

LOCAL

Peanuts a deadly snack for some

(Part One of a two-part series)

EMILY WEAVER

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For many, Mr. Peanut is a jovial fellow with his top hat, eye monocle and cane. But for children like Andrew D'Angelo he might as well be hiding poison under that hat.

Two-year-old Andrew is one of the growing numbers of children with the highest level of severe peanut allergy. For him, a simple nut could mean death. One touch, one breath of its dust or one mistaken ingestion could cause his airways to close as his small writhing body sinks into anaphylactic shock.

His mother, Michelle D'Angelo, said the family didn't know about his allergy until just a few months ago. She said they had tried to feed him a peanut cracker and a small amount of peanut butter before and he just wasn't interested. But the third time nuts graced his lips was an eye opener.

"A couple of weeks ago, we gave him a Peanut Butter Crisp cookie. He took one very tiny bite and within seconds he started salivating excessively, crying and saying 'hurts' and was putting his hands into his mouth as if he was trying to scratch it. What followed was vomiting, a rash on his face and chest and his upper lip swelling almost four times its normal

size. We were able to treat him with a dose of Benadryl immediately (per our physician's orders) and within an hour, his swelling started to go down," she said.

Once a blood test determined that Andrew has a Class 6 "life threatening" allergy to peanuts, she contacted the Kings Mountain church preschool he attended and asked if measures could be taken to secure the class as a "peanut-free zone." Her child's life depended on it. Both Andrew and his big sister Eleya had attended the church's Mother Morning Out preschool program. Sure that there would be no hesitation in their request, Michelle wrote a letter to parents explaining the issue. But parents never received the letter.

Michelle said, instead of asking parents not to send any peanut-laden products with their child to school, the board of directors decided instead that they would seclude Andrew during snack time when peanut products may be present.

Outraged and hurt, Michelle said they took Andrew out of the class. There are currently no laws requiring schools to establish a peanut-free environment for children like Andrew. Cleveland County Schools has voluntarily decided to not serve any peanut products in their lunch rooms, but students are not restricted on what they

bring from home.

Andrew's allergy is life-altering not only for him, but also for those around him. The whole family is on a peanut-free diet. The protein in the nuts that causes a reaction stays in the person's body, on their skin, in their sweat and saliva for up to four hours after digestion.

Their entire house in Kings Mountain is peanut-free. Even foods that may have been produced in a plant which has come in contact with nuts are stricken from their grocery lists. Trick-or-treating at random houses risks treats of dire consequences.

For parties, Michelle said she will probably fix the cupcakes and snacks that Andrew will eat. Ball games and restaurants where peanuts are scattered are off limits. The dust could be poisonous to Andrew.

For older children, she said it's easier for them to know what they can and cannot put in their mouths. But for a two-year-old whose mouth may be as adventurous as his hands, extra precautions must be taken. Michelle said Andrew's allergic reactions and sensitivity will grow more severe each time. She and her husband



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Andrew D'Angelo, 2, was recently diagnosed with a life-threatening allergy to peanuts after a scary reaction to a peanut butter cookie.

Philip keep an Epi-pen nearby for an emergency. When Andrew is old enough, he'll have to learn how to inject himself in a reaction.

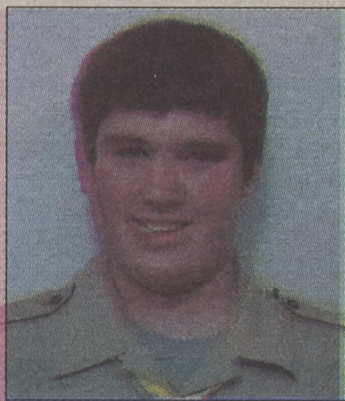
Aside from his deadly allergy, Andrew is a normal two-year-old. He tends to be a little shy around strangers and when he's asked to smile for the camera he raises his eyebrows instead of

the corners of his mouth. His youthful eyes seem to be flecked with wisdom beyond his years.

The D'Angelos found another preschool in Shelby, which does accommodate tykes with peanut allergies. Shelby Presbyterian's Rainbow Connection went peanut-free in January.

Announcement:

Jacob Allen Bridges has completed the requirements for and attained the rank of Eagle Scout.



Congratulations from: Mom and Dad, John, Whitney, Grammi, Grandmama and Granddaddy, and all of your family. Friends, brothers in scouting, members of Central United Methodist Church, and your family at The Kings Mountain Herald.



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