

NT Behind the Scenes: Lesia Cartelli Discusses Angel Faces, "Head Up. Wings Out!"

Kimberly Hillyer, DNP, NNP-BC



The following is an amended transcript for Neonatology Today Media between Dr. Kimberly Hillyer and Lesia Cartelli, author of *The Heart of Fire*. The interview took place on August 24, 2022.

Lesia Cartelli is the chief executive officer of Angel Faces. She founded Angel Faces in 2003 after launching and directing multiple aftercare programs for burn and trauma patients.

Angel Faces' motto is "Head Up, Wings Out!" They aim to provide ongoing support through education and healing retreats, empowering girls and young women with burn/trauma injuries. Their work was a mini-documentary that won an EMMY. Cartelli was selected as "Hero of the Week" by People Magazine and featured on CNN's "Human Factor" with Dr. Sanjay Gupta. She has received many prestigious awards for her leadership and inspiration, including the "Heart of a Woman" Award on the Dr. Phil Show. She has also been one of San Diego Magazine's Women of the Year finalists.

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**The next scheduled retreat will be in Wolfeboro, New Hampshire, in June 2023.

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Dr. Kimberly Hillyer: Hello and thank you for joining us on today's segment of Neonatology Today. I am your host, Kimberly Hillyer, a Neonatal Nurse Practitioner with Loma Linda University Health publication team, and I'm here today with Lesia.

How are you doing, Lesia?

Lesia Cartelli: I'm doing great. Really good.

Dr. Kimberly Hillyer: I'm glad to hear that, and thank you so much for joining us.

I was really inspired by your biography, the current book that you have out, "The Heart of Fire." I really wanted to talk to you about your information that you have regarding the book, the service that you are doing out for the community, and really hear about your story. Your story is a very emotional story, and I'm hoping that you might be able to tell my audience a little bit about that story.

Lesia Cartelli: Yes, sure, and it really is when the piece of my life, the path, really opened up to where I'm at today, many decades later. When I was nine years old, I was in a natural gas explosion as a child at my grandparent's home. They'd been smelling gas for a few days, and we arrived for dinner on a Sunday afternoon. There were nine of us in the house. Gas had seeped in, hit an ignition point, and the house exploded. I was trapped in the basement.

"I had sustained burns over half of my body at nine years old; half your body that total that TBSA (total body surface area) 50-60% is huge. Full-thickness burns, so I was transported to Children's in Detroit. This was 1969, so treatments were very barbaric."

I had sustained burns over half of my body at nine years old; half your body that total that TBSA (total body surface area) 50-60% is huge. Full-thickness burns, so I was transported to Children's in Detroit. This was 1969, so treatments were very barbaric. Burns were pretty much still being, as horrific as they were, it was a long process in that hospital. Coming out months later and carrying the weight of not only the trauma of what happened to my family losing everything. Thankfully, no lives were lost, but we really lost that foundation of our family that my grandparents were the really strong, steady link within the family. And so, being literally blown to pieces and not a spoon left. So, coming out of that, we all fumbled. My whole family didn't know how to handle that grief and that loss. And here I am now, ten years old, with severe scars over my face and my body. I launched into a series of years of struggling to find purpose. Struggling to transform that pain into something good.

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You know, I knew that I didn't survive that fire just to survive the fire. I had to get to a place where I didn't want to waste the pain that I had gone through and my family had gone through because of being severely injured as a child. There's that whole sense of adolescence where you're going back into the hospital. You have more grafts, you have more surgeries, you have contractures, you have all these pieces that go into having a severe burn injury, and with each one presented more hurdles. Going back to school, the staring, the questions, the unwanted questions—it's very difficult on the whole entire family.

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Dr. Kimberly Hillyer: Now, as you talk about just the adolescent part, I think almost everyone can connect to just the normal difficulties and struggles of going through adolescence. Then you have the additional burden of having to explain, like you said, what's going on with your appearance. How do you find the courage to talk about something that's so painful? Because I'm sure questions were asked by classmates and teachers.

“You handle it on different days depending on how...or I handle it on different days, depending on how I felt. Some days I would put my head down and scurry away. Some days I would give quick answers, “I was in a fire.” And some days, I would cry.”

Lesia Cartelli: Oh, and strangers. You handle it on different days depending on how...or I handle it on different days, depending on how I felt. Some days I would put my head down and scurry away. Some days I would give quick answers, “I was in a fire.” And some days, I would cry. It really would depend on how I wanted to be treated that day.

I really...Kimberly, I had an epiphany in 5th grade. It is what really started to make me think about what? When I treat myself with some self-love and grace, which is a tall order for a 5th-grader, right?

Dr. Kimberly Hillyer: Very much.

Lesia Cartelli: But if I could accept myself and love myself, so

would other people. But if I was separate from myself then and felt like a victim, I was treated like a victim. If I acted strong and I acted tough, then more people would gravitate to me in a positive manner. So, it was really about the choice because when I acted like a victim, I was treated like a victim. I saw this in 5th grade with another student.

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I had started school at this public school and didn't know anybody. It was in the middle of the year, which was the worst. My family had moved from Detroit to Florida, so I was waiting to get into this Catholic school, and they hadn't had room for me yet. So, my family put me in this 5th-grade class at a public school in January. I come in, and not only do I look very different with all these scars, but it's in the middle of school the year. Everyone's got established friendships, and I don't. So, for the first three days, I was pretty quiet, observing. On the fourth day, this girl came in who had been out sick. She came in, and she apparently was the one that the class was always bullying. And she walked in, and the class came alive. They were throwing erasers and pencils when the teacher would turn their back or leave the room, and they would unleash on this girl, Rose. And Rose would turn around and leash back. I thought, OK, she's feeding that. And where's my responsibility? Because they're not treating me like that...So, I really learned that when you feed into that victim and the anger, that's what you're going to get back because I would go the other route and be happy and pretend, I was happy and be funny and friendly even though I was dying inside. But it got me through.

Dr. Kimberly Hillyer: You had to first learn about self-love. Then you learned that, basically, what you put out in the universe is also what you will perceive. When do you get to the step of finding that purpose?

Lesia Cartelli: It came, it came decades later, really came in my young 30s. I talked about it in my book. I had gotten my real estate license and was trying to get a job here in Southern California. This broker, I was interviewing every day with him. He would say to me, “Come back tomorrow; I want to interview you again and have you meet so and so.” He would go through this process.

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Lesia S. Cartelli, Founder/CEO, Author, burned at the age of nine in a gas explosion, envisioned educational healing, skill-building retreats and aftercare programs for girls and women that have endured disfiguring burns and trauma.

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Angel Faces (est. 2003) provides intensive educational and healing retreats and ongoing support for girls and young women with burn/trauma injuries. To inspire and empower so that they reach their optimum potential and develop meaningful relationships for themselves, their families, and their communities.

Angel Faces is a 501c(3) nonprofit organization.
Our Federal Tax ID# is: 20-5718594

For detailed information regarding application forms and guidelines, fees/scholarships, and upcoming retreats visit angelfaces.com

After four and five days, Kimberly, I'm running out of interview clothes. You know what I mean? I'm running out of openings and closings. I'm just like, let's cut to the chase here. I got a phone call on that fourth night from a woman who was in the office. She said, "the broker you're interviewing with is my roommate, and he will never hire you. He can't get past your scars. He's hoping that every day he brings you back that you're just going to get so worn down, you're just going to move on and go somewhere else because he doesn't have the heart to tell you." And that was, that was a huge epiphany for me! I'm like, why am I going to sell real estate? I need to...I need to help people and make that transition. Like, what do other teenage girls do, what do other women do who have disfigurements and scars and trauma, and what do they do? I've made it this far into my 30s, jumping ahead a little bit; that's when I started Angel Faces.

Dr. Kimberly Hillyer: So, I can imagine, with today's technology, that it is much easier to connect with that community and the community that you're building today through Angel Faces. What was it like for you back in the 80s and 90s as you were finding yourself, growing towards that purpose that you find a little bit later on? Were you able to find a community or build a community to grow from?

Lesia Cartelli: Not that it had anything to do with trauma or burns or injuries. I worked retail, so my life was not shallow, but you know, pretty adventuresome and carefree, and paycheck to paycheck. I can remember going in that period of time, in my early 30s, when I couldn't get that real estate job. I had a doctor friend say to me, my sister was a nurse, I was at her house at a little party, and he said, "You know, we can do this procedure on your face." And I said, "my face?" And he said, "Yeah, that would make your face look better." I said, well, I'll go get a second opinion.

So, I went to UCSD to the Head of Plastics there to get a second opinion. He said to me, "Lesia, your face is beautiful. We'll talk about that in a minute." He said, "I'm astonished at your recovery from your accident as a child. Why aren't you helping burn children in the world?" I remember sitting on the edge of the table in the exam room, dangling my feet and saying to him, you mean there's burn children in the world? I mean, that's how removed I was from that whole world. And he said, "Yes, there are several hundreds, thousands of children with burn injuries in the world who need you." And that's when my wheels started going. I think I need to switch gears.

Dr. Kimberly Hillyer: Now. I remember this transformation in you and seeing that light bulb moment, and it really was something

angel faces

Young Women's Regional Retreat, Wolfeboro, NH

Facial Design



Head Up, Wings Out!

that inspired me because sometimes. As you said, you get so focused on that narrow vision, and sometimes just the day-to-day life gets to you. But you were still open. You were open to this physician talking to you about the rest of the world, the community that people may not be aware of. So, you decided to bring awareness to it through Angel Faces and to really help build a community for these young ladies. Can you tell me a little bit about Angel Faces and how you try to help them through the same trauma that you went through?

“They come to us, and we’re giving them a toolbox of all the methods that I found helpful to me over the years. Surviving through those traumatic years of adolescence and in my 20s was just as traumatic. We give them everything and let them pick.”

Lesia Cartelli: So, we’re a small nonprofit, Kimberly, but we’re very mighty, and our reach goes wide. We’re about the depth of healing from trauma, not the breadth of it. We run retreats that are very intensive. They’re a week long, and the girls come from various trauma centers and burn centers. We get referrals from CPS, Child Protective Services, and schools from across the board, and of course, burn centers too. They come to us, and we’re giving them a toolbox of all the methods that I found helpful to me over the years. Surviving through those traumatic years of adolescence and in my 20s was just as traumatic. We give them everything and let them pick.

The main thread is getting them to tell their story to us in a non-judgment way because we know what happens to the child, happens to the whole family. But the family and the parents and the mothers are so wounded themselves from shame and guilt. Even if they weren’t anywhere near what happened, as my mother was not near us, she was en route and had arrived after the explosion. So, the child I have found with my girls, they tell the story that they have never been really allowed to tell. From their eyes, because what happens is they start protecting the family, right? Their childhood has been robbed, and they grow up really quick. They’ve got to be strong. So, when they get to us, they can lay down that social armor. They can lay down that protective armor that have to stay on within their family.

So, we get through the grief and loss. We’re all led by licensed professionals, and the mental health professionals really start to unfold with them over a period of time at the retreat. What happened? How did it happen? Then we start to put together back the story in a healing manner. We do a big forgiveness piece. Were they write a letter of forgiveness, and we talk a lot about forgiveness. We do a lot of role-playing on staring and role-playing on unwanted questions. Like you’re in Walmart, and the lady is following you around with some sort of barrage of questions. How do you handle that? How does your mother handle that? How does your sister, who you’re with, handle it? How do you handle

your family handling them? So, there’s methods and tools that we teach. To help them embrace all that with grace, not with anger, not with shouting back, and there’s a way to disarm those situations. We use art therapy too. The girls sometimes they don’t have the words to describe the shame or describe what they’re feeling. But boy, when we weave in that art project into the theme. Wow. It really is pretty magnificent. We have fun, too, at our retreats in New Hampshire; we do paddleboarding and hiking and lots of great stuff in the afternoon. Mornings are mostly sessions we do corrective cosmetics. But I have to correct myself because the girls reminded me a few years back. That there’s nothing to correct.

Dr. Kimberly Hillyer: No. Beautiful.

Lesia Cartelli: That is facial design. So now we call it facial design, which a team of makeup artists in the field of corrective cosmetics come in and really teach the girls. Maybe how to draw that eyebrow on that was burned off or just give some symmetry.

Dr. Kimberly Hillyer: To highlight what is beautiful inside and out. I love the way that the girls were able to, kind of have you do a course correction with that scene. It just shows the resilience that they have in this and the growth and the strength that they have in these retreats.

“It’s really beautiful to watch because, in the beginning of my opening, I always say to them, your trauma is a gift. There are gifts in this trauma that will change the course of your life, and they’re like, this isn’t a gift. I’m missing a hand, and I’m missing fingers, this is horrible. But, over time they find that gift.”

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Dr. Kimberly Hillyer: That’s correct. Now you transformed your pain into something beautiful, not just with the work that you do with the girls, but you found a way to share your story, not just one-on-one, but with the world. So going back to your book. There’s bits and pieces in which you find why your title, “The Heart of Fire,” was created, but can you tell me in the audience why did you choose that title?

Lesia Cartelli: Because. Because the fire inside of me burns hotter and stronger than any fire that tried to destroy me. Right.

Dr. Kimberly Hillyer: That’s powerful, and that is truly correct. I

think your readers will definitely get that, and especially when they see you battling that fear of the fire. Can you tell me a bit about how you battled that fear of a fire and were able to overcome?

“I wanted to be free of fire. I wanted to be free of the fear I had of fire. It wasn’t a crippling fear, but it stunned me a little. I’d go get gas in my car, and I would just hesitate and make sure nobody was smoking around the pumps.”

Lesia Cartelli: You mean literally, literally? But yeah, so I am. I was in the middle of running these burn camps. And I remember standing there, and there was this little boy, and he was up on this ropes course, and I was shouting at him. “Don’t be afraid. Just embrace your fear.” And I thought, well, you know you can’t tell somebody something when you’re not doing it yourself, right? I mean, the other day, I was on my husband because his office was dirty, and then I woke up in the morning with my office is filthy and disorganized. So, I got up, and I cleaned my office, and then I went to him, and I go, now I can say it again.

I wanted to be free of fire. I wanted to be free of the fear I had of fire. It wasn’t a crippling fear, but it stunned me a little. I’d go get gas in my car, and I would just hesitate and make sure nobody was smoking around the pumps. I go through this little checklist in my head. Don’t be on your cell phone at the gas pump because rumor has it; it’s going to explode. And all this. I would never live in a house with natural gas. It always had to be one of those switches or no fireplace at all or wait till Frank came over to light my BBQ. Little things like that. And then I thought, this is crazy. I want to go back into a fire. I want to face my fear head-on. I’m going to pull the dragon out from underneath the bed, the monster. I just want to go back to that and face the angels that had rescued me out of that basement.

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Dr. Kimberly Hillyer: And by finding the courage and the strength to do that, you actually did find love through that as well.

Lesia Cartelli: Found love, and I married the love. Two years later and it was something I didn’t ever think was going to happen. I was in survival mode most of my life. Yeah, so I married the firefighter who took me back into the controlled burn. To teach me about fire so I wasn’t afraid of it, that I understood it as a woman,

not a scared child.

Dr. Kimberly Hillyer: So you able to after facing your fear, after finding love through facing your fear. Are you able to come to a point in your life in which you say through this trauma, I’ve been able to find peace?

Lesia Cartelli: Oh, yes, because it strengthened my faith. It really strengthened my faith in being able to serve for a good reason. Really gave me a sense of going back, and as horrific as it was, as painful as it was, I don’t know how my life would be not having that accident. I know it’s brought me some incredibly beautiful people in my life. It’s brought in me incredible richness for appreciation. You know, would I love flawless skin? Yeah. Wouldn’t anybody. But it really forced me to dig down deeper to find the meaning of all life.

Dr. Kimberly Hillyer: Now, you talk about some of the people you’ve encountered. I know that you’ve also encountered people that have been able to help you build this organization. Can you tell me about how you’re able to connect with these people and how you’re able to bring your story to life?

Lesia Cartelli: You know, that’s pure magic, and I just laugh about it because it’s...I don’t laugh because I also worry; oh my God. How am I going to pay the bills? It is because I have to raise the money, not only hold the girl’s hands, but I raised the money as well. And yeah, there’s times over the last 19 years. So, for 19 years, I’ve had Angel Faces, which is kind of unheard of these days for a nonprofit that is small and mighty, you know? When I get a little nervous, I go, God, I really need a donor to come in.

“Really gave me a sense of going back, and as horrific as it was, as painful as it was, I don’t know how my life would be not having that accident. I know it’s brought me some incredibly beautiful people in my life. It’s brought in me incredible richness for appreciation. You know, would I love flawless skin? Yeah. Wouldn’t anybody. But it really forced me to dig down deeper to find the meaning of all life.”

The weirdest thing happens, my phone rings, or I’ll get a random donation that’s anonymous. I’m not very good at raising money. People say I am very good at it, but I don’t feel it because I never want people to run out of the room when they see me and go, oh my God, she’s just going to ask me for money. You know? Here she comes. But I think the key for me is to stay open because you never know. What’s going to happen? You never know who’s standing next to you that happens to know somebody who has a traumatic injury that feels compelled. You just never know. I think, I have to believe in what I’m doing wholeheartedly for that magic to continue.

Dr. Kimberly Hillyer: I can't imagine anyone not hearing your story, reading your book, and not, you know, feeling a movement in their heart. If they do feel that movement in listening to you today, how could someone participate and donate and help you and your organization?

Lesia Cartelli: You know, donations are always welcome. I'm always looking for partnerships with corporations that can help fund our retreats. Through our website, you can go on and find me that way; there are many different opportunities. I was telling somebody yesterday I don't have a lot of time to cultivate these long relationships, and I don't have a big development office. I just have to say, let's get to the part where you write us the check because I have work to do, and it's just that way. Sometimes I look at these big foundations. I'm like, how did they do it? Yeah, but the cord of where the funding comes into who it reaches is really short. And that's what I like about what we're doing is you can see the impact.

Dr. Kimberly Hillyer: It's small steps for sure, and the impact that you're making, especially for these young women at the retreats. At the other things that you're doing for individuals who will read your book. It's truly magnificent. Your retreat, I know that you'll have one going on soon. If someone, a physician, or someone listening to us today had an individual that they were treating. How can they help connect them with you and your community?

Lesia Cartelli: So yeah, we have a retreat coming up in Knoxville, TN. The first week in October, October 5 through the 9th (2022). We still have some spots open as of this morning. So, for the physicians, if you're treating somebody, a woman between the ages of 17 and 29 with a traumatic injury does not have to be on the face, can be anywhere significant on the body, 20 or 30%, TBSA or if it's a significant scarring on the face, but a smaller TBSA then go to our website, complete the application process and then they'll be in our system. We'll contact them, they just need to get themselves to Knoxville, and we will cover the retreat. We cover food, transportation, and everything. It can be a pretty life-changing opportunity for the patient because it's really a buffet of everything from healing modalities on grief and loss, yoga, exercise, nutrition, and how to find that self-love back.

Dr. Kimberly Hillyer: As you go to these retreats, build these opportunities for these young ladies to find their way back. Find their purpose. How does this continue to affect your spirit?

“What keeps you going? You give all that. What keeps you going? It's when the women and the girls go home, and they take what we've done and what we've taught them, and they make an impact. That's what makes me excited and engaged.”

Lesia Cartelli: Somebody just asked me that yesterday...What fills you up? What keeps you going? You give all that. What keeps you going? It's when the women and the girls go home, and they take what we've done and what we've taught them, and they make an impact. That's what makes me excited and engaged. I

get these beautiful, flowery letters and all this gratitude, but it's the action that I like to see when they go home and apply for college or leave the bad, toxic, abusive relationship or make a better life. That's what gets me going. I'm like, OK, all this is [not] for naught.

Dr. Kimberly Hillyer: In your book, you go through all the different aspects of your story, and I'm sure that there's maybe a small part of the story that maybe you weren't able to fit into your book, but you still felt was a monumental moment in your life. Is there something that just didn't quite make it into your book that you felt was still a point for you?

“One of them was the fireman that rescued me out of the house that I had met him many decades later for the first time. That was powerful meeting him. That was really because he was this little old man by then, and it was such a beautiful full circle for both of us.”

Lesia Cartelli: It's such a good question, Kimberly. It's such a good question. Yeah, there's several which has prompted me to write a second book, which I'm working on now. One of them was the fireman that rescued me out of the house that I had met him many decades later for the first time. That was powerful meeting him. That was really because he was this little old man by then, and it was such a beautiful full circle for both of us. It was funny, like we were in the car, and the Detroit Fire Department pulled up behind me. I was told that he was one of the guys on the call. I wasn't told that he was the one who got me. My head went into a kind of time warp. I see the Chief step out from behind the wheel, and he's 40 years old, and he's in all his regalia. I'm like, oh wow, there he is, and they're like, no. The door opened, and the passenger came out, this little man with this University of Michigan hat on and his U of M jacket. He shuffled up to me. That was a powerful moment. Yeah, it was powerful.

Dr. Kimberly Hillyer: I can't wait to read. I'm sure, as you said, there are moments that you just can't fit into one book that you know you'll be continuing to work on with your next book. So, I can't wait to read that and to see as your story continues to unfold.

Lesia Cartelli: Thank you.

Dr. Kimberly Hillyer: Now, I know you have a website, but would you go ahead and give our audience the website and the information for you and your organization?

Lesia Cartelli: Yes so, the website is angelfaces.com. We are a 501c(3) nonprofit organization going into our 20th year. I know, it's pretty exciting. Who would have thought? I'm still crying over the fireman story. Is that crazy? He's passed on now.

So angelfaces.com, and they can find out anything that they want about the retreats. They can watch video clips. We've done a lot of research that has been accepted by the American Burn Association. They can look at our research data from there, and all the outcomes are pretty impressive. They can find me through there.



Dr. Kimberly Hillyer: Then you have your own website as well.

Leisa Cartelli: Yes, I have my own website because I do a lot of speaking. That's lesiacartelli.com. So, you can find a little bit out about me personally and professionally through my own website, as well as Angel Faces.

“I can just imagine that the girls’ lives that you were touching they’re going to be feeling the same way about you, your organization, and what you’re doing because even though the fireman physically saves you, you’re saving these women emotionally and mentally.”

Dr. Kimberly Hillyer: You still have the tears coming down. I can just imagine that the girls’ lives that you were touching they’re going to be feeling the same way about you, your organization, and what you’re doing because even though the fireman physically saves you, you’re saving these women emotionally and mentally. As you said, it takes time for those scars to heal, and they go through multiple procedures or surgeries sometimes, but sometimes the hardest thing to touch is that emotional and mental healing aspect.

Lesia Cartelli: And really for them to know that it takes time and a whole lot of gentle self-talk, a whole lot of gentle grace with yourself and the people around you. It took me years to get to a place where I just felt really good gratitude that I’m able to do this work. That I am fulfilled enough to do this work, that donors step up and allow me to do this work. I tell the girls, I’m one beggar telling another beggar where the bread is. As long as I’m sustained in our funding, I’ll keep doing it.

Dr. Kimberly Hillyer: Well, you said it multiple times throughout our conversation today. Finding that grace with one another, I think, really does open the heart. Opens the heart to respond to each other on this human level that pours love, and sometimes that love happens to build into a donation, and sometimes the love is the personal love, and aspect that you get from meeting your husband. So glad you were able to just not just face your fears but to have this moment of strength, and that will continue to be around with you through the love that you built with your husband, who’s a firefighter.

Lesia Cartelli: You know, isn’t that great and then he went on to become a chief and then retired. So, it’s just a fun full circle.

There’s something that I want to say that I think is important for your listeners. I cover this in the retreat. I think this is a good platform to make this point to your listeners and your readers that one of the pieces that we do at the retreat is to teach the girls and the women that they are not the only one injured. That they may have sustained a physical injury, but around them, there is a whole group of people that maybe witnessed it, that see you as a different person now. That loved you and now has angst and pain for what you’re going through. There are the frontline workers,

the emergency, the firefighters, the police officers who were on that call who saw what happened. Not only the family, but the first responders, the nurses, and the doctors that are impacted. To try and get them to see beyond their own woe is me. Have compassion for the people around them who are equally, sometimes more affected, particularly with the parents who feel helpless.

I really try and get them to get to a place where they have gratitude for their nurses, and their doctors, and their police officers, and their firefighters, and the people who care for them and got them back on their feet. Angel Faces gets the accolades because we come in at the 11th hour when they’ve been discharged. You’ve put them all back together, and we come in and work on their spirit. They go, oh, like a little duckling that’s been imprinted, right. But I want them to know that there needs to be a shared gratitude with the medical centers and with those first responders. That they’re not the only ones that are injured, and you could see their little light bulbs going off in their head. Going, oh yeah, the nurses, the doctors, the technicians, the people that helped clean their room, their hospital rooms, the custodians, and the maintenance people—everyone’s affected.

“Angel Faces gets the accolades because we come in at the 11th hour when they’ve been discharged. You’ve put them all back together, and we come in and work on their spirit. They go, oh, like a little duckling that’s been imprinted, right. But I want them to know that there needs to be a shared gratitude with the medical centers and with those first responders. That they’re not the only ones that are injured, and you could see their little light bulbs going off in their head.”

Dr. Kimberly Hillyer: Yeah. I know before you were saying, back in the 70’s, that there wasn’t as much treatment, and you had to go to Detroit. I’ve heard the long-term aspects of treatment for some of these individuals that have a large amount of their surface area that has sustained burns. The amount of time that it takes with the nurses and the doctors, like you said, trying to physically put some of those pieces back together.

Lesia Cartelli: Yeah, it’s a long process. You know, when you have a heart attack, you get repaired, and then you go in for some PT and some OT. You get things back together, and you’re done. As long as you eat healthy and stay away from salt. But with a burn injury, you go back constantly for more surgery and more releases, more skin grafts because the skin is constantly contracted during and not tightening and changing. So, it really is a long process.

Dr. Kimberly Hillyer: Well, it’s a process that I’m so glad that your organization helps these young ladies through after they continue to work with us in healthcare. Filling, bringing that physical pro-

cess through. Then you're able to bring the mental and emotional support for them. So, I'm glad that they're imprinting on you like little ducklings because that really is what brings that resilience, that self-love that you talked about. That courage that we talked about gives them that purpose that then builds for them, for their families, and for all souls that touched their lives, even strangers.

“ I tell the girls that when they walk into a room, people are going to stare anyway. They're all going to look up, and they're going to look over. So why not give them something beautiful and strong to look at? Why not be that teacher and show your resilience and put your girls out, put your shoulders back and your head up, and smile at them?”

Lesia Cartelli: Strangers. I tell the girls that when they walk into a room, people are going to stare anyway. They're all going to look up, and they're going to look over. So why not give them something beautiful and strong to look at? Why not be that teacher and show your resilience and put your girls out, put your shoulders back and your head up, and smile at them? You know, and pretty soon, the scarring will go away, and they'll start to see your light.

Dr. Kimberly Hillyer: See the light shining through the eyes? Because that's what's being focused on.

Lesia Cartelli: Yes, and we role play that, and boy, is it really interesting to watch the behavior and the response of people.

Dr. Kimberly Hillyer: Well, Lisa, I'm so glad that you've spent this time talking to me. I want to remind our audience about your book, which I know I found on Amazon. I'm sure it's also in all the other bookstores that still exist today. Brick and mortar still there.

Lesia Cartelli: Yeah, right? I think they are.

Dr. Kimberly Hillyer: Yeah, at least Barnes and Nobles, because I just went there.

Lesia Cartelli: There you go. Uh-huh.

Dr. Kimberly Hillyer: So want them to go ahead and pick up your book, “The Heart of Fire” and then soon maybe we'll have a second book. Do you have a publication date yet or still in the writing process?

Lesia Cartelli: I'm still in the writing process. You know, they say it takes three weeks to write a book and three years to edit, right?

Dr. Kimberly Hillyer: I can only imagine. Your heart pours into those pages, and then you have someone coming back and ripping it apart. Having you add and mix this and remixing it, you're like, wait, I did tell my story.

Lesia Cartelli: But I wanted that fireman in there, and they were like, no. Save it for book two. I'm like, OK, yeah. But it's a fun

process.

Dr. Kimberly Hillyer: I'm so excited for this next journey for you with this. With the book, the second book and that you continue to grow and have purpose and strength in what you do with these young ladies that have gone through so much.

Lesia Cartelli: Thank you and thank you so much, Kimberly, for giving me this time and this platform to tell my story and share the girls' journey. I am really grateful, and keep doing what you're doing up there, and take care of those patients. It just makes the world a better place every day.

“Thank you and thank you so much, Kimberly, for giving me this time and this platform to tell my story and share the girls' journey. I am really grateful, and keep doing what you're doing up there, and take care of those patients. It just makes the world a better place every day.”

Dr. Kimberly Hillyer: Thank you, thank you so much.

We want to thank our audience for joining us on today's episode of Neonatology Today Media.

Lesia Cartelli: Thank you, thank you so much.

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About the Author: Kimberly Hillyer, DNP, NNP-BC:



Title: NT News Anchor and Editor

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Bio: Kimberly Hillyer, RN LNC, NNP-BC DNP, completed her Master's degree specializing as a Neonatal Nurse Practitioner in 2006 and completed her Doctorate of Nursing Practice (DNP) at Loma Linda University in 2017. She became an Assistant Clinical Professor and the Neonatal Nurse Practitioner Coordinator at Loma Linda University. Her interest in the law led her to attain certification as a Legal Nurse Consultant at Kaplan University.

As a Neonatal Nurse Practitioner, she has worked for Loma Linda University Health Children's Hospital (LLUH CH) for twenty years. During that time, she has mentored and precepted other Neonatal Nurse Practitioners while actively engaging in multiple hospital committees. She was also the Neonatal Nurse Practitioners Student Coordinator for LLU CH. A secret passion for informatics has led her to become an EPIC Department Deputy for the Neonatal Intensive Care at LLUH CH.

She is a reviewer for Neonatology Today and has recently joined the Editorial Board as the News Anchor.

About the Author: Lesia Stockall Cantrelli



Lesia Stockall Cartelli is a sought-after speaker and author. She is the founder and chief executive officer of Angel Faces - a national nonprofit providing healing retreats and ongoing support to adolescent girls and young women with severe burn/trauma injuries. Cartelli endured serious burn injuries at the age of nine in a natural gas explosion. Her grandparents' home was destroyed yet her spirit survived.

For the past 30 years, Cartelli has launched and directed aftercare programs for burn and trauma patients. In 2003, she founded Angel Faces. Resiliency and courage motivated Cartelli to face her fear of fire at age 33. She suited up in firefighting gear and entered a burning building known as a "control burn." Her fear conquered, she married the fire captain who led her into the fire to face her fears.

Cartelli transformed her pain into a life of passion and purpose. Thousands have been deeply impacted through her programs and her talks. She inspires all who are in her path. Cartelli was selected as "Hero of the Week" by People Magazine, featured on CNN's "Human Factor" with Dr. Sanjay Gupta, HLN, ABC NEWS 20/20, MSN, PBS, and other national media. She has received many prestigious awards for her leadership and inspiration including the "Heart of a Woman" Award on the Dr. Phil Show and an EMMY for Angel Faces mini documentary. San Diego Magazine's Women of the Year, finalist.

Cartelli is often interviewed on Doctor Radio and Sirius Radio and has been written about by the Associated Press, Reader's Digest, Woman's World and many other national and international publications. She is a dynamic, captivating, nationally-known motivational speaker.

Her book, Heart of Fire is available through Amazon.

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