

Love Meets Joy Podcast  
Season 2 Episode 1  
*Lucia's Story: Empowering the Cleft Community*  
*with Luci Capo-Rome*  
Transcript

Iva Ballou: Hey everyone. Welcome back to the Love Meets Joy podcast on the Smile Train podcast network. I'm Iva Ballou. I was born with a bilateral cleft lip and palate. I'm the Smile Train Cleft Community Development Manager, the CEO of Real Sophisticated Joy and a confidence coach.

Ashley Barbour: And I'm Ashley Barbour. I was also born with a bilateral cleft lip and palate. I'm the creator of Cleft Love where I share my journey of self-acceptance and spread awareness of cleft. And today we are so thrilled to have Luci Capo Rome with us today. She was born with a bilateral cleft lip and palate just like we were. She's a retired nurse practitioner. She's the author of Lucia's Story: My Imperfect Beauty, under Bella Lucia. She's a poet. She's an advocate for older adults with cranial facial difference, and she spearheaded Smile Train support for the Ensuring Lasting Smiles Act. We're so happy you're here, Luci.

Iva: Thank you so much, Luci.

Luci Capo Rome: Oh, it's my pleasure. I'm glad to be with both of you.

Iva: Yes, we are so happy to have you because looking at all that you have done for the cleft community with your cleft journey, did you ever think that in the past that you would be on a podcast talking about this now, is this something that you saw for yourself?

Luci: No, I didn't. No, but I was thinking about some other way of getting it out there, but I'm just thrilled.

Ashley: So exciting. And I know for many of us in the cleft community, there was sort of a moment when we decided to embrace cleft as a part of our story. And I'm wondering if that moment kind of coincided with when you decided to start sharing your story. Because for many of us, sharing our story is kind of new, but you've been doing this for decades, so if you could talk a little bit about what drove you to share it and that moment when you embraced that part of you.

Luci: It was probably in my early thirties because my family didn't talk about it and it was like it didn't exist. And all I heard was that word, harelip. And so I wanted answers. And so I went ahead and I talked with a speech therapist friend and a social worker at a clinic where I was a patient and we gathered a group of women who are cleft affected and I got together and it was wonderful sharing everything you could imagine about cleft and I learned so much, it was like, yay! So it was a wonderful time to get started and realize, hey, there's more to do.

Iva: Exactly.

Ashley: It totally is. And I feel like that's such a good message that the search for community is definitely not new for many of us. We sort of found the cleft community through the internet, through Instagram, through Facebook, but you were developing community pre-internet and all of that. So what was it that really prompted you to get your sort of group started?

Luci: I felt so isolated and alone as a young woman, and I wanted to expand that. I said, I know there's more to this. I want to get going. I was determined and I had a wonderful, wonderful speech therapist friend who was very dear to me and she said, Luci, I will help you. And so we got together with the social worker and we did all the research finding all the women, and we started meeting at each other's houses and sharing ideas. And there was two other women. And that's when we got together and we called our group Looking Ahead and some of the things that people said was amazing. And so it was a very healing time for me. It really was. It was so exciting.

Iva: I can imagine that had to have been exciting because you, as Ashley said, did the work of connecting in person. That's a lot. So first off, thank you and kudos to you, but what were some of the biggest challenges in maintaining in-person groups? Because getting people to show up consistently and be committed can be hard. And then just one follow up question. I'm asking for myself on this one. Are there any tips for people that are listening that want to kind of create their own little cleft community groups in their area?

Luci: I would probably reach out to people who may have interests that are common. Just start small though. That's what I did. Just start small and maybe where you go to get some of your care done if you're still getting

some done. Right now I'm developing older adults. In fact, I recently had an article published, which I'm excited about, but I think reaching out to people where you tend to gravitate toward whether it's at your clinic, but I guess that's where I would get started. We've got Facebook and we've got Instagram and other means, but just partnering, reaching out, and I'm still trying to do that now because a lot of people don't use social media still. So it's just reaching out to people that you know like the older adults, they're out there but they're hiding and I'm trying to find them to bring them out. That's my goal right now.

Ashley: I love that so much! Did you already mention what year it was that you started that group?

Luci: It was 1983, and unfortunately it only lasted two years. It was from 1983 to 1985.

Iva: It was still a long time!

Ashley: Yes!

Luci: And I still have all the notes. I have some of the things that people said. I can give you one example. There was a young woman, the two that helped me to get things started. She went on a date and the guy tried to pressure her into having sex and she said no. So he called her Snub Nose 38 and she never forgot that.

Ashley: Yeah, that's the kind of stuff that really sticks with you. And it's fascinating that the issues that we deal with today were happening 40 years ago.

Luci: Exactly.

Ashley: 40 years ago! Oh my goodness. I didn't want to just say that because that was two years before I was born, but oh my God,

Luci: It was really cool. And some people, their families, would hide them if they wanted to go to college. No, you can't go because of the way you look and prevent them from developing themselves.

Ashley: And now you've really spanned the in-person meetups, and you've seen how that works. And now you've really adapted, even though you are in

the older adult community, you've adapted and now you've brought your community online to Facebook and Instagram and your website. So what do you think are some of the advantages of both, right? Because I'm sure there are pros and cons to both. And I'm curious what you think were the advantages to in-person versus potential advantages to having an online group.

Luci: Well, the in-person, I'm one of these people, I can feel your energy. I can feel your energy now, but I feel it even more so when we're together in person and maybe helping with each other with makeup would be like the lipstick or whatever else you want to do to accentuate your qualities, your beauty. And so that's one thing that I can see in person where the cool thing with the media is we could reach so many more people where we had this small support group and women did say what they wanted to say and they expressed how they felt. And even relationships, we talked about that too. That's another one. But yeah, I think that's the thing about the social media. There's so much we, as you know, we can reach so many more people than in person. So in person, you make announcements. That's why I did this article in my county so that we can get people to come out because unfortunately, people even older than me tend to hide out.

Iva: And they're not on social media, but they do read.

Ashley: Yes.

Luci: Yeah. And you would be surprised. I did a study and there are a lot of people who like to use YouTube.

Ashley: Yes.

Luci: People use it now for directions on how to do certain things.

Ashley: Yes, I know!

Luci: Like plumbing issues or whatever as an example. But yeah, so I do have some videos on my website for older adults and I actually changed my website to be geared toward older adults. So I'm currently working on that.

Ashley: I love that. And what are some of the videos that you have on there? What are they about?

Luci: The first ones were about just being different and uniqueness. And I've also done all the awareness, but the last three are me actually talking because let me share this with you. It took me probably about two years to work up the courage to look at the camera like we are right now. I had a hard time, so I joined a professional group that does videos, and so I used other people and pictures and all kind, and I always put one picture of myself in there, but me actually talking like we are now, I couldn't do that for about two years. So that's what it's about, about being an older adult and finding what works for you. And again, using the media. And I mentioned, well, maybe if your grandchildren or your children can assist you, because there's a lot of good things about the media, again, it reaches so many people. So I'm still working on that. I'm a little bit behind right now because I'm involved in some other community stuff and I am getting ready to go to ELSA, so yeah.

Iva: Which we are definitely going to talk about. But you just brought up so many things just now, and as Ashley said, a lot of the topics that are in the cleft community that are present today such as beauty and cleft, relationship and cleft, self-awareness, they're still very much prevalent today. And I first want to say, I hope that the audience caught that last tip that you gave of maybe if you aren't comfortable watching yourself on video, that is a great tip. Take a class, do something where you have to be in front of the camera so you can get comfortable. This is why we had to have you on the show, but what are some other topics that you might've discussed in that two-year period with the group? Because I'm pretty sure that there's also some more wisdom that you could share with us.

Luci: Well, we talked about, I had another friend who was in the group, and what she learned was how to accept herself. She wouldn't drive a car because she didn't want people to see her silhouette the way she looked, like when she was sitting in traffic.

Iva: Yes, the profile.

Luci: The profile. And so it took her some time to do that. And so that was one thing. The other thing was our appearance. We talked about makeup and dental work. We even talked about relationships. Unfortunately, some

women, and I know you both know this, we'll jump into a relationship because this other person was accepting to them, but then turned around and treated them negatively. So we talked about that. And I have to show one thing. We did let one man in, I found out through the clinic where I was, my friend said, listen, we have this guy. So he was a violinist for the Pittsburgh Symphony and he had I think the unilateral and he would not sit in the front row, so he had a mustache. And so he came to our group and after two or three times of us just talking about anything and everything that bothered us or we had to talk about, he actually got up the courage to sit in the front row. So we did make a difference.

Ashley: I love that. You made such a difference to so many people. It's just so incredible.

Luci: Oh, thank you. But it was, I didn't realize, but yeah, he felt better. So he only came, I think the two or three of the meetings.

Iva: It doesn't have to be a continuous thing, it's just that once of being in that group of community and seeing other ladies, you are like, okay, I'm safe to put myself out there.

Ashley: Yeah. And I definitely have noticed within the cleft community, anecdotally, that many of us tend to struggle with self-esteem. And as a result, that impacts our relationships, like you just mentioned. I just think that for so many of us, we feel like we are not good enough or we're lucky if anybody wants us. It just feels like, I don't know, a lot of us end up in situations that aren't very healthy because we're hurting and we want as humans, we want love. We want relationship. We want acceptance. And so I think a lot of us really struggle with that.

Iva: Seeking outside validation.

Luci: Yes

Iva: Please validate me. Please tell me that I'm enough. And so with that, Ash and I have been very open on the podcast about our relationships. And how did your cleft play a part in your romantic relationships?

Luci: Well, I can tell you I was fortunate that I never had a guy say anything bad about my appearance negative. But my first marriage, it was because of

that acceptance and that love, but it actually turned bad. But we both, and I can share this, we both had a pain story about our history growing up, and it was difficult. And so, looking back, I know that this individual had his own issues, and so he dealt with them the best he could. I did get out of that relationship. In fact, when I was in graduate school, and it was so funny when I went back to school, because I've been to school so many times. When I went back to school to get my bachelor's, I got a diploma in nursing. He was very supportive. And then when I went into graduate school, he called it Fi Zappa Crappa. And I said, okay, I'm outgrowing you. So, bye bye, and I did get out of the relationship. There was a little bit of emotional abuse predominantly. And so, I was single for 12 years. Then I met my current husband, and I said to myself, because I was in therapy for a long time I said, I'm going to get real particular. I'm not going to settle for anything. Because unfortunately, he was a mama's boy. And then I met another guy who was so loving, he was another mama's boy, and I said, I'm sorry, he bought a diamond ring. And I said, I'm sorry dear, but I can't. I can't. So that's when I decided, and I went through different dating services. It wasn't online then. And that's when I met my current husband. When I remarried, I was 48 years old. But I knew this was it. I'm done. And I was very, very particular who I went out with.

Ashley: What self-process did you have to go through in finding yourself, in finding your confidence, in finding self-esteem to go from that first relationship that was sort of emotionally abusive to this now relationship that you've had for how many years have you been married?

Luci: 23

Ashley: For the last 23 years. And you guys have the sweetest relationship. You're like now how you can go out on the anniversary of your first date wearing the same clothes that you wore the first time you met, which is amazing. But what was your growth process? Or do you have any advice for those of us who are still hopeful that love is out there, but maybe still feel like we might be getting in our own way?

Luci: I highly believe in counseling. We all need a tune up every now and then. You can skip it for two or three, five years, and go back. If something comes up, it's not going to hurt you. But I probably read every self-help book, known to man. I did counseling, I did any kind of spirituality. I did reading. I did yoga, I did just about, and I love to dance. And so all those

things. In fact, the gentleman that I met after the divorce that got serious, we danced together so well. It was fantastic. We were great on the dance floor together.

Ashley: I was going to say when they say about dancing, Luci...

Iva: You can't see me. But I had questions. Okay...

Luci: I did makeup classes, I did a little bit of everything. And I think just knowing that and in growing and then I went back to school, I knew that education was my key because when I was younger, they said, oh no, you can't do that. And I kept going. And so that's another thing that helped me to realize that I have brains. And I always said to myself, I wasn't beautiful, but I was attractive. That's what I always said. And I met a guy one time at one of those dances who said, you have a really healthy attitude. And I said, well, listen. I said, I'm here to have fun. And that's it. And whatever happens, happens.

Iva: So this sounds like Luci, you really learned to, you fell in love with yourself almost, and it made it-

Luci: Yeah, I did. And I was at a before and after contest. I was never real overweight, but I was overweight. But I wanted a nice body. I mean, I just did. I wanted to look good, but of course you did the best you could because that ran in my family being overweight, and I made a commitment when I was 15 that I'll never let myself get obese. But that was just me.

Ashley: That whole being able to control your body is very prevalent in the cleft world, I feel like.

Luci: Yeah, because you do the best you can with what you have. And I learned about makeup not for a long time. I wouldn't wear lipstick because I thought, oh, my lips are too crooked. Who's going to want? Oh don't bother!

Iva: We have got to go to break, guys. You were going to want to come back because Luci has more stories to share with us, more wisdom and more laughs and joy and love. So come on back after the break and so we can hear the rest of her amazing story and her advocacy.

Announcer: We are happy to tell you more about our sponsor. Smile Train. Smile Train pioneered a sustainable model of partnering with local media professionals in more than 70 countries. Since 1999, it has supported more than 1.5 million safe cleft surgeries, more than all other cleft charities combined. And as many people in our audience know, children born with clefts often need more essential cleft treatments than just surgery. Because their partners provide local year-round care, Smile Train is also able to fund nutritional support, dental care, orthodontic treatment, speech therapy, and psychosocial support for those who need it. Smile Train invests in their partners, providing them with the state-of-the-art equipment and training they need to make safe and quality care possible for those who need it most. But this isn't possible without your support. Go to [smiletrain.org/donate/lovemeetsjoy](https://smiletrain.org/donate/lovemeetsjoy) today and donate \$21 a month to make sure that every child with a cleft can receive the care they need whenever they need it. That's [smiletrain.org/donate/lovemeetsjoy](https://smiletrain.org/donate/lovemeetsjoy).

Iva: Welcome back everyone. Before the break, we were talking with Luci and talking about her romantic relationships. But Luci, I would have to say that in listening to the story and knowing just everything that I know about you and the audience has been learning, there was a shift of your personal relationship with yourself, kind of grew over the years, would you say so?

Luci: Yes.

Iva: Because I also know that along the lines of, as you mentioned with your ex-husband, you went back to school and you decided that I'm going to do this. No matter what people said about me, I'm going to go further my career. That had to also play into that personal shift that you were going through. Do you think that at the same time that you were growing in yourself, like, oh, okay, I'm this confident person, I'm falling in love with me. Also shifted into I can go do this amazing new career?

Luci: Yes, definitely. I became a nurse because of being in the hospital so much. And back when I was younger, you were either a housewife or a nurse or a teacher, and I knew I wanted to be a nurse just because of all the wonderful care I received when I had all my surgeries. That's what I decided to do. And I did get into a school of nursing at that time, and then I went on to get my bachelor's and then my master's and postgraduate. Each time it helped me feel better about myself because I knew I could

accomplish, and at that time, I thought I liked being a nurse practitioner and a dance practice nurse. I could spend more time with people educating them, caring for them, and helping them to feel better about themselves and to take care of themselves because big on self-care and education. And I even did some nursing education too. Real challenging experiences.

Ashley: I relate to what you said so much about how just finding different things, it helped you to find yourself, and then that contributed to your confidence. I remember when I was in my mid-twenties, I went through a pretty yucky breakup. At least it was yucky on my side. And so I was really on the struggle bus, and I remember I just dove into literally everything. I learned how to knit, I learned how to run. I ran for the first time in my life, I worked out, I did all of these things and I got my master's. That was when I started on my master's. And I feel like all of those things just really contributed to my overall confidence. And I think just as you get older and as you are working more and everything, then you end up just, I don't know. As you gain life experience, confidence often comes. You mentioned being a nurse practitioner, and I don't know that I would've ever wanted to work in a hospital because I really struggled with being a patient. I didn't love hospitals. And I'm wondering what it was like for you to be both experience, what it was like to be the patient, but then also turn around and then be the provider.

Luci: It helped me with my compassion for sure, and to be efficient and because I had to become very responsible. But I learned that as a child. I actually started working when I was 10 years old, believe it or not. I had a little job walking kids to school, so I was always having to learn, and I just have to throw this in just to add on. But the other thing that really helped me was tap dancing.

Ashley: Oh, see, I feel like my physical body, learning what my physical body was capable of also gave me emotional strength. And I found a lot of that in doing yoga because the purpose of yoga, well, one of the purposes of yoga is if you hold a pose that's very uncomfortable, it's like practice ground for real life. So if you can breathe through a tough time, then you know that you're going to be able to get through it. So how long did you tap dance for?

Luci: I'm still tap dancing now.

Iva: Oh, really? We didn't know that.

Ashley: Can we get a video of that?

Luci: When I was 14, my mother said, if you want to go to a parochial school and buy your uniforms and pay your tuition, you got to go to work. So I had to go to work after school and on the weekends. So I stopped. And then I probably did it intermittently as an adult all my life. And now there's a 50 plus adult tap class here now that I take weekly.

Ashley: Love that. Do you ever perform?

Luci: No, this class does not so far. They may in the future, but I have a classmate who was in her eighties. So it's like, okay, keep going. But it's just, it's a wonderful, I love it so much. But anyway...

Iva: First thank you for sharing that story with us because again, I think what we keep, I know I keep saying this, and Ashley, I have talked about this. I think it's a testament to you as a person throughout your life, you've had these just different moments of like, oh, wow, I never would've thought to do that. And so you're helping us, but you're helping yourself. And as you often say, you're advocating for the older cleft community. I think it's just beautiful and it does speak to you as an empath. And I'm curious to know as a nurse, many of us in the cleft community, we do in some way kind of go into the healthcare field in some way, shape, or form because that need and desire-

Ashley: Or a caring field!

Iva: Or a caring field of giving back or helping someone or being that person on the team who's going to speak for the underdog. Is there a time in your nursing journey that really stands out where it was just like you just really poured out your heart to a patient?

Luci: Yes, very much. In fact, I'll just share a real brief story. I was a student nurse and I had to work on a pediatric floor where they did surgeries, excuse me. We had a little boy and he had his lip repaired. And at that time they called it some kind of a bow where they would tape it and to keep it in place. And of course, he had his arms tied down, and so he was crying and nobody ever came back the whole evening to check on him. No

parent, no family or anybody. So I picked him up and I put a diaper on my shoulder, and I held him on my shoulder for quite a while, while I did my tasks for the evening. And I didn't care about his little bloody tears getting on my shoulder, and I just held him until he fell asleep and I got him back in bed. But I'll never forget that because I was able to pick him up and hold him. And it just brings tears to my eyes now just thinking about how much love I provided for him and tenderness. Because he was all alone and he was uncomfortable.

Ashley: And it makes such a difference, I think. So often people don't think about little babies and the impact that those early procedures have on us later in life. And so I have a feeling that you made such a huge difference in that baby's life, even though you probably never actually saw the impact or anything, but I'm sure that you changed that baby's life in one way or another.

Iva: She felt that calmness.

Luci: Yeah.

Iva: And I was going to ask the question about did being a patient help you train other nurses? But I think in that answer alone, of course, of course. But tell us a little bit about that transitioning into not just being a nurse practitioner, but then you go on to train other nurses.

Luci: I did, and they really appreciate. I didn't spend a whole lot of time in education, but the time I did, I made sure that I explained things to them. And I always say, put yourself in the patient's place, and if you don't know anything, like I've heard horror stories from other cleft affected people that they didn't feel that healthcare providers were supportive enough. And I said, if you don't know anything, go look it up. Don't ever try to go in there cold. Look it up, see what that means to you before, and I was taught that myself. I could tell you a whole lot more stories. I was a home care nurse for over 10 years, and I was also worked in hospice. And so I've done a lot of different things. I worked as a mental health provider. I was actually functioned as a psychiatrist because there was a shortage. And so I had a lot of stories from that too. I had a woman who was seriously mentally ill, and she had a personality disorder, and she heard I was retiring. She went up to administration and she said to them, you can't let her retire! And I said, well, just because they feel comfortable because

what I would do is I would try to accommodate her when she came to our clinic, because she had to do different things. And so I said, well, why don't you do it all in one day? So that way we don't make me run back and forth, just little things like that because seriously mentally ill people also have that stigma. So, my heart goes out to them too.

Ashley: Yeah. I find you so inspiring in so many different ways, Luci, I feel like you've done so much for the cleft community and just for the medical healthcare community, and I'm just wondering if you have any advice for those of us who are young advocates, like what kind of advice can you give some of us or to even kids who are growing up now?

Luci: To remember who you are. Think about what you've done so far in your life, and even children, young children, they've accomplished things. I've seen eight-year-olds who can tap dance like crazy or go out there and repair something that you thought, oh my goodness, I can't do that or even show you how to do something on the internet that I can't do, or software or whatever. So it's just think about what you've accomplished, and if somebody bullies you just remember they've got the issue, not you. They need help. So reach out to them and say, listen, what can I do for you? Why do you have to say whatever you said to me, why? There's a reason behind that.

Ashley: Yeah.

Iva: Thank you so much for that, Luci. I receive it, I know Ashley receives it, and we hope- and we know that the audience is going to receive that as well.

Ashley: Yeah.

Iva: So we were fortunate enough to speak with Luci at this year's Cleft Con New York City in July. It was an amazing weekend, especially on that Saturday meeting with new friends, having real conversations about the emotional and the medical side, a little bit of our cleft journeys, and it was just an amazing time. But the main thing when we were talking to Luci, we got to learn about her work in trailblazing ELSA, and we're going to get to hear a little clip of that.

Ashley: You've been such an amazing advocate for this community from little babies all the way on up, and it's just incredible. And as we mentioned earlier, you've really been a champion for the Ensuring Lasting Smiles Act. And for any of our listeners who are unaware of what the Ensuring Lasting Smiles Act is, it's a bipartisan piece of legislation, and it would require that insurance plans cover all necessary services related to diagnosing and treating birth differences, which would also include cleft. ELSA would also extend coverage to all medically necessary treatment to include both dental and orthodontic coverage, and it would extend to all ages, and it would ensure that the medical provider is the one that would determine if treatment is medically necessary, because as it stands now, we know that even if a medical provider says this treatment, this surgery is required and medically necessary, the insurance company is the one that ultimately gets the final say. So I'm curious how you first found out about ELSA, and then how you- when you brought that to Smile Train and what that process was like?

Luci: I was, for some reason, I don't know if that was on my phone or tv, but there was a reporter from CNN, and this was exactly on March 16th, 2021. I saw that and I went, wow! I said, I got to get this out. So I actually spoke to Troy, and that's when I got interested. I said, this is something that we need to do because my history, it's the same as very many of you in the audience, that in 2002, I had to have my prosthetic bridge work replaced, and this was in Kansas, and I actually wrote letters and the state representative for the insurance companies said, nope, we can't do this. And so I didn't go as far as I probably should have, but at the time it was \$14,000. And so my husband and I took out a loan. Then it happened again in 2014, I had to go get it replaced, and my dentist referred me to a maxillofacial prosthodontist who works with clefts, and it took him three years because we had a lot of challenges, and it was going to cost 27,000.

Iva: Wow. Okay.

Luci: So my prosthodontist, God, love him, he went to bat for me, showed them pictures, and it got done. The insurance company paid for it, but it was my major medical but you know, you still have the dental. So now I have the same one of course, they each lasted about 14 years. So I thought, well, we got to get this done because when I get this replaced, I want to have some coverage. So that's another reason why I am very passionate. And I also

think about the women that I've talked with on Facebook and other places that, do I buy groceries or do I pay for the healthcare of my child?

Iva: And a lot of people do that.

Luci: I have to have money to live. So this is what I think about every day when I talk to them.

Ashley: Yeah, that's amazing.

Iva: And so along with all of her many things, or when she's not traveling with Dick, going to different places, because they do love to travel. You guys check that out. In September, you are going to go to the Day on the Hill, which again is you championing for ELSA and for those, for yourself, but for the rest of us in the community. And can you speak a little bit about that, because this would be your what, second one or third one?

Luci: Probably my fourth.

Iva: Fourth.

Luci: Yeah.

Iva: See?

Luci: Yeah, I think we did it twice for the Congress and once for the Senate, and this is with the Ectodermal Dysplasia Foundation. On the 12th, they're having a virtual orientation, and then on, I think it's the 18th in the afternoon, they're having speakers and registration, and then on the 19th is on the Hill. And what's cool about it is that they're going to bus everybody up to the Hill, and we're all going to try to represent our states, and I'm going to be helping with other states. My state, luckily has been covered by both the Congress and the Senate of Kansas. So that's what we're going to do. So it's a really cool opportunity because you get to network and meet other people and hopefully keep working at it. So, yeah!

Ashley: Yeah. And have been, you mentioned that you've been involved for several years, and can you explain a little bit about the process about why it's been ongoing for quite some time?

Luci: Well, I know that when it first came out in 2018, it didn't go to the floor until 2021. And what's so cool is it's Dr.- I'm sorry, Senator Tammy Baldwin is the first person who actually started this whole thing. So then it just went on and on with Congress and just kept going and representing your state, telling your story. The most important part of everything is just getting in front of these people and telling your story.

Ashley: And if it doesn't become law at the end of the year, then you restart the process for next year.

Luci: Restart it, yes.

Ashley: And so that's why it's so important to get so many voices and so much information out there about this, because we really want people to champion that.

Iva: Isn't she great? We are so excited and we're thrilled to have the Queen of ELSA be on our podcast.

Ashley: Yes. And thank you so, so much, Luci. For everyone else, that's our show for today. Don't forget, as always, we would love to hear from you. Luci, where can the people find you?

Luci: Well, my website is [bellalucia.net](http://bellalucia.net). That's B-E-L-L-A-L-U-C-I-A dot net. And you can find me on Facebook under my name, Luci Capo Rome. And then for my Instagram, if you go to [@luciaimperfect](https://www.instagram.com/luciaimperfect), it's L-U-C-I-A-I-M-P-E-R-F-E-C-T. That's my Instagram page.

Ashley: And you can find me on Instagram [@cleftloveig](https://www.instagram.com/cleftloveig) or on TikTok [@CleftLove](https://www.tiktok.com/@CleftLove)

Iva: And everyone, you can find me on Instagram and TikTok, [@realsophisticatedjoy](https://www.instagram.com/realsophisticatedjoy). Don't forget to go to [smiletrain.org](http://smiletrain.org) to learn more about all of the wonderful things Smile Train is doing for the cleft community around the world. You can find us on your favorite podcast streaming site. While you're there, don't forget to leave us a five-star review. That's the show.

Ashley: Thanks so much for listening.

Ashley and Iva: Bye!

Announcer: If you like the show, be sure to subscribe, leave a review, follow us on social, and tell all of your friends to listen. Questions or episode ideas? Email us at [lovemeetsjoy@smiletrain.org](mailto:lovemeetsjoy@smiletrain.org). We can't wait to hear from you. Love Meets Joy is a product of Smile Train. Our hosts are Iva Ballou and Ashley Barbour. Our senior producer and editor is Ariel Nachman. Our Smile Train producer is Adina Lescher. Love Meets Joy is presented by Smile Train, the world's largest cleft focused organization. One in 700 babies is born with a cleft, a potentially life-threatening birth difference that can cause difficulties eating, breathing, hearing, and speaking. The good news? Smile Train has developed a sustainable model that empowers local healthcare workers around the world to provide life-saving cleft treatment to all who need it in more than 70 countries. 100% free. Learn more at [www.SmileTrain.org](http://www.SmileTrain.org).