

Interview with Chris Bridge, Co-Author of *Andrew's Story*



In early 2002 we received a copy of a delightful book, *Andrew's Story*. The authors, Andrew Bridge and his mother Chris, describe their experiences after Andrew was diagnosed with and treated for Wilms tumor in 1991 at three years of age. Chris Bridge agreed to share some of their story with us.

Q: You and Andrew wrote *Andrew's Story* about his experience after being diagnosed with Wilms tumor. What motivated you to do this?

CB: The process started when Andrew was in the hospital getting tests. He was getting bored, and his grandmother had brought a camera. She gave him the camera to keep busy. I wrote little notes about what was going on, and he took pictures about what was happening around the hospital. We put these together in a book. After Andrew physically recovered we used the book to work on his emotional recovery.

At first it was just a book for him. Later we were watching Marlo Thomas on a program about St. Jude (Children's Research Hospital). There was a little boy with her, Zach, who had Wilms tumor and was three years old. I said "Andrew, Zach is going through what you did when you were three. I wish we had a copy of your story to send him." That's when we came up with the idea to develop his book and send it to a publisher.

Q: You said you had published another book. Did you take *Andrew's Story* to your publisher?

CB: No, we needed a publisher who was interested in health issues. A friend learned of Lerner Publication's Company in Minneapolis. They had published a series of books for children. This is the "Meeting the Challenge" series, and it looked like a good fit for us.

Q: What is this series about?

CB: The "Meeting the Challenge" series is for children who are going through special situations from adoption to undergoing surgery. There are twelve titles that meet the needs of children with special needs.

Q: How did Andrew do after treatment ended?

CB: Andrew was three, and at that age children are learning to go beyond family and caregivers and learning to trust adults more and more. He was trying to set some personal boundaries. When he was being treated if he said "No, don't touch me" they touched him anyway. It was difficult for him to try to keep control of his space and for it not to be respected. So he needed to work on his trust in adults.

We went back and talked with the doctors and nurses to have normal conversations without being treated. He was able to separate the experiences between being sick and being well. That was the beginning of recovery for him. He shared his story with others, and this helped him understand what the people did to help him even though it hurt him.

Q: How is Andrew doing now?

CB: Andrew is doing great. He's involved in skiing, swimming and tae kwon do. He is also on the honor roll.

Q: Andrew has an older brother, Tyler. What was this experience like for him?

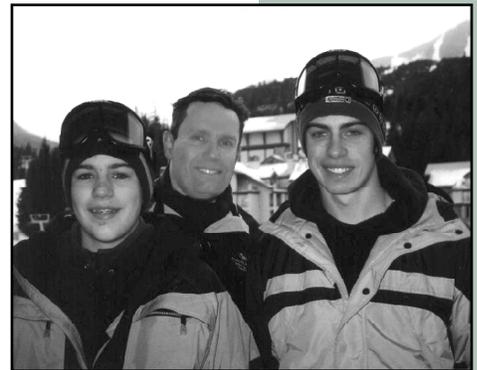
CB: Tyler was five at the time and just getting ready to start kindergarten. He was busy with his own activities. But, he did know that Andrew was sick and needed extra help. He wanted to help Andrew get better, and he wanted to be involved. He would spend time with Andrew playing, reading or running errands.

Q: What resources do you think would be most helpful for families experiencing all of this?

CB: In the past five years there have been more and more resources for families that weren't available when Andrew was being treated. Now people can go to their computers, type in "Wilms tumor" and find out all kinds of information. However, a book I would like to see is one on how parents can be better observers of their children at home. I am not a nurse and didn't know everything the doctors were talking about. Sometimes I would get home and not remember what the doctor had said. Yet I had to be a nurse for my child when I got home. A book about this would have been a great help.

Q: How can someone get a copy of your book?

CB: We have a limited number of books left that we can give out free. Local school kids did fund raising to pay for publishing so that the books could be given to kids in hospitals around the country. If anyone would like a copy they can email me at Chbridge@aol.com or order one through their local bookstore. ☞



*Andrew (left) and
his family*