



From top: Andrew with sister (and Special Love staff member) Angela, earning archery honors, and a progression of camp portraits from 1994-2001.



30 Years & 30 Heroes

Hero #19 of 30

“T-ball saved my life.” When **Andrew** says that, he means it. He was diagnosed with T-cell ALL in 1993 during a routine physical for t-ball and his family was uprooted literally overnight from their home in Azores, Portugal, to Bethesda Naval Hospital. Andrew relapsed in 1995, which led to a bone marrow transplant and multiple side effects including pneumonia, graft-versus-host disease (GVH), and radiation-induced cataracts and tumors. He attended camp while dealing with everything from homesickness to casts on both his legs (see photo at left), which came as a result of his GVH. Yet through it all, Andrew says camp kept him going. “The greatest impact camp has on a camper is knowing that no matter how sick you are, there is a place where you can go and be free from all the hospitals and needles. Even though that care is also provided at the camp, it’s a different feeling.” Andrew’s father, Mike, remembers those early camp days, too:

“As a child undergoing treatment, Andrew always looked forward to camp no matter how medically handicapped he was. He did not care if he was attached to oxygen, in a wheelchair with casts on his legs, or undergoing chemo, he just had to be at camp and the staff was always prepared to take care of his needs. The happiness it brought him was truly unbelievable.”

Andrew enjoys sharing his history and experience with newly-diagnosed kids and credits his happiness as a camper—and now as a counselor—to his first counselor, Mike, and to Tom Baker’s golf class—which, when you think about it, isn’t that big a stretch from t-ball!

To support more kids like Andrew, [click here](#), visit us on [Facebook](#), or call 888-930-2707!

