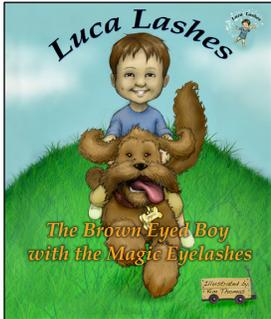


FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Want your kids to overcome their fears? There's an app for that.
Series of interactive apps and eBooks helps kids conquer firsts



PHOENIX — For every parent who has watched a child tremble in the hairdresser's chair, drag their feet to swimming lessons, or cry on the way to the pediatrician, help has arrived.

"Luca Lashes" is a collection of kids' eBooks and interactive apps – aimed at kids ages 0–4 – that turns “fear of firsts” into fun.

Created by long-time educators Nicole and Damir Fonovich, the series (a finalist for a Cynopsis: Kids Imagination award) was inspired by their little boy, Lucas, and their desire to help him be brave in all his childhood discoveries: the first swimming lesson, first plane ride, first trip to the dentist, first haircut.

"As a parent, the 'firsts' were a huge source of anxiety," says Nicole. "Childhood discovery should be a learning experience and an opportunity for parent/child bonding. That's why we created "Luca Lashes"—to help fellow parents remove the fear and worry associated with the firsts."

Nicole and Damir recruited a team of editors, illustrators, music composers, translators and narrators to create an educational and fun answer to every parent's struggle. The result: a whimsical, multi-lingual (English, French, Italian, Spanish, and Chinese) line of children's eBooks and apps based on a boy with magic eyelashes which give him special brave powers in all his "scary" firsts.

There are currently nine books in the series that follows Luca as he (and his parents) conquers fearful firsts, from brushing his teeth to visiting mommy in the hospital. Parent suggestions at the back of each book and on [YouTube](#) highlight key teaching concepts and offers questions parents can use to prompt learning opportunities.

New technology also allows for interaction with the words and illustrations. For example, the *Luca Lashes: The Brown-Eyed Boy with the Magic Eyelashes* app allows readers to listen to the school bus as it honks and drives away, hear the dog bark, and turn Luca's bedroom lights on and off. In the *Luca Lashes Learns to Brush His Teeth* app, kids see toothpaste being squeezed onto the toothbrush, hear the sound of toothbrush bristles, and hear frogs "ribbit" and ducks "quack" in the background.

AVAILABLE AT: *Luca Lashes: The Brown Eyed Boy with the Magic Eyelashes* app is free on iTunes, and the other apps can be downloaded for \$1.99 at all major marketplaces. Accompanying eBooks can be purchased for \$2.99 everywhere eBooks are sold, and also at Lucalashes.com. View the Electronic Press Kit [here](#).

- Luca Lashes: The Brown-Eyed Boy with the Magic Eyelashes*
- Luca Lashes Learns to Brush His Teeth*
- Luca Lashes and His First Trip to the Dentist*
- Luca Lashes and His First Haircut*
- Luca Lashes has his First Swimming Lesson*
- Luca Lashes Visits the Doctor*
- Luca Lashes and the Trip to the Nursing Home*
- Luca Lashes Visits Mommy in the Hospital*
- Luca Lashes and His First Airplane Ride* (July 2013)

NICOLE & DAMIR FONOVICH (Lucalashes.com) have backgrounds in teaching, writing and publishing. Together, they have 17 years of experience in education, in both teaching and administration. Nicole has a Master of Education in Educational Policy and Leadership and has served in the field of financial aid for the majority of her adult life, helping students. They are regularly featured in the media through guest appearances and contributed articles. They currently live in the Phoenix area.

About Nicole and Damir Fonovich

Authors and creators of *Luca Lashes*

NICOLE FONOVICH, M.ED, is a tech-savvy mom blazing a new trail in children's publishing.

Young readers are at the dawn of a new era where eBooks meet interactive apps, and discovery takes many shapes. That's where Nicole, both a children's eBook author and app developer, is becoming a pioneer.

In one year, she expanded a seedling book idea into a multilingual line of 36 eBooks and corresponding apps.

The co-author and co-creator of "Luca Lashes" eBooks and apps, Nicole is also the president of Luca Lashes, LLC, where she oversees company operations—from art and story development to functionality on multiple technological platforms.

With her husband, Damir, she created the series for their son Lucas, as a way to help him conquer his "firsts" with courage and confidence. Lucas and his real-life adventures continue to be the inspiration for the fictional "Luca" stories.

Nicole has a Bachelor of Arts in leadership and advocacy from Kendall College in Evanston, IL, and a Master of Education (M.Ed.) in educational policy and Leadership from Marquette University in Milwaukee.

While serving in the field of Financial Aid Administration for the last 15 years, Nicole has assisted students in every capacity, including her last post as Director of Financial Aid at Touro University in California. Nicole's professional experience runs the gamut in several fields, from management and education to website development.

DAMIR FONOVICH serves in many facets of the family company. Aside from the dual roles of husband and dad, he is also co-author, Italian translator, and English and Italian narrator. As Vice President of Content Development, Damir works hand-in-hand with his wife, Nicole, to help write Luca's story.

Born in the U.S., but with roots in Croatia and Italy, Damir attended the University of Illinois-Chicago, and received a Bachelor's of Science in marketing and finance. From there, he completed graduate coursework in Child Psychology and Student Counseling at Marquette University in Milwaukee. He also completed a Teacher Certification program at Touro University in California, and taught fourth grade.

Damir has worn many hats in the book industry: writer, Internet content editor, and teacher. For 10 years, he worked on the brick and mortar side of publishing as a bookseller at Barnes & Noble. His love of writing, education and family has combined in the ultimate way in this latest endeavor.

"Luca Lashes" has been featured by Chicago's WGN-TV, as well as numerous parenting outlets nationwide. Their guest columns regularly run on popular family, education, and lifestyle websites and blogs. They live in the Phoenix area.

Follow them on [Facebook](#) and on [Twitter](#) and learn more at [Lucalashes.com](#).





Q&A with Damir and Nicole Fonovich

Co-authors of the "Luca Lashes" eBook and app series

How did you come up Luca Lashes?

We wanted to help children (and parents) overcome fears and help make new experiences easier. The magic eyelashes we thought up while watching our son, Lucas, sleep when he was just a baby.

Why eBooks?

We wanted to think "green" and modern. We are completely aware that our route is non-traditional, but perhaps if more books were available in this format, we could save even more trees. Additionally, publishing through the eBook format gives an author much more control over the process, so it seemed like a natural choice for us. By publishing as an eBook, we control our content, our time, our energy, and our effort.

Why apps?

We created apps because we had so many ideas to make our series much more interactive, and really make the illustrations come to life. We also thought that with the introduction of the tablet, it might be the easiest way to get our product into consumer's hands globally. Also, our son Lucas loves the apps that we already own, and has used them basically since he was born. One of our first apps for him was a rattle app! He still uses it--we don't know if it is just nostalgic to him at this point, or that he just still loves it.

Why firsts?

As parents, we understand that firsts can be incredibly difficult. They not only make your child anxious, but we can get incredibly nervous and feel totally unprepared, too. So we wanted to create a way to help both parents and kids, and therefore help their relationship. By giving them tools to go through firsts and make them not something to be afraid of, but ways to learn. We want to turn "Firsts" into "Fun!"

What lessons do you hope your readers will take away?

We hope that children are able to start discovering the world around them with a sense of wonder and magic, always excited at new experiences because Luca Lashes helped make them more confident. We also hope that parents see our product as a tool to help raise confident children. The parental suggestions at the end of each book (also on YouTube) guide parents through each new experience and offer tips to enhance that learning opportunity. We also hope that readers take away that reading books in multiple languages is fun and reinforces what they are already learning at home or in school.

What ages will benefit from Luca Lashes?

We wrote the stories for children up to age 4. However children and parents of all ages should benefit from the tried and true lessons that each story introduces. It is also helpful to introduce children to a foreign language as early as possible, so using this tool in conjunction with learning at home or in school is highly recommended. The words are highlighted as they are spoken in English, French, Italian, Spanish, and Chinese to assist with reading and language skills, also traditionally learned at a young age.

Give us an example of how parents can use Luca Lashes?

Let's say your child is going to the dentist for the first time. You can go to LucaLashes.com or to the app store and download a story about Luca's first dentist visit for your child. He/she will hear the sounds, see what it looks like, and touch different things that found at the dentist's office. And then beyond that, in getting your child familiar with the experience, you'll also get some parenting tools and recommendations guidelines.

Where is Luca Lashes headed?

We are working on the next nine books in our series and can't wait to continue the adventures. We are all getting better at our processes as we go and are excited to continue our work together as a team.

Praise for Luca Lashes

What readers are saying about *Luca Lashes*

Series Review

From [Motherhood Moments](#): "The illustrations are adorable and I like that there are interactive features. I also love the bonus parent tips, since sometimes it can be hard to know what the best way to approach a child's fear is."

From [Smart Apps for Kids](#): If you have a youngster between the ages of 0 and 4 or a special needs child, these stories may save a lot of sad faces and help instill the confidence your child needs to face the unknown.

The Brown-Eyed Boy with the Magic Eyelashes

From [Second Bookshelf on the Right](#): It's a terrific technique to teach your kids, especially those who are timid about new experiences.

From [Tracy's Nook](#): The pictures are great, the story is easy for a younger child to understand and to relate to. I recommend this book for anyone with younger kids, especially if those kids are shy and scare easily.

From [Moms with Apps](#): The App features interactivity (touch, sight, & sound), parent suggestions, a relatable character and is written for children in the 0-4 year range.

Luca Lashes Learns to Brush his Teeth

From [Cary Plunkett](#): I read this book to my son who is two and a half and it kept his attention until the end and was even repeating some phrases in the book. Now, my son still puts up a fight when it comes to brushing his teeth but one of these days he might appreciate Luca Lashes and his bravery and decide he wants to be brave too.

From [Adventures of the Alpha Wife](#): I learned that if there are fearful things my kids are trying to overcome, all I have to do is give them a way to overcome their fears. Maybe it's blinking like Luca, or perhaps it's tapping their toes three times. My kids giggled in delight as we read the book, and loved watching as Luca overcame his fears.

From [Smart Apps for Kids](#): Parents, teachers, and therapists who work with children that resist teeth brushing may find this book an excellent addition to open the conversation about each child's fears. The illustrations and theme make it worth a download. On one page, the sun and moon shimmer, birds tweet and spin, hands move around a clock, and some exhaust comes out of Luca's pajama-shirt rocket.

From [Just 10 More Minutes](#): I loved the book because it relates to the children and how they feel. It says to a child "I'm on your side", and that's important when facing scary situations. I also loved that it had a section in the back with facts for parents and resources.

From [The iPhone Mom](#): Children can learn along with Luca Lashes as he discovers how to use a toothbrush and why. This app features interactive elements (touch, sight, and sound), parent suggestions, a relatable character and is written for children from birth to age 4.

Luca Lashes and his First Trip to the Dentist

From [Dominique's Desk](#): I love the handy suggestions to parents at the end of the book on how to prepare the child for the dentist visit. The book is easy to read and follow for younger readers with pictures and words on alternate pages.

From [Just 10 More Minutes](#): [Luca Lashes Visits the Dentist] explains what happens to Luca while he is in the seat and that he was perfectly fine when it was all done. I thought the book was a nice addition to the first and I feel like it is a good set to own or borrow for those big moments in a child's life.

PR BOOK

From [Smart Apps for Kids](#): These books are a great concept and really helpful for children who are fearful about new things. Children are incredibly suggestible and this is a very gentle and positive way to introduce a new experience.

Luca Lashes and his First Haircut

From [Tracy's Nook](#): By combining the original text and terrific artwork with features that entertain and promote reading, this eBook series appeals to beginning readers of all ages. It's never too early to fall in love with language!

From Chrissy at [Good Reads](#): I enjoyed the illustrations, which were filled with bright, bold colors guaranteed to catch the eye of a toddler. The segment on the last page giving parents tips and tricks on how to make the first haircut special was cute and useful.

From Clarisa Kluver at [Digital Storytime](#): I highly recommend this series for parents & educators looking for a simple way to teach kids about what to expect on big firsts, including this one that helps prepare toddlers & preschoolers for what can be a scary experience, where a stranger uses scissors to cut their hair.

From [Smart Apps for Kids](#): Each step of the trip to the salon from putting on the apron to seeing hairs falling on the floor, is described and pictured through carefully drawn illustrations and helpful interactive elements.

Luca Lashes has his Frist Swimming Lesson

From [Tracy's Nook](#): Swim lessons can be scary. That is why Luca has a special way of making things less scary. This is a great kids book. The pictures are great, the story is easy for a younger child to understand and to relate to.

From [I'm a Full-Time Mummy](#): It is engaging and interactive and I love that we can also touch the page on the screen and the page sways according to your direction you sway it!

Luca Lashes Visits the Doctor

From [A Stich in Time](#): *If you have a nervous child on the way to the doctor this is a great read! And we all know, a calm and ready child is so much better than a fearful one!*

From [Tidbits from a Mom](#): I think this book is adorable and perfect for my son. The illustrations are wonderful! The book is short and sweet and point out parts of the visit that cause my son his anxiety, including being weighed, measured, and receiving a shot.

From [Tracy's Nook](#): Like the other Luca books this one is a great introduction to little kids who might have some memories of going to the doctor before and are really scared of getting shots, or even just going to the doctor. Just remind the kids to blink their magic eye lashes and then they can be brave enough, just like Luca.

Luca Lashes and his Trip to the Nursing Home

From [Tracy's Nook](#): I think that having a book like this read to them and seeing the great pictures in the book would have eased any lingering fears they might have had. Even if they might not be fearful I think that showing them what to expect before hand will make those visits all the more fun and way less stressful.



Why We Created Luca Lashes

By Nicole and Damir Fonovich

1. We believe that a childhood “first” can be the most important decision-making moments in a child’s life.
2. We believe that speaking multiple languages and thinking cross-culturally prepares children for the global environment we live in.
3. We believe that our son Lucas is a miracle, and every moment with him inspires more from us in our eBook/app series!
4. We believe in the power of communication, and experience the power of it every day as we communicate our message across the globe.
5. We believe that we are on the verge of being the “next” big children’s book series and that eBooks and apps are the future of children’s literature!
6. We believe that tablets are breaking down the barriers of communication and helping level the playing field.
7. We believe eBooks and apps are environmentally friendly. We also believe that eBooks and apps are a great tool to entertain and teach your child when space is a commodity.
8. We believe that children benefit and learning can be enhanced from interacting with words, pictures, and sounds, together when possible!
9. We believe that it is important for parents to provide their children with “teaching moments” and that these moments are precious and a gift. We also believe that it is important for parents to prepare their children as best they could.
10. We believe our series helps children discover the world with less fear and anxiety. Knowledge is power. Teach them in advance and they will have the power to overcome fear and anxiety.