Walt Disney World News

CR – Compassion – Andy’s Wish to Thrill

Roller coasters provide a few moments of bliss for thrill-seekers all over the world. Once the ride is over, all that is left is a memory and a hope to ride that coaster again in the future. For 17-year-old Andy of North Huntingdon, PA, that memory and hope became a passion. Not just for riding roller coasters, but for designing them. So when Andy and his family ventured off to*Walt Disney World* Resort for his wish, he was not looking forward to meeting a specific character or seeing a big celebrity. Andy was going to meet a celebrity in his own mind, a Disney Imagineer.

Andy could hardly sleep the night before his big day. When the day finally arrived, he was escorted through the cast member entrance of *Disney’s Animal Kingdom*

and quickly approached the construction site of Disney's newest roller coaster, *Expedition Everest: Legend of the Forbidden Mountain*. Waiting to meet Andy was Imagineer Mike Lentz, project manager who oversees construction and development of this latest attraction.. Instantly, Andy felt Mike was excited to grant his wish and felt comfortable talking with him.

After putting on hard hats, Mike led Andy into the construction site and began the tour by explaining the story behind the attraction. Mike would point out details along the way that left Andy spellbound by the amount of work and planning that went into this roller coaster. Mike then took Andy inside the mountain and they began climbing several flights of steps that had Andy wondering where they were going. When the steps stopped, Andy realized he was standing on the roller coaster track. As Andy was hitting the peak of his excitement, he realized

that his two-hour tour was almost over. Mike gave Andy an official *Expedition Everest* 2005 construction crew t-shirt which was his most prized souvenir.

While going through his treatments for Hodgkin's disease, Andy had fantasized constantly about his wish. Andy admits now that the tour Mike gave him was more fantastic than anything he could have imagined. He is now looking forward to the day when he can ride *Expedition Everest*; however, Andy already has his next wish already lined up – to be an Imagineer himself.   Andy knows that will take a lot of hard work on his part to make that happen. Luckily, he now knows that his dreams really can come true.