

# Edward “Chip” Anderson, Ph.D., 1942–2005

By Mark Pogue and Irene Burklund

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- 150,000 students:
  - 15 to 90 years old
  - high performing
  - special needs
  - culturally diverse
  - English as a second language
  - transitional students
  - returning learners
- 405 schools:
  - four-year public
  - four-year private
  - community college
  - high school

ON JULY 5, 2005, *StrengthsQuest* coauthor and teacher Chip Anderson passed away after a brave battle with cancer. Cancer may have taken Chip’s life but never his mission or his spirit...Chip won that battle. Even in the last days of his life, by sheer force of will Chip pushed strengths-based development for students into new areas. He was championing StrengthsQuest in high schools and intended to be the keynote speaker at a conference focused on K-12 educators, as well as coordinating the translation of the *StrengthsQuest* book into Spanish for students in Mexico for the state of Puebla. Mark had the opportunity to co-present with him at a conference at Lake Arrowhead in California. Because of a delay in receiving his chemo treatment, Chip was late in arriving at the conference center, which sits in the mountains at 10,000 feet. His lungs were fighting cancer and the high altitude, but he arrived in the afternoon and presented as long as the participants would listen, late into the night. No matter what obstacles he faced, his incredible passion was always

evident and he was always trying to help people know what amazing strengths they had.

Chip left a rich legacy as a herald of strengths and a master teacher. He made people believe in themselves and their talents, and truly changed the world in doing so. Those who speak about him talk about how wise, generous, and insightful he was.

Chip’s deep Belief talents and his faith in God and the strengths practice made a mark on everyone he encountered. Here, a few of Chip’s friends and colleagues talk about his unique and significant influence on the world.

## What made Chip special?

“Chip was special because of his unique ability to make others feel they were special. He saw talents and gifts in people and encouraged them to live up to their potential. He was single-minded in his focus on helping others — especially students — become the persons they were created to be. Each person who crossed his path was changed.”

—Laurie Schreiner, *Azusa Pacific University*

“What made Chip special was his unique, visionary thinking. He was a big-picture dreamer, about 20 years ahead of the rest of us! Because he refused to ‘think inside of the box’ he did not allow those he spent time with to ‘think inside of the box’ either. His ability to ‘push back the boundaries’ of how others saw themselves was truly special. He saw things in me that I never saw in myself! And he believed in me when I did not believe in myself!”

—Linda Cantwell, *Tabor College*

“Chip had boundless passion and enthusiasm.”

—*Tom Rath, Gallup*

“Chip woke up every day wanting to make a difference in people’s lives. He was passionate about sharing with others that they were created uniquely and for a purpose. He was passionate about his wife, Irma. Many of his stories were filled with wonderful examples of their love and care for each other. Chip’s personal transformation through his relationship with God was always inspiring as well.”

—*Eric Bryant, Mosaic Church*

“Chip was the most loving and accepting person.”

—*Debby White, Lee University*

“Chip always had a caring and positive attitude. He offered encouragement to others to reach for the stars and build on our strengths to achieve our goals. As the keynote presenter for the RHC Flex Day over a year ago, he received a standing ovation from faculty at the college. This was the first time that had occurred. Faculty reported that his presentation was the best thing they had heard ever!”

—*Lyla Eddington, Rio Hondo College*

### **How has Chip changed the world (and specifically, your corner of the world) or what is his greatest contribution to the world?**

“For me, Chip spoke hope and courage into my life. He saw things in me and shared them with me boldly and kindly. When I first took the StrengthsFinder assessment I was quite disappointed with the results. I approached Chip, wanting encouragement since I did not have any ‘thinking’

themes. His response to me: ‘Eric, you remind me of Michael Jordan playing baseball. Stop playing baseball and get onto the basketball court. Stop trying to be someone you are not and be the person you were created to be.’ I have applied these words to my life ever since.”

—*Eric Bryant, Mosaic Church*

“Chip’s greatest contribution was giving thousands of students a new lens through which to view the world.”

—*Tom Rath, Gallup*

“In my corner of the world — Azusa Pacific University — it’s as if he is still in the room. We keep expecting to see him coming down the hall lugging boxes of books and papers, saying ‘Hiya!’ to each office as he passes by. He has helped us see ourselves and others through those ‘strengths-colored glasses’ and to recognize how important it is for us to ask ‘what would we do if we really loved our students?’”

—*Laurie Schreiner, Azusa Pacific University*

“Chip certainly changed my corner of the world at Tabor College, because he changed the way my students viewed themselves and their potential because of strengths awareness. The ocean has become much closer to Kansas because of Chip. In his five short years of interacting with my students, these students have graduated and are in the ‘real world’ of work and influencing their organizations making hiring decisions based on strengths. These students are now also beginning to raise their young families seeing strengths in their children. Thus the ripple effect Chip so often spoke of has already begun!”

—*Linda Cantwell, Tabor College*

“Chip was truly a strengths-based friend, always encouraging me, pointing out my strengths. There were many times on my worst of days, he would call me and want to know what was going on...how he could pray for me. So much of what I do today is a reflection of Chip’s influence in my life. When I talk with students about their strengths, or present a strengths seminar to a group of educators, I hear Chip’s words coming out of my mouth. It’s an honor and a high privilege to carry on his legacy through the work that I do.”

—*Debby White, Lee University*

### **What will happen at your school or beyond because of Chip’s work with strengths?**

“Chip was a valuable contributor at Mosaic, our church in Los Angeles. He introduced hundreds of us to the idea of living out and maximizing our strengths. His legacy will live on as we continue to mobilize others using StrengthsQuest. The training we received from him carries on to this day.”

—*Eric Bryant, Mosaic Church*

“At APU the Academy for Strengths-Based Leadership and Education has come into existence because of him, and every single first-year student who walks through our doors learns about his or her strengths and is encouraged to achieve excellence by building their lives on that strengths foundation.”

—*Laurie Schreiner, Azusa Pacific University*

“The strengths revolution that Chip talked so often about will continue with individuals and institutions.”

—*Debby White, Lee University*

Chip made a difference in the lives of so many people. His incredible faith, love of his wife and family, and his passion to help others know about their greatest gifts was truly a rich and lasting legacy. His impact on students and educators has created a “strengths revolution” — and his work when he was alive was only the beginning. Those of us who worked with Chip feel a responsibility to continue, and know that we are only at the beginning of his vision for this revolution. StrengthsQuest has no choice but to move forward because that is the legacy Chip left it. Although we miss him, we still feel Chip’s encouragement and spirit moving us along even though he is no longer physically present.

A memorial fund has been established in honor of Chip Anderson’s strengths legacy at Azusa Pacific University, designated the Noel Academy for Strengths-Based Leadership and Education. We look forward to seeing his passion and spirit continue.