



Nick and his prosthetist, John Rbeinstein, CP

by Abbey Smith

*Nick Springer has a bright future ahead of him. He's only 17, but after living through more adversity than most people do in a lifetime, he's ready to live his life to the fullest and take nothing for granted.*

When he was 14, he contracted meningococcal meningitis while at summer camp in western Massachusetts. Although the deadly bacteria is usually fatal within the first 36 hours after a person is exposed to it, Nick miraculously survived, but not before his legs right above his knees and his arms below his elbows had been amputated to save his life.

During a tedious rehabilitation process, Nick was able to relearn how to complete everyday tasks. He also received prosthetic limbs to make getting around much easier. And when he was old enough, he had hand controls placed in his car and has been cruising around his hometown near New York City ever since.

With an easygoing personality and charming smile, Nick has nothing but a positive outlook on life. "I told myself that I had to get over this," Nick explains. "I just don't see myself as being disabled."

When Nick isn't at home hanging out with his friends or listening to his favorite band, *Sublime*, he can be found on the hockey rink. Influenced by his favorite National Hockey League (NHL) player, Adam Graves of the San Jose Sharks, Nick

competes in sled hockey and has had the opportunity to play with Graves since having his amputation. He uses prosthetic arms that have custom-made hockey sticks on the ends and has a specially designed sled that enables him to move around the ice easily. Nick is also involved in other sports like rugby, snowboarding and swimming. He's even thinking about becoming a catcher for a wheelchair softball team.

"I look at it this way," Nick says. "No matter if a person is missing one limb or all four limbs, that person is not disabled. Some people, like me, just have to find a different way of doing things."

Nick, who was a member of the first *youth inMotion* Advisory Board, has been able to help provide support to fellow amputees through outreach programs such as bio-fit, a targeted youth fitness program. While attending a bio-fit meeting in Atlanta last year, Nick was able to spend time with other amputees his age and encourage them with his positive attitude.

After graduating next year from Archbishop Stepinac High School in White Plains, New York, he plans to attend Boston



College or the University of Colorado at Boulder to pursue a career in writing. An international traveler, Nick has already been to Russia and Sweden, and he plans to go abroad just as soon as he gets another opportunity.

Up to any challenge, Nick hasn't let anything stand in his way, and he is ready to conquer the world. Armed with optimism and a drive for success, he will certainly prevail in anything he puts his mind to doing. e