



Aaron was our son. He was born in 1993 with a congenital heart defect: hypoplastic left ventricle (HLHS). At the time of his birth, it was rare for children with this particular defect to live beyond one month of age. One of the few options available was a procedure called a Norwood procedure which involved a series of open-heart surgeries, the first of which happened when Aaron was only 7 days old. Aaron delighted everyone when he came through that surgery with no complications. That was a first for this procedure. (Prior to Aaron's surgery the survival rate for that first surgery was approximate 35%. After Aaron's surgery, the survival rate jumped to 70%. He was a cardiac pioneer.)

During the course of his lifetime, Aaron underwent a total of 6 open-heart surgeries and a variety of other medical surgeries and procedures. Finally, in 2011, after a particularly difficult year, Aaron was placed on the heart transplant list. He received his new heart in August of that year. For the first time, he was healthy.

He came back from Indy early in November of that year, was able to return to school in the spring and actually walked with his class at Terre Haute North High School, graduating in June of 2012. In February of the following year, he was able to move into his own little apartment with his cat, Tyglet. He enjoyed life and being healthy.

In June of 2013, he got what he thought was a slight head cold. A couple of days later, he thought it had turned into a stomach virus. Feeling dehydrated, he called an ambulance and went to the emergency room at Union Hospital. From there, he was transported by cardiac care ambulance back to Riley Hospital for Children. That was the evening of June 14th. By 2:30 on Saturday morning, he had difficulty breathing and was intubated. A little after 7 that evening, he coded. After performing CPR, the doctors suggested placing him on ECMO to give his heart a rest. Sometime in the early morning hours of June 16th, he had a major stroke and it was determined that he was brain dead. We turned off life support later that afternoon, and Aaron's body followed his spirit as he left this world for whatever lay beyond."

Perhaps because of his lifelong illness, Aaron had a tender and a loving spirit. He Page 9 was a protector of both animals and people. His cat, Tyglet, was just one of many animals he adopted

for rescue during his short time. When he was at Terre Haute North High School, I attended his first I.E.P. conference. His teacher of record, Mindy Schultz, told me she was amazed by Aaron because of his ability to be a friend to all. She said he seemed to accept everyone, no matter who they were. He was as likely to be seen hanging and talking with the jocks and the popular kids as he was with the geeks, nerds, special needs kids, or the outcasts. He had a wonderful sense of community and the need to support one another. And, when he was a teenager, he developed a love for God and for the church.

While he was in Indy awaiting his heart, Randy was cleaning his room one day and found a list tacked to his bulletin board. This list is something we've come to think of as Aaron's anti-bucket list. It was a list of things he intended to do with his life once he was healthy. Many of the things on that list involved helping others, as organizing a group of friends to serve at Lighthouse Mission, volunteer at the Humane Society, and provide age-appropriate activities for children, especially older children, on the Riley Heart Center.

During his time in the hospital, and after, Aaron loved playing with LEGOs. We realized that LEGO is a perfect toy, especially for some of those older patients (teenagers and such) who are confined to a hospital bed because it requires creativity and imagination and is easily used by a child who has only a tray table in front of them.

We decided to try and combine Aaron's love of LEGO and creativity with his wish to provide activities to the kids at Riley, and Aaron's LEGOCy was created. The past two years, we have been able to provide the Heart Step Down Unit at Riley with a supply of LEGO sets for their patients.

We have discovered that, locally, a variety of perfectly sized LEGO sets that fall in the \$5-6 range can be found at Meijer and WalMart. Other sized sets, as long as they are brand new and unopened, are also acceptable. But, of course, I'd rather provide 4 kids with \$5 sets than 1 with a \$20 set, if given the choice.

Randy and I would be happy and thankful for anyone who might be interested in contributing LEGO sets to the LEGOCy on Aaron's behalf.

Randy and Andrea Todd

