next 20 years, Elizabeth dutifully visited her cardiologist every six months for monitoring. And although she continued to feel great and maintain her athletic lifestyle, “I knew it would need to be fixed when the time came,” she says. “I just needed to find the right surgeon.”

(continued inside) 

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### Elizabeth at 48: The napkin

Lowell was having lunch one afternoon with some friends when he overheard a man in the next booth talking about an aortic aneurysm that was repaired by a “miracle doctor at Yale New Haven Hospital.”

Lowell asked the man to write the name down on a paper napkin: “Dr. John Elefteriades at the Yale New Haven Hospital Heart and Vascular Center.”

A few years later, Elizabeth would be very grateful for that napkin.

### Elizabeth at 53: Lowell joins Elizabeth at her checkup

Lowell didn’t usually go with Elizabeth to her cardiology checkups, but — just by chance — he joined her for her CT scan one afternoon. He was alarmed at what he saw.

“Elizabeth, it’s not good,” he told her. The aneurysm had grown significantly since the previous exam. Lowell could see that her condition was critical — but the cardiologist did not agree with him.

Thank goodness for Lowell! Clearly, it was time to dig out that napkin.

When Elizabeth met Dr. Elefteriades (known by all as “Dr. E.”), former chief of cardiothoracic surgery, she knew within minutes that “this was the guy.” His great warmth and compassion were unlike anything she’d experienced in her decades as a cardiology patient.

Dr. E. agreed with Lowell. Elizabeth was in grave danger. Her aorta was on the verge of rupturing. Elizabeth’s surgery was scheduled immediately.

Dr. E. replaced Elizabeth’s aorta with one made of Dacron. “My husband said it was amazing what he was able to do,” says Elizabeth. “Dr. E. has magical hands.”

### Aortic aneurysms run in families

But the story doesn’t end there. Aortic aneurysms often run in families, and Dr. E. insisted that Elizabeth’s adult children, Nick and Sophie, be tested.



**ABOVE:** Elizabeth, her son Nick, and her grandson Frankie. Dr. E. knows aortic aneurysms run in families, so he insisted on testing Elizabeth’s children. That was lucky, because it turned out Nick had to have the same surgery as Elizabeth. Nick’s son, Frankie, will be tested when he’s older.

Sophie was fine, but Nick had the same condition as his mother — and just like her, he had absolutely no warning symptoms.

Nick’s aorta was also successfully repaired by Dr. E. at the Aortic Institute at YNHH.

“Dr. E. saved both our lives,” says Elizabeth. “But let’s not forget — my husband saved my life first!”

**Thank you, donors, for supporting the YNHH Heart and Vascular Center. You make it possible for our amazing physicians to save people from “the silent killer”! ♥**

### You can help save someone from the silent killer

As you read this today, someone just like Elizabeth or her son Nick has a time bomb ticking away inside their chest. Your generous gift will make it possible for our physicians to save them from the worst.



**DONATE NOW.**  
**GivetoYNHH.org/hvc23**

« Or scan this code.



# Meet Ryan: Published author and philanthropist

(She's eight years old)

**On the second-to-last day of school this past June, Ryan, age 8, won the Dreamer Award.**

“I’m always dreaming of creative ideas,” she says.

One of her most amazing creative ideas was the book she created last year. It’s called *Why Feelings Matter (and Understanding Them)*. She published it on a special kids’ author website, sold dozens of copies, and — here’s the most amazing part — donated the proceeds to Yale New Haven Children’s Hospital (YNHCH).

Ryan dreamed up the whole thing — the concept, the writing, the illustrations, and the donation. The book is a runaway bestseller! She has already sold more than 40 copies and gifted \$630 to YNHCH.

## Wisdom in “a big book of feelings”

You’re probably wondering how a second-grader came up with such a grown-up idea. To answer that, we have to go back in time a few years...back to the early days of the pandemic.

Ryan’s mom, Rachel, is a physician at YNHCH, and during the first wave of infection, she ran a COVID unit at the hospital.

It was a terrifying time for Ryan, who had just turned five. She didn’t understand exactly what COVID was (none of us did then!), but she knew that every morning, her mom headed out to a place where people were very sick and very contagious.

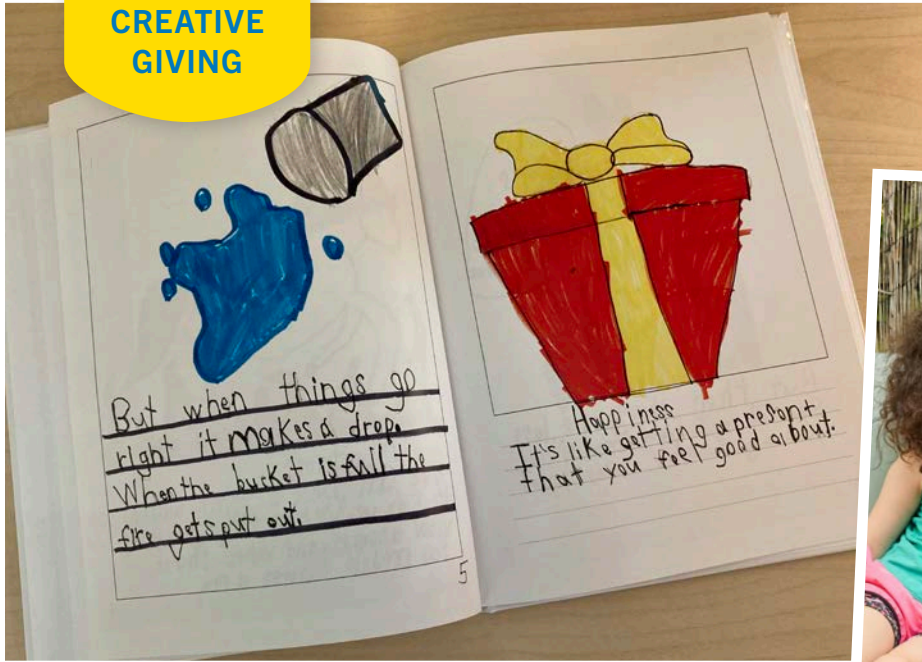
Ryan was overwhelmed with scary emotions. She was determined to find a constructive way to handle them.

“One day I went up to Mom and said, ‘I want to write a big book of feelings,’” Ryan remembers. “I’m extra sensitive to feelings. I wanted to help people who were hurting because they had feelings or problems, and make them feel less alone.”

The project took a long time, and Ryan says “it was

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## CREATIVE GIVING



(L) Pages from Ryan's book; (R) Ryan reads from her book to her twin siblings, Quinn and Elliott



HARD!" But the result was a beautiful hardcover book. In it, Ryan explains and illustrates all the feelings she wants her readers to understand. The book also includes some very wise observations about feelings, like "You can't be happy unless you've been sad."

Ryan even invented a brand-new word for an important feeling that has no name in the English language. She calls the feeling LASA, and she defines it as "courage and bravery when you face your fears."

"Ryan's the first to tell you she hasn't quite managed how to achieve LASA yet ... and like, who has?" says Rachel.

### A very adult rationale for giving

From the very beginning, Ryan knew she wanted to give her proceeds to YNHCH. "I wanted to donate the money

because I knew if I was in the hospital, or worked in the hospital, I'd want people to donate to get more toys or to help us."

In fact, Ryan thinks "everyone should donate to the hospital because the hospital does a lot for our community and the community should pay them back."

Wow. All this, and only eight years old! We can't wait to see what Ryan dreams up next.

There's one more thing Ryan wants you to know, and she says it's very important. "Keep dreaming!!!" ♥

» You can help Ryan continue to donate to the children at YNHCH by purchasing a copy of her book here (and you may learn a thing or two about feelings, too!): [www.givetoyhhh.org/why-feelings-matter](http://www.givetoyhhh.org/why-feelings-matter)

## Wish Book



### CHECK YOUR MAILBOX for the YNHCH Wish Book...

... arriving in your mailbox this fall. It's a catalog of items that help our pediatric patients and their families get through the toughest times of their lives. It's a wonderful way to make our youngest patients feel a little bit better.

Donate to the Wish Book online at [ynhhwishbook.org](http://ynhhwishbook.org). Or scan this code. >>>>

