



# Story Monsters Ink®

November 2016

Great Reads for Growing Minds

## Kenny Loggins

Cuts *Footloose* with New Children's Book

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## Steve Carr

Brings *Middle School: The Worst Years of My Life* to the Big Screen

.....

## Meteorologist Brittney Shipp

is Changing the Climate of Children's Literature

.....

## CMA/Radio Disney

Artist Jessie Chris Takes the Stage

.....

## Girl Power:

Francesca Cavallo and Elena Favilli Reinvent the Fairy Tale

.....

## Dr. Nicolas Bazan

Pens a Powerful Tool to Raise Alzheimer's Disease Awareness

.....

## Let Them Eat Dirt:

Raising Children in a World of Balance

.....

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# November 2016

## In this issue...

For many of us, Kenny Loggins wrote the soundtrack of our childhoods. From “I’m Alright” to “Danger Zone” to “Whenever I Call You Friend,” the Grammy Award-winning musician has had us kicking off our Sunday shoes for the past three decades. Now, he will capture our children’s hearts as well by turning one of his most beloved songs into a picture book about a dance party at the zoo, where the animals cut loose, and it’s set to the same catchy tune that sent toes tapping when the film first boogied across the big screen in 1984.

Also in this issue, we meet film director Steve Carr, meteorologist Brittney Shipp, CMA/Radio Disney Artist Jessie Chris, authors Francesca Cavallo and Elena Favilli, and neuroscientist Dr. Nicolas Bazan, who tells us about his book, *Una Vida*, and his goal to raise awareness for Alzheimer’s Disease.

Do you want to know the secret to healthy kids? Let them eat dirt! At least that’s what the new books says. Our special contributor Shirin Zarqa-Lederman tells us all about it.

It’s election season! If you’re not pleased with the choices of candidates this year, we have 20 kids who are ready to take the podium and change the world. Find out what they would do if elected president inside!

Tell us what you think of this issue! Email your comments to [Cristy@StoryMonsters.com](mailto:Cristy@StoryMonsters.com).



Wishing All of Our Readers a Very Happy Thanksgiving!

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## Dr. Nicolas Bazan Pens a Powerful Tool to Raise Alzheimer's Disease Awareness

by Melissa Fales

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Neuroscientist Dr. Nicolas Bazan set his first novel, *Una Vida: A Fable of Music and the Mind*, in his beloved adopted hometown of New Orleans. The book, which was recently made into a movie, is a suspenseful tale about an aging jazz singer whose past is a mystery, even to her, having lost most of her memory to Alzheimer's disease.

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“I wrote *Una Vida* because I want more people to learn about Alzheimer’s. I want to raise awareness about Alzheimer’s and offer hope to those who have been affected by it.”

The backdrop for *Una Vida* is the Big Easy’s French Quarter with its historic sites, colorful characters, and ubiquitous jazz music. A scientist named Dr. Alvaro Cruz meets a street performer named Una Vida and becomes fascinated by her, her singing, and her struggle with Alzheimer’s. The book follows Cruz’s efforts to understand her past even as her disease rapidly progresses.

When choosing characters for his book, Bazan said he was careful to include a caregiver for Una Vida. “One of the critical issues in this terrible disease is that patients not only need caregivers, but they need them in a different way than those with other diseases,” Bazan says. “Because cognition is lost, a patient can become lost in their own house. I built in the element of a caregiver because I wanted to portray the profound significance

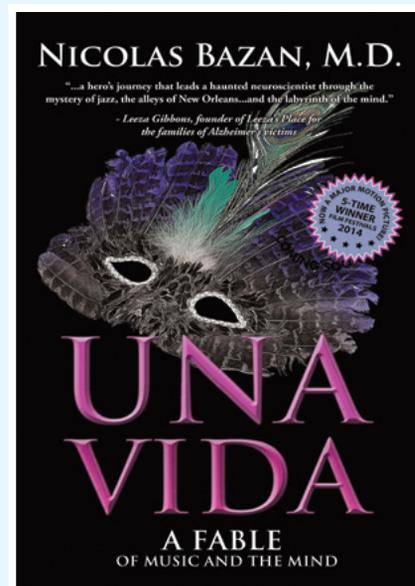
caregivers have in the life of Alzheimer’s patients.”

Bazan weaves his love of jazz throughout *Una Vida*, a musical style he believes embodies the very soul of New Orleans. However, Bazan says music of any genre has a powerful ability to affect the brain. “Music can awaken patients with Alzheimer’s unlike anything else,” he says. “In my own research, I’ve seen a definite connection between music and the mind.

Bazan also co-wrote the screenplay for the recently released film version of *Una Vida*, produced by Monterey Media. Although it’s been well-received, winning 14 film festival awards in America and Canada, Bazan said he was never out to make money with the film. “We’re donating 70 percent of the proceeds towards Alzheimer’s research,” he says.

Born in Los Sarmientos in Tucuman, Argentina, Bazan traces his interest in the medical field back to an experience he had as a boy. His aunt was taking him to a piano lesson when she suffered an epileptic seizure. “It was traumatic for me,” he says. “That’s when I became interested in the brain.”

After attending medical school in Argentina, Bazan completed his post-doctoral work at New York’s Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons and at Harvard Medical School. “My first job was on the faculty at the University of Toronto, Clarke

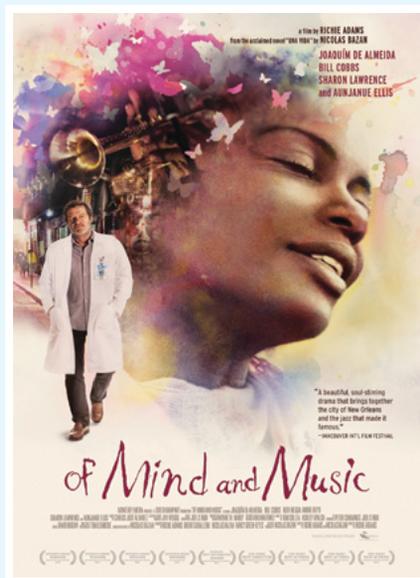


Institute of Psychiatry,” he says. He later returned to Argentina in the 1970s to begin a research institute.

In 1981, Bazan and his family moved to New Orleans in order to escape the political chaos of their homeland. “We’ve been in New Orleans almost 36 years now,” Bazan says. “We love it here. I love the culture of this city.”

Today, Bazan is the director of the Louisiana State University Neuroscience Center of Excellence where he studies different aspects of brain diseases. “I’m trying to discover fundamental mechanisms that will lead us to understand what’s wrong at the cellular and molecular level of a brain affected with Alzheimer’s,” he says. “There is currently no cure for Alzheimer’s. Only treatment. We need to identify and understand these issues before we can start to work on a cure.”

In addition to *Una Vida*, Bazan has written four other books, including *The Dark Madonna*, which follows Dr. Cruz on a trip to Poland. Bazan also plans to write books for children and teenagers about brain health. “There’s a



tremendous need to inform young people about how important the brain is," he says. "I've come up with five recommendations for how to take care of the brain so these young people will have healthy brains in the future."

Bazan notes that while the number one risk factor for Alzheimer's is age, the number one environmental factor is a traumatic brain injury. "One example is when a child receives a concussion from playing sports," he says. "The more we know, the more we fear that the mild to moderate concussions a child might receive from playing soccer might have long-lasting consequences. It's something we haven't quantified yet, but we are looking into it. I'd like to educate parents and guide children about this."

According to Bazan, many people aren't aware of the staggering statistics regarding the number of people affected by Alzheimer's each year. "One woman out of five over the age of 65 will have Alzheimer's," he says. "In men, one out of 11 over the age of 65 will. One thing we are actively researching is why it's so much more prominent in women. Women like Una Vida."

Without giving away the ending of the book or film, Bazan says it was important for him that Una Vida ultimately offers resolution for the characters. "If you write about a terrible disease like this, or make a movie about it, you don't want people to become depressed," he says. "I wanted to expand knowledge and at the same time send a message of hope. Although

Alzheimer's is a terrible disease, I truly believe that one day, research will conquer it."

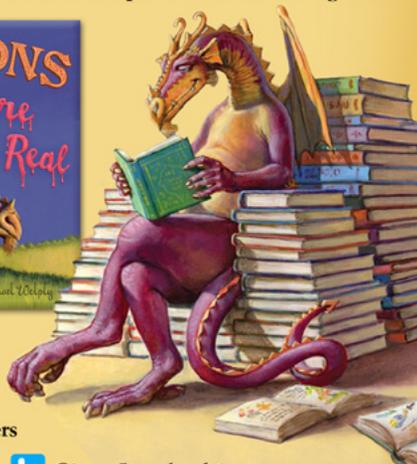
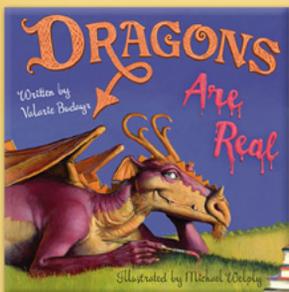
For more information about Dr. Nicolas Bazan and *Una Vida*, visit [www.UnaVidaNovel.com](http://www.UnaVidaNovel.com).

## November is National Alzheimer's Disease Awareness Month.



## Are You Ready to Meet a *Real* Dragon?

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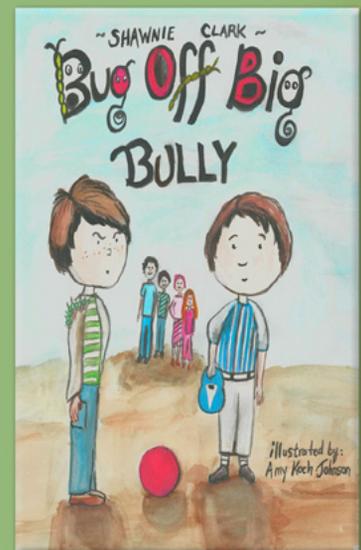
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## A LITTLE BOOK WITH A **BIG** MESSAGE

Peter had the weight of the world on his shoulders when his family moved to a new town. Things got even heavier when the school bully came calling. But thanks to a quaint little bug's arrival at just the right time, life would never be the same.



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