



FAST FRIENDS

by Heather M. O'Connor

illustrated by Claudia Dávila

Letter from the Author

Dear friends,

Have you ever wondered where stories come from? Some are completely made up. Others are inspired by real people or events, like *Fast Friends*.

The Suze in *Fast Friends* is my daughter Suze, with a few minor differences. Suze was never the new kid. She doesn't have a G-tube. And her wheelchair was always pink or purple. But she does love to go speedy-quick!

The big sister in the story is her sister Anne. But Tyson? He's made up.

A few years before Suze started kindergarten, our school board introduced inclusion. Suze was in a regular classroom at our neighbourhood school, instead of a special class or a special school.



This is Suze, her big sister and baby brother in our backyard.

There weren't any accessible playgrounds or wheelchair swings in those days. There weren't any automatic doors or ramps, either. But there were lots of caring students, teachers and educational assistants.

Suze had dozens of special friends like Tyson over the years. They wheeled her around at recess, read her countless books and included her in their projects and games.

More
photos of
Suze on
next page

They helped Suze a lot.
But Suze helped them too.
Her classmates learned to be thoughtful, empathetic and patient. They learned to look past wheelchairs and disabilities and treat people like people. Like Tyson, they busted down barriers and built bridges. I'll always be grateful.

Now it's your turn. You can be a friend like Tyson, too. Just smile and say "hi."

Happy reading!

Heather M. O'Connor



A trip to the zoo with a couple of friends



Suze's 4th birthday party