

By Jane McBride Choate

(Based on a true story)

I will seek good friends and treat others kindly

(My Gospel Standards).

Joel stopped by Brandon's house on the way home from school. Brandon had been diagnosed with cancer a year ago, and now he had home school because his treatments made him weak. Brandon also had to stop playing on their baseball team. School and baseball practice just weren't the same without him.

Brandon's mom answered the door. "Thank you for coming, Joel," she said. "Some of Brandon's friends don't visit anymore. I think they feel uncomfortable."

Joel looked down at his feet. He hadn't visited Brandon for a few weeks. Then he ducked into Brandon's room.

Brandon's face brightened when he saw Joel. "Thanks for coming," he said.

"No problem," Joel said. "How are you feeling?"

"Not too bad. The chemotherapy makes me tired, but the worst thing is having to wear this hat all the

time." Brandon pulled off his baseball cap to reveal his bald head.

"Did the chemotherapy do that?" Joel asked.

Brandon nodded.

"That's rough."

Brandon rubbed his head. "Actually, it's pretty smooth."

Joel grinned. Brandon had a great sense of humor. He'd even kept it through his sickness and all the hard treatments.

Joel stayed until he could tell Brandon was getting tired. As he walked home, Joel thought about how he could help his friend feel better. He took off his baseball cap and looked at it. He remembered how excited he and Brandon had been when they'd gotten their team hats. Now Brandon wore his all the time to cover his head.

Joel had an idea. He smiled as he hurried home to share it with his mom.

"Are you sure?" Mom asked when Joel told her his plan.

Joel nodded. "That way Brandon won't feel so alone,"

Joel wants to help his sick friend. How can he bring his baseball team together to do it?

BALD

HEADS

and



he said. "I need to talk with the rest of the team."

The next day Joel and his teammates went to Brandon's house.

When they walked into Brandon's room, Joel could tell it had been a bad day for his friend. Brandon's freckles stood out on his pale face.

"Guess what?" Joel asked.

Brandon gave a tired smile. "I'm not really in the mood for guessing games today."

"We're getting our heads shaved."

Brandon stared at the boys. "Why?"

"We thought it'd be cool," Joel said. "And teammates stick together."

On Saturday the team gathered at Brandon's house. Brandon's dad set a stool in the front yard. Joel was first in line. He grinned nervously as Brandon's dad shaved off hunks of hair.

"All done," Brandon's dad said. "Next!"

All the boys on the baseball team had their heads shaved.

"It feels a little funny," Todd said, rubbing his head.

Everyone laughed.

"You guys are the best,"

Brandon said. He was smiling too, even though he had tears in his eyes.

Joel punched Brandon lightly on the shoulder. "Well, you're our best pitcher," he said. "We hope you're back soon, helping us win!"

At school my friends and I were playing on the playground. A boy asked if he could play with us. Everyone said no because there was no room for him. I got out so he could take my spot. The other kids started to leave because they didn't want to play with the boy, but I stayed to play with him. I felt really happy.

**Koa B., age 10,
California**



BUDDIES

