



STRONGER TOGETHER

Meet the Epilepsy Foundation of Colorado's Youth Council & Kids Kouncil

Kelsey Kraft



My name is Kelsey. I was diagnosed with absence seizures when I was 12 years old. Two years later I was also diagnosed with a mild case of Turner's Syndrome, a genetic disorder that only occurs in females. Turner's Syndrome has many symptoms, of all of them I have short stature, celiac disease (gluten, or wheat and flour allergy), and epilepsy. We were then told that it was gluten that was causing my seizures so I was put on a gluten free diet, and now today I take my two medications twice a day, eat gluten free, I have gotten my driver's license, and I have been seizure free for almost two years.

Larissa Grammar



Hello my name is Larissa. 10 years ago my family and I were in a very similar position as you. I was nine years old when I was diagnosed with epilepsy. When I was first diagnosed some parts of my life had changed. For about a year my mom slept in the same bed as me, since my seizures usually happened at night. Eventually she made her way to the floor, and once my seizures were controlled, she stopped sleeping in the same room as me. As a nine year old this was a challenge, but as time went on it changed. My parents took other precautions, such as always being in the same room as me if I showered. Despite the changes and difficulties I was like any other child, and my parents made that known. I was a gymnast and had been since I could remember. This didn't change once I was diagnosed. I carried on with life as normal, in gymnastics we would simply inform our coaches and tell them what to do if I had a seizure. In high school I made the transition to spring board diving, where once again I informed my coaches. We were always very upfront with everyone about my seizures, which at first may seem like it would make living a "normal" life impossible, but being upfront is what allowed me to live a normal life. In school I have always excelled and been in the top of my class. I loved learning. As I got older, school definitely became more difficult. There were days I just couldn't think or remember. But, my epilepsy was never an excuse not to do well, instead it just meant I had to work harder. I was upfront with my teachers, which is essential. Living with epilepsy hasn't impaired my life or given me a worse life by any means, something that seems to linger in anyone's mind when being diagnosed. I am currently going to the University of Denver, where I am studying biology and concentrating in neuroscience, and a member of the varsity dive team. That's a great accomplishment for anyone, with or without epilepsy. I just find my accomplishments that much more rewarding, knowing that I have done them, while living with epilepsy. Remember, you may have epilepsy, but it does not define you, you can still accomplish great things in life.

Zeth Schoenfeld



My name is Zeth Schoenfeld and I am on the Epilepsy Foundation of Colorado Youth Council. I live in Northeastern Colorado in a small town named Otis. I am 18 years old. I have had epilepsy for over five years and I have been seizure free for a little over three years. Don't lose hope of being seizure free as it can take some time to find the right medicines.

When I first found out that I had epilepsy, I worried about not being able to do certain things like play sports that I love or ever being able to drive. I have found out that having epilepsy doesn't mean you have to stop living or do the things you want to do. Epilepsy is just a condition where you take medicine and keep living your life as a normal person. Some people who do not understand epilepsy will make fun of you, but just ignore them. I also found that telling people about epilepsy helped them understand and then they didn't tease me as much anymore.

I am a senior this year and look forward to journeying out on my own next year. I am still undecided on the college I am going to attend but I do know that whatever career I chose that it will be helping others. I have been attending the Jason Fleishman camp for the past four years. This past year, I served as a junior counselor. The Jason Fleishman Camp is an awesome time. There are many fun activities. It would be great to see you there this summer! Take a look at the EFCO website and watch the videos.

Campbell Fisk



My name is Campbell Fisk and I am 11 years old. I was diagnosed with epilepsy when I was 3 years and 9 month old. Of course I do not remember all of this but my family does. I started out having 5-6 seizures a day and then they stopped as fast as they started when I was 4. I was seizure free for over 5 years until I was 9. Now I have been seizure free again for 8 months. I attended The Jason's Camp in 2013 and loved it! My camp counselors inspired me to be more active and talk more about my epilepsy and bring more awareness. I am new to the Kid Council this year (2013). I play hockey for Boulder Bison and this is my 5th year playing hockey. I love all sports and also play baseball in the spring for Thunder Baseball in Bromfield. I like school and love to play with my friends. I do not let my seizures stop me from doing what I like to do.

David Jensen



My name is David Jensen I am 21 years old and I have been living with epilepsy since I was 18 months. I have not let the fact that I have epilepsy dictate what I can or cannot do in life. The fact is this is my life and in the end I am the one who is responsible for the choices that I make in my life, no one else. I made the choices and that is something that I should be proud of no matter what the outcome because no one knows me better than me. I am taking responsibility for my life. It does not matter how hard the fall but it is how you rise from that fall that matters.

Ever since I was young some of my hobbies have always been athletics, photography, talking to people and making new friends. Later in my career when I was about 13 years of age I got involved with the "Epilepsy Foundation of Colorado" (EFCO) where I found myself getting the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Foundation at their annual Gala. At that point I realized I had one more thing I really enjoyed doing in life and that was public speaking! Nothing can help you get to know yourself more than opening up your mind and writing something about yourself while inspiring someone in the end.

Alexa Levine



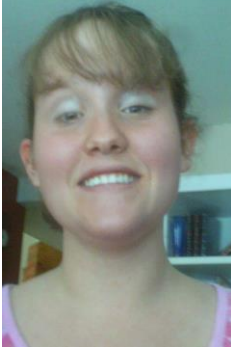
My name is Alexa Levine. I'm 16 years old and I live in Louisville, Colorado. When I was 13 months old I was climbing up a small brick wall and fell back and hit my head. My parents took me to a doctor and he said that I had a concussion, but I would be fine. When I was 5 I started to have Absence seizures, but at the time we did not know what was happening. When I was 7 I had a Tonic Clonic seizure that lasted over an hour and I was flown by helicopter to Children's Hospital. My neurologist immediately knew that the fall I had when I was young caused me to develop epilepsy. Right after the seizure I was really upset and had a "why me?" attitude. Over time I realized that epilepsy did not restrict me from doing the things that I wanted to do. I was not ashamed of my epilepsy and I have always embraced it. My neurologist has been very helpful over the years and I have been seizure-free since I was 10 years old. I recently joined the Youth Council for The Epilepsy Foundation and it has been amazing to talk to other kids who have epilepsy and who have had similar experiences as me. Having epilepsy has never stopped me from pursuing my goals. In fact, it has made me realize that I can overcome anything.

Delaney Tanner



My name is Delaney and I have had epilepsy since I was twelve. I am now sixteen and I go to Grandview High School. My life changed the day I was diagnosed with epilepsy, I still remember the first day someone noticed my Absence seizures and it wasn't just one person, it was my entire Spanish class. I was in my seventh grade Spanish class and I was telling a story and right during the middle of my story I simply stopped talking. My teacher tried to get my attention and so did my friends and when I was done spacing out everything went back to normal and no one thought anything of the staring spell. When the staring spells kept occurring, my mom deciding it was time to go to the doctor and they prescribed an EEG. I still remember the night before the EEG, my best friend stayed up with me, eating chocolate and watching movies, to make sure I was sleep deprived for the test. Finally, in the beginning of my freshman year the big hit happened. I had my first Tonic Clonic seizure on the floor in one of my classrooms. At first I thought I fell asleep in class and the teachers were waking me up, then when the ambulance was there I realized what had happened. Ever since that seizure I have been working with my fabulous neurologist, testing medications that work best for me, and trying to get my seizures under control. I certainly still live my life to the fullest and I definitely embrace my epilepsy. I wear it proudly and everyone that knows me knows I have epilepsy; it is something I would never be ashamed of. Epilepsy has brought so many good things and good people into my life.

Caitlyn Kerlee



Hello! My name is Caitlyn Kerlee and I'm a junior in high school and I live in Longmont, Colorado. I am a person who loves music and reading. I do my best in school and I am currently in the top 50% of my class at school. When I'm not busy playing my music for honor band or doing my homework for my psychology course at school you can find me with ear buds in at a quiet place reading a book. I also spend a lot of my time outside of school with different groups of people and I am a dedicated member of my church youth group. I am part of a Restorative Justice team which is a group of people who hold peaceful circles where people who have committed any wrongful acts have an opportunity to fix them. We help these people find a way to pay their "debt to society" or what we call "repair the harm that was done" without things like jail, suspension or expulsion.

The thing I most enjoy doing with my free time is working with the Epilepsy Foundation's Youth Council. I was diagnosed with epilepsy June 3, 2010 after I had been a serious accident with a mini-van. I was on my way home from volleyball practice when I suffered a traumatic brain injury which resulted in epilepsy. I am proud that I have received awards from the city of Longmont and other groups for turning this obstacle into a chance for me to grow as a person and experience new things and get involved with new groups. While this accident could have ruined my whole life if I had maintained a negative attitude, I focused on the positive and kept looking forward to the future. I always have looked for ways to use this challenge to help me grow as a person and better both myself and my future.