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Midtown parents' book shares the story of a son's devastating diagnosis

'The Boy Who Can' and his companion dog now a fixture in their neighbourhood

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Being a parent has more than its share of pitfalls and challenges, but few received the shock midtown Toronto parents Marcy White and Andrew Trossman received shortly after the birth of their son, Jacob.

Jacob was diagnosed with Pelizaeus-Merzbacher Disease (PMD), a rare neurodegenerative disease in which motor skills, coordination and intellectual abilities slowly deteriorate.

As a result of PMD, Jacob, now 11, has no control of his head, cannot walk or speak and must be fed through a tube directly into his stomach.

White has outlined the journey the family, which in addition to the now 11-year-old Jacob now includes twin nine-year-old sisters Sierra and Jamie, has taken in the recently-published memoir *The Boy Who Can: The Jacob Trossman Story*.

"I hope the book gives people hope and strength for whatever adversity they're facing," White said.

The first-time author added she also wrote the book because, as parents, she and her husband learned best from hearing the stories shared by other parents and because she wanted to get Jacob's story out there for doctors, caregivers and educators to read.

While *The Boy Who Can* does not sugarcoat some of the difficulties the family has faced, it provides an uplifting view after a devastating diagnosis, starting with the three months Jacob spent in hospital after being born up to his 10th birthday.

"There are plenty of hard things to deal with, but there's so much good," White said. "If my child can just lift a toy, in my world, in the world with a child with special needs, that's so, so huge to us."

White's memoir includes many major milestones, all of which White was present for.

"I used to work in the mutual fund industry and was just going to take a three-month leave when Jacob was born," she said. "I haven't gone back since because no one's going to be able to fight for him like I can."

The family has received help along the way, not only from doctors and professional caregivers but from a group of local teens from a nearby high school.

"There's a whole community of girls now that we refer to as Jacob's princesses," White said. "They're young girls who act as volunteer caregivers and they just love spending time with him."

The Boy Who Could will hopefully raise awareness of PMD, something White said is necessary in making progress against the disorder.

In 2007, the family started up www.curepmd.com, (<http://www.curepmd.com>), a website that has raised roughly \$100,000 toward PMD research.

"We found there was very little going on in the PMD research world," White said. "Right now, there's very exciting work coming out of California with stem cells, so that's hopefully going to lead to really good news."

The Trossman-White family has lived in the midtown area since Jacob was born, first into one home and then into a more accessible house to meet Jacob's needs. These days, he is well-known in his neighbourhood, as he makes his way around with his companion dog.

"More people know him in our area than know us," White said.

The Boy Who Can is available at major book retailers or online at www.theboywhocan.com (<http://www.theboywhocan.com>)



Marcy White and her son Jacob Trossman, who was diagnosed with Pelizaeus-Merzbacher Disease (PMD), a rare neurodegenerative disease. White authored 'The Boy Who Can', which looks at the difficulties Jacob and his family faced.