Author’s Note

The idea for this picture book grew out of my own experiences with breast cancer and its treatments. As an elementary school teacher, I felt that it was important to explain the process to my students in a way that would help them to understand without being scared. I had planned to use a picture book for this type of teaching tool; however, I was never able to find one that presented the story in a real but nonthreatening way. During a conversation with one of the oncology nurses caring for me, who also had gone through chemotherapy and had wanted a similar type of book to read with her grandchildren, she suggested that I write a book. After long talks and discussions with my husband and mother about what approach to use for the story, an idea emerged. Because walks in nature have helped to heal my body and spirit, an appropriate theme for the picture book emerged—a mother and daughter being led by a goldfinch on a hike to see nature’s changes, changes that correlate to how the human body changes and adapts during chemotherapy.

The setting for this book is based loosely on the environment that provided me peace and healing during chemotherapy: the Highlands Nature Sanctuary, a nature preserve located in southwestern Ohio. Seeing a goldfinch or bluebird dance through the field or catching the white of the deer’s tail as it scampers to its next grazing spot always brightens my inner spirit and encourages me to look at the many beautiful parts of our world. Kati Aitken’s illustrations, which are based loosely on one of the Sanctuary’s trails, have created the cozy, comforting feel one experiences when surrounded with the beauty of nature.

I hope that this book provides opportunities for other people with cancer, caregivers, friends, and family to talk with their younger loved ones. When Nellie and her mom take time to sit and look at the views over the gorge, they realize how much more they can see in the winter when the trees are bare of their leaves. Anyone involved with the cancer process soon realizes how much more can be seen in life with views broadened during this life-changing event. May you find the beauty in life’s seasons.

Charlotte L. Stiverson
Gazing out over the autumn-touched fields and woods, Nellie and her mom sensed the changing world around them.

“Mom, what was that?” Nellie burst out as a dirty yellow figure landed on a nearby thistle.
Pick! Pick! Pick! The beak bobbed up and down, pulling out the tiny thistle seeds one by one.

“That’s a goldfinch,” explained Mom.

“But the goldfinches at our feeder were bright yellow. Is this one sick?”
“Don’t worry, Nellie. In the fall they replace those vibrant yellow feathers with drab-colored ones.”

“Why?”