

CONTENTS

Jimmy Fowkes: Bald and Biking

EDITED BY ELIZABETH WHITTINGTON

When 14-year-old Jimmy Fowkes was diagnosed in January 2006 with medulloblastoma, a type of brain tumor, the weeks of headaches and vomiting finally made sense. The doctor told Jimmy's father to pack a bag and take Jimmy to the hospital immediately, where he would have surgery the next morning. Several months of chemotherapy and radiation awaited Jimmy.

To give him a goal through treatment, Jimmy's father, Dan, signed them both up for the Lance Armstrong Foundation's LIVESTRONG Challenge in Portland. To help raise the minimum donation to participate, Jimmy sent out e-mails and donation forms to friends, family, and his medical team. More than 200 people helped Jimmy surpass his goal, raising more than \$31,000 to become Portland's top fundraiser. "I was really surprised," he says. "I thought I might not even raise the \$500 minimum, and my dad would just pay for both of us to ride it."

While fundraising took a lot of work, getting on his dad's bike and training for the 40-mile ride after surgery was more challenging. Margo, Jimmy's mother, recalls that after more than a week in intensive care after brain surgery, Jimmy was barely able to walk down the hall. His first time back on a bike after surgery, he crashed within 100 yards because his equilibrium was still impaired.

Seven months after his diagnosis and between chemotherapy rounds, Jimmy completed the 40-mile ride in July 2006.

Jimmy also involved his friends and classmates in his cancer journey and philanthropy. When his hair began falling out because of radiation, Jimmy invited friends over to his house for a headshaving party. He asked them to each make a donation or bring a new toy to give to the Child Life program at Jimmy's hospital.

In the end, Jimmy's friends donated about \$2,500 in cash and toys, and 30 went bald. "We had pizza, hung out, got our heads shaved, and played basketball," Jimmy says. "None of my friends that are girls would shave their heads, though."

Jimmy finished treatment in March and has set a goal of 70 miles and \$50,000 for the 2007 LIVESTRONG Challenge. He also inspired a team called Friends of Jimmy Fowkes to raise money and ride in the Challenge.

"It shows people who don't have cancer that they can still make a difference and help," he says. "And people with cancer, it shows them that it's possible to get back into shape and do all the things you want to do."

Do you know a patient, survivor or caregiver we should highlight in The Advocate? If so, e-mail your nomination to editor@curetoday.com.

