

## Brave Soldiers

by

Vanessa Bruce Ingold, as told by Amy Koerth

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A few precious little comrades, helped by military men, hurriedly climb into the Hummer. Wide-eyed with excitement, the young warriors allow their faces to be camouflage—painted by their Army champs. Gathered around fatigue—dressed soldiers, the remaining tykes take turns examining an unloaded rifle ... No, this is not the scene of juvenile boot camp. It is "I.V. League," a support group for boys and girls who are battling Leukemia.

The Army National Guard of Fullerton, California, is among the groups that have signed on to cheer and encourage the courageous children of the I.V. League, a support group for families of children fighting cancer. Policemen, firemen and paramedics have also participated.

*I.V. League*—so named because the children must wear an I.V. each day— began after Founder Amy Koerth's 3 1/2 year-old-son, Kyle, became sick in May 2001. He was vomiting and had a low—grade fever, Amy recalls. She nursed him and prayed for recovery, but after three days Kyle was still sick.

With Kyle's pediatrician out of town, Amy brought her son to a nurse practitioner, who determined that he had the flu. But two weeks later Kyle still had not recovered.

"I sent my husband Kurt and my 11-month-old daughter Kendra off to church," remembers Amy. "While Kyle slept I poured out my heart to God." Amy prayed the prayer of James 1:5, "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him."

With tears running down her face, Amy heard God whisper, "Leukemia."

"No, Lord." She rose, got her child-care book, and looked up Leukemia. *Kyle only has two of the symptoms*, she thought. *I won't panic.*

A few days later, Amy took Kyle back to the doctor's office. "He looks like he has the flu," the pediatrician said.

Handing him her list of each time her son had vomited or experienced fever, Amy asked the doctor to check Kyle for leukemia, Kyle's pediatrician agreed to order a blood test.

As Amy and Kyle waited for the results of the test, they heard the doctor being paged. Amy was instructed to bring Kyle to his office immediately. Her heart began to pound as she saw tears filling the doctor's eyes.

"Take Kyle to the main hospital in Los Angeles," he said. "He needs blood as soon possible, and we need to run more tests." They would be testing Kyle for Leukemia.

As she walked to her car with Kyle, Amy thought of Joshua 1:9: "Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you, wherever you go."

*No, Lord, we can't do this, not my son.*

At home, Kurt reassured Amy that God was with them, and prayed before they all left for the hospital in Los Angeles.

That night, Kyle was given a blood transfusion and underwent a painful spinal tap and a bone marrow test.

Before dawn the next day, while Kurt and Kyle slept, Amy grabbed her Bible, shut herself in the bathroom and sat on the floor.

She felt she needed to love God with all of her mind, because her heart was anguished. *I want to react like Job of the Old Testament*, she thought. Job, having lost his wealth, health and family, instead of getting mad and running away from God, worshipped Him.

"Oh Lord, You're beautiful ..." she quietly sang. Reading Psalm 121 comforted her, and she was able to commit Kyle to God's care.

*I know You'll watch over us, God, and that You can protect Kyle. Maybe he's got an unusual viral strain; the doctor said that's possible.*

The next day was Sunday. Kurt, the pastor of Son Rise Christian Fellowship in Fullerton, asked the congregation to pray for Kyle. While he and Amy waited, the church devoted the service to singing and praying.

Finally, the doctor asked them to join him in a conference room. Amy recalls that the room was a cold white, with a big, brown table. "Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia," the doctor said. Amy's world stopped. She couldn't catch her breath. The doctor spoke for 30 minutes, but Amy heard nothing. Her husband sat nodding as tears poured down his face.

After the meeting was over, Amy asked Kurt to stay with Kyle. "I need to be alone," she said.

Then, "Why God?" she cried, flooding Him with all her sadness, fear, hurt and worry. But she remembered His promise, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" (Heb. 13:5).

"Thank You, Lord," she whispered, and went into Kyle's room to hold him.

"There's a war going on inside your body," Kurt told his son. "You'll have to be a brave soldier to fight and win. God will help you, and so will we."

"The good blood is fighting the bad blood," Kyle explained weakly during a hospital visit.

Amy and Kurt were determined that the battle would make them better, not bitter, and vowed to do everything possible to promote a sense of normalcy for Kyle. When chemotherapy caused Kyle to lose his hair, Kurt shaved his head. Even Kyle's little sister Kendra helped with simple routines such as flushing her brother's I.V. Friends and family contributed home—cooked meals, gave generous monetary gifts and helped with house cleaning. The Koerths felt overwhelmed by love.

To calm Kyle during his spinal taps, Amy sang *Rejoice, The Lord Is King; Jesus Loves Me; and Awesome God*. Staff members began to sing along.

Kyle's leukemia specialist, seeing how Amy comforted parents whose children had received similar diagnoses, asked her to help prepare families for upcoming difficulties.

He suggested she start a support group, and I.V. League was born. Bimonthly meetings include the whole family and are held at Son Rise Christian Fellowship Church.

While children play in the supervised kids' room, parents meet in the main sanctuary and share practical advice, such as adjusting children to a crucial low—bacteria diet. Amy relays helpful information from the area's closest chapter of The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society.

A few months after Kyle began chemotherapy, steroids were injected into his upper thighs, causing him to gain weight. His legs became extremely sore and he had to use a walker. Life—threatening complications required hospital care. Near the end of his 10—day stay, he stabilized. He stood with his walker, his smile one of joy and peace. Amy took his picture, and printed it as part of a “thank you” letter for loved ones. Kyle's optimistic attitude encouraged many.

“What do you want me to write under your picture?” Amy asked him.

“Tell them I'm chubby and I can walk,” he answered.

Today, at age 6 and a half, Kyle outruns most adults! The Make A Wish Foundation photographed him with a full head of hair and big, confident, brown eyes. His picture was used in the foundation's calendar, and the Koerths were treated to Kyle's dream vacation at Disney World.

Kyle still dreams. Strong and brave in his army green t-shirt, he says he wants to be a soldier when he grows up. He can handle anything. After all, he can swallow nine pills at a time!

Kyle recently completed his final chemo treatment, and his health continues to improve.

“None of us are promised tomorrow,” says Amy. “Kyle has an 85 percent chance of surviving. I pray for his healing every day. But one thing is certain, if he's not healed in this life, he will be healed eternally when he enters heaven.”

### **Update:**

Today, Kyle is still in remission! PTL!

### **Contact:**

Although *I.V. League* is no longer is a group, you may visit Son Rise Christian Fellowship. Go to <http://www.sonrisecf.org/> for their address, phone number, or directions.

