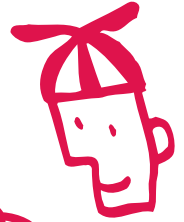
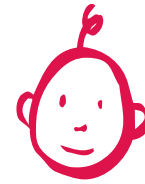




CBTF'S

Kidz Korner



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Kindness & Courage

An Interview with Erin Puck, Survivor on a Mission
By Zach Steinhorn

On a sweat-drenched afternoon in mid-July, the Holland Tunnel served as something more than just a gateway from a muggy city to the beaches of the Jersey Shore. On this day, the tunnel would function as a connection between two survivors. Riding through this passage-way of darkness, I looked forward to the enlightening experience of meeting fifteen year old Erin Puck, a fellow conqueror of a childhood brain tumor. As Erin shared her personal story, including how she founded a non-profit organization called "Toys.Calm," I could not help but identify with many of the feelings and innermost thoughts she conveyed.

Erin was only twelve when she started getting headaches. At the end of her sixth grade year, she began to get blackouts in the hallway.

"No one thought it was anything," she says. "They thought it was sinusitis, puberty, or allergies." All of these symptoms came to a head that August when Erin and a friend attend-

ed the annual "Firemen's Fair." After going on a few rides, she began to feel dizzy.

"My friend, who was like the biggest girl in the class, carried me home. It took me an hour to recover," Erin remembers. The last straw came when Erin started vomiting in the morning. That was when her family knew something was clearly wrong and they went to see a doctor in New York City. A CAT scan later, Erin was finally diagnosed with a medulloblastoma, one of

Hey Kidz!
We want your poems, drawings, stories, word games, recipes, etc. Anything that other kids will be interested in! Send your stuff to: CBTF, 274 Madison Avenue, Suite 1301, NYC 10016.

the most common childhood brain tumors. The next day, she underwent a successful surgery performed by Dr. Mark Souweidane of New York Hospital.

Erin brought a positive attitude to her treatment, which included radiation and chemotherapy. She praises Dr. Souweidane for helping her get through this difficult time.

"He always told you the truth. He didn't lie. He told you exactly what he was doing. He made me feel at ease," Erin says of him. She also remembers Margie, a friend from the neighborhood whose nephew's expe-



Jersey Girl: Erin Puck at home in Fair Haven, NJ

(Continued on page 2)

Kindness & Courage (continued)

erience with cancer motivated her to lend support to Erin and her family. Erin still smiles while talking about her meetings with Jon Bon Jovi and Lance Bass from 'NSYNC.

"The battle against cancer is a mental one," Erin says. "Positive people and experiences can really help." Erin believes that while on treatment, the hardest and most important thing for her was to keep her mind off what was happening.

"One thing I did was I watched *Cinderella*. I locked my doors and just watched it. I loved Legos. It was something that I could just do with my hands. I must've made like 300 Lego things. Whenever anyone asked me what I wanted, I said 'Just get me Legos.'"

When I asked her to describe any academic or social challenges she currently faces, Erin was quick to point out one thing.

"Well, all my friends are into basketball, and I used to be really good. I was a fast runner. But now, I get more tired. I'm not as fast, not as good. It is tough to deal with. Academically, I don't really have any problems. Social issues are the hardest part of recovery."

Although treatment often left Erin feeling sick, she did not fail to notice the discomfort of other young patients near her in the hospital. Dedicated to finding a way to help, she created Toys.Calm to help "calm a child's fears." Toys.Calm hopes to "bring toys and games to pediatric patients in area hospitals" in order to make hospitals more child-friendly. The other main reason she started Toys.Calm was to take the focus off herself. She does not want to be known as the kid who had cancer.

Erin looked to her school, church, and community as the initial source of support for her organization. Local newspaper publicity followed, and shortly after, people began dropping off bags of toys at the Pucks' front door. Erin's mom remembers a time when their entire

basement and living room was filled with toys to bag up and distribute throughout hospitals. When Toys.Calm makes their donations to hospitals, they simply drop off the toys and leave. This philosophy can be traced back to Erin's own experience while on treatment.

"Some people donated for the wrong reasons. They would come and give you toys, but would expect something in return. I was on treatment at the time, and they would expect you to go out of your way to thank them, and would look disappointed if you didn't. They wanted you to be all happy, and it just shouldn't be that way. I was like "Do you know how crappy I feel right now?" Other people were better. They would just come and leave toys on the bed, without saying anything. You should just want to help. No thank yous should be required. You should just want to make their day a little better."

A goal for the future of Toys.Calm is the establishment of a video phone system in hospital rooms. This will enable children to see and speak with their family and friends while alone in the hospital. In the meantime, Toys.Calm has donated several laptops to nearby hospitals, allowing kids to connect with their loved ones. Other goals include strengthening the network among survivors and their families, with a special focus on teenage survivors since Erin feels that there is not as much out there geared towards them.

As our interview neared its end and all of my factual questions had been answered, I decided to pose another question; one that was less tangible, but one that had been on my mind ever since my last day of treatment nine years ago. I asked Erin how her experience with cancer had affected her current outlook on life.

"I just don't have any patience for the phoniness. It makes me really focus on what matters. In a lot of ways, it makes life very simple. You can get rid of all the extraneous stuff and get on to what matters." A smile crept across my face as I knew exactly what Erin meant.

Erin's website can be found at www.toyscalm.org



FUN & GAMES!



Harry Potter wordsearch

Search for the following words from J.K Rowling's Harry Potter books. Good Luck! See funology.com for answers.

BLUDGER	HIPPOGRIFF	RAVENCLAW
BROOMSTICK	HOGWARTS	RIDDLE
BUCKBEAK	INVISIBILITY	RON
CRABBE	LUPIN	SCABBERS
CROOKSHANKS	MAGIC	SCAR
DEMENTORS	MALFOY	SEEKER
DOBBY	MCGONAGALL	SIRIUS
DUDLEY	MUGGLE	SLYTHERIN
DUMBLEDORE	NIMBUS	SNAPE
DURSLEYS	NORBERT	SNITCH
GILDEROY	OWL	SORCERER
GINNY	PEEVES	TREACLE
GOYLE	PERCY	VOLDEMORT
GRYFFINDOR	POTION	WEASLEY
HAGRID	POTTER	WEREWOLF
HARRY	QUIDDITCH	WIZARD
HEDWIG	QUIRREL	
HERMIONE	RAT	

Q U I D D I T C H P D U M B L E D O R E
 A U W R R I D D L E E Q S Y G H G Y W G
 P C I P O T I O N T P E R C Y N I B A I
 S B Z R M A L F O Y K B E K O O W B L N
 P I A S R T R E A C L E B R G R D O C N
 D U R S L E Y S X P S V B D W B E D N Y
 Z H D I L G L U P I N Y A E E E H S E I
 H E O Y U W I Q R I I E C M R R F K V N
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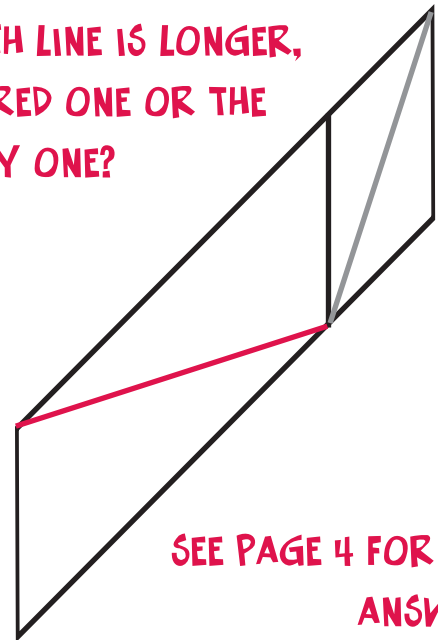
HOW TO BREAK A CARROT WITH A
 piece of paper!



Materials needed: One very thin carrot and a sheet of paper

1. Hold the carrot in one hand, and the piece of paper (folded in half) in the other hand.
2. Keep your index finger behind the paper so the audience doesn't see it.
3. Move the paper across the middle of the carrot, and break it by applying pressure with your finger (but don't let anyone see it!)
4. It will appear as if you broke the carrot with the piece of paper!

WHICH LINE IS LONGER,
 THE RED ONE OR THE
 GRAY ONE?



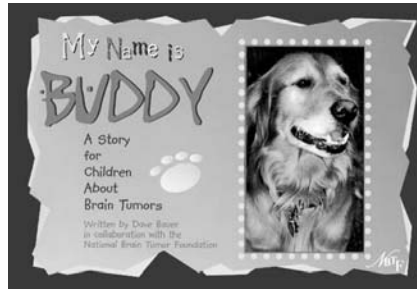
SEE PAGE 4 FOR THE
 ANSWER!

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My Name is Buddy

A Book Review by Karen Lopata

"I was a typical nine year old, until one day I just didn't feel so good." So begins *My Name is Buddy*, a book about a dog who has a brain tumor. "A dog?" you say to yourself as you read the previous sentence again to make sure your eyes aren't playing tricks on you. Despite the fact that the subject of the book is of a different species, *My Name is Buddy* is a cute little story which very clearly describes what it is like to go through treatment for a brain tumor.



Buddy tells the story in what seems like the voice of a young child. The story leaves room for readers to think about their own feelings instead of always telling them how Buddy feels. Kids who are dog lovers will immediately gravitate towards the story. They will enjoy hearing about how their favorite animal went through the same thing they are going through, and even triumphed over his cancer.

My favorite part of the book was when Buddy had to have a CAT scan. "Cat scan?" he exclaims. "But I'm a dog!"

Buddy successfully goes through surgery and then needs

to have radiation. The feelings that he describes having after surgery are especially about how other people view and react to him. This will definitely help prepare kids for how some people might treat them and will warn them that there is still a long road ahead past surgery.

The book might be a little too "fluffy" for older kids as it makes Buddy's experience with a brain tumor seem kind of simple.

To end the book, Buddy talks about the "heroes" whom he has met at various places. The heroes are children who have survived brain tumors and they are pictured with Buddy. I am sure that once kids see some *humans* who are in the same situation, they will feel less lonely and will be filled with positive hope for their own futures.

For information on how to get *My Name is Buddy*, please contact the National Brain Tumor Foundation at 800.934.2873 or www.braintumor.org.

Karen Lopata is a student at Columbia University who was a summer intern at CBTF.

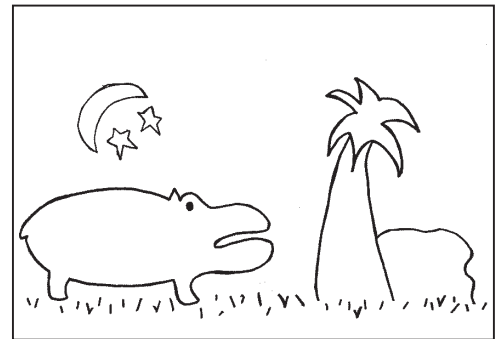
Answer: The red line and the gray line are exactly the same length!

Three Friends in "Hippo's Nightmare" by Jeremy Shatan color us in!

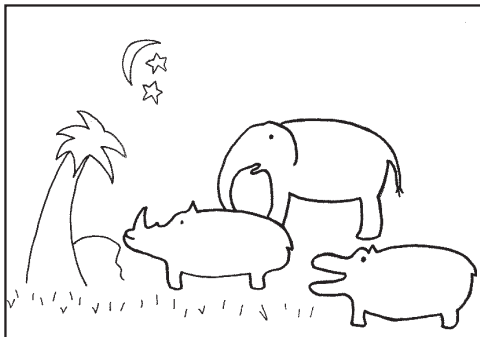
ONE NIGHT AS HIPPO SLEPT, HE DREAMT OF BEING CHASED BY AN ANGRY HIPPO.



WHEN HE WOKE UP, HE THOUGHT HE SAW THE ANGRY HIPPO THROUGH THE TREES!



HE WOKE UP RHINO AND ELEPHANT. RHINO WENT RIGHT UP TO THE ANGRY HIPPO BUT IT WAS JUST A ROCK!



FROM THEN ON, HIPPO, RHINO AND ELEPHANT SLEPT CLOSE TOGETHER. NIGHT-NIGHT, THREE FRIENDS!

