

Teen reaches diabetes patients with book

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Chase Kroll could become a lacrosse star or comic book artist, but if those two fall through the 14-year-old might consider a career in journalism or education.

Kroll was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes when he was 9.

Instead of letting it define him, he accepted it, moved forward and decided to use it to help others.

Chase recently published his story, as well as about 60 others', in "When I Got Diabetes: Letters to Chase."

The book includes stories from 5-year-olds to 65-year-olds and was produced not for profit, but to help others, Chase said.

"I just want to help as many newly diagnosed kids as I can," Chase said. "I don't want it for money."

It's believable coming from the unassuming but self-assured Caesar Rodney freshman lacrosse player.

Tall and rangy, Chase looks like a 14-year-old should.

Fashionably unkempt hair.

Penn State t-shirt.

Light blue basketball shorts.

He looks typical. But his behavior is anything but.

"Chase, he rose to the challenge immediately," said Susan Hoffman, school nurse at W.B. Simpson Elementary School. "He just went right on, it never slowed him down, it never held him back at all."

At 12, Chase produced his first newsletter and distributed it to local school nurses to help other kids with diabetes.

After Hoffman mentioned to Chase she had a diabetic student who couldn't afford anything but water at lunch, Chase decided to help by starting a fundraiser for the student.

He put a notice about the project in his newsletter and waited.

The notice helped Chase raise \$295 – \$145 toward Crystal Light for the diabetic student and \$150 for the Walk for Diabetes.

Chase and his mom, Kim, decided on the heels of this success that a book could help even more kids, so the second issue of the newsletter asked people to submit stories of their diagnoses.

In the beginning the letters trickled in, but after a few weeks they started arriving a few a day at times.

The book took about a year from start to finish, Chase said.

“He dedicated an hour or two each week reading, writing and typing for a full year to put together a book that could help others,” Kim said. “He had moments where he became frustrated, but he never lost sight of his goal.”

The Krolls found an Internet-based self-publishing company, www.lulu.com, to print and distribute the book and a week after submitting it, Chase had a copy in his hands.

“It was pretty weird,” he said. “I never thought I’d be an author at 14 years old.”

Books have gone out to participants, friends and family members, but Chase wanted to reach more kids.

“One of my biggest things is I wanted to donate some to the Children’s Hospital,” he said.

So 25 copies were printed and donated to the hospital, where Chase was treated shortly after being diagnosed.

“It felt really good,” he said.

He’s also shared it with others in the community.

“I am so impressed with the book,” Hoffman said. “I have shared it with ... two students now in my school who have type 1 diabetes and they enjoy coming in and reading the book.”

“I just want to tell them that they’re not alone,” Chase said. “It’s not going to stop them from being so-called normal.”

The straight-A student is now working on the second edition of “When I Got Diabetes” and another venture, “When I Got Cancer.”