

Strength and Courage...

By Susan Wagner



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Strength and courage...my story

by Susan Wagner



For me, living with my epilepsy has provided me with so many opportunities to meet and connect with others, and to help those who have similar situations to mine. And, I have the Epilepsy Foundation of Michigan to thank for these chances.

At 19 years old, I've been able to take part in many different aspects of Camp Discovery, one of my favorite programs. I began as a junior counselor, and I have worked my way up to the position of counselor. It's something to behold when you can see a child with epilepsy make her way up to the top of the rock-climbing wall after several years of trying. To share in her joy and pride was an experience I'll never forget!

Activities and events like Camp Discovery help me understand and accept the fact that I'm not alone in living with my epilepsy. When I was young, my epilepsy affected me in such a different way than it does now. I thought I was the only child, anywhere, to experience seizures, but there's a great gift in learning that there are others out there who live a similar life.

Through the Epilepsy Foundation of Michigan, I have made numerous friends and I've come to understand that despite the fact that I will most likely never be seizure-free, I can live a full and promising life. The Foundation has taught me that we can all take part in advocacy work and spread awareness; the louder we speak, the more clearly we are heard.

I was honored to be named the 2009 Terrific Teen by the Foundation and to this day, I take that honor very seriously. There are only a handful of us who understand what it's like to live with epilepsy and I'm committed to helping other teens like me understand that they don't have to be alone.

There are other programs that we can all take part in that help us understand and accept. The Wellness & Epilepsy Conference, held each November, is a fantastic event that can really help those of us with epilepsy, young and old, identify with the challenges and struggles.

I consider talking with and meeting other teens and adults and young children, a gift of learning and experience. I am so grateful to be involved with the Epilepsy Foundation of Michigan. My involvement makes my life much brighter and it also helps my family.

I hope you'll join me, and others, as we pledge to continue our support of this wonderful organization. If you can donate funding or your volunteer time, know that you make a difference in so many lives. Without the Epilepsy Foundation of Michigan, my life with epilepsy would not be this complete, and I want to make sure this organization is around for many years to come!

Warm regards,

Susan Wagner

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from the President

What a year it has been!

Truly, that's how the staff of the Epilepsy Foundation of Michigan is looking back on 2011. This is the time of year we reflect on the impact we've made on those nearly 100,000 people in Michigan who live with epilepsy.

We held some incredibly successful programs and events in 2011, from our four Summer Stroll for Epilepsy Events to Camp Discovery, to the launch of our first-ever Toasting Hope Wine Tasting event in West Michigan. And, we just recently wrapped up our annual Wellness & Epilepsy Conference. I'm proud of everything we have done this year to bring those who live with epilepsy and their families and caregivers, together by promoting knowledge and advocacy.

In this year-end newsletter, you will meet one of our shining stars here at the Epilepsy Foundation of Michigan. Susan Wagner is a bright young woman who has made the conscious decision to make the most of her life with epilepsy. She is a positive example to all of us that participation in events and activities allows you to bond with others who live with epilepsy.

I like to relay positive feedback to you as we continue to work hard on our advocacy and our programs. This was a Facebook post just a couple of months ago:

"What more can I say, but thank you. Living with epilepsy is clearly difficult, from the acceptance issues to the side effects of my medication, but the Foundation provides me with an outlet and a way to see my life in a different light. You are my friends and my family, and I am forever grateful!"

This holiday season, please help us continue our efforts to promote advocacy and find a cure, through our programs and events. We cherish your support and your dedication. My promise to you is that we will never stop fighting for research dollars, advocacy programs and support, and we hope you will continue to join us in this fight!

All the best,



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Questions or other ideas to share? Please contact Brianna Romines at (800) 377-6226



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THE EPILEPSY FOUNDATION OF MICHIGAN CAN CHANGE LIVES...WITH YOUR HELP!

We asked our supporters to tell us what some of our programs and events have meant to them over the year.

"Camp Discovery changed my life! For just five days, I was able to be a regular girl, ready to take on life. No one was looking at me as if I was about to have a seizure. There's something so great about being treated like every other kid in the world"

"The Summer Stroll for Epilepsy™ at the Detroit Zoo always chokes me up! I look around and each and every person participating in that event has a connection to epilepsy and they share my hope that some day, there will be a cure. It doesn't matter if you are young or old, the Stroll brings us all together in this fight to raise awareness and find a cure."

"I was thrilled with Marion Clignet's presentation at the **Wellness & Epilepsy Conference**. Just when my daughter begins to feel so down, as if she can't accomplish anything with her epilepsy, you lift us up with a speaker like Marion. It means we're not alone in the battle against epilepsy. I'm grateful for the support & teaching tools you have available to us."

"I had never called before, but my husband encouraged me to dial in to one of the **Learn & Share Conference Calls**, the July Stress Management program. I was so impressed with the discussion and the amount of information I received. More than anything, it was good to hear that others also lived with stress, along with their seizures. I'm a frequent caller now, just knowing that I can share my questions and my experiences makes a big difference in how I live my life."

"I always seem to make a new friend or two when I attend an **EEG Event** or one of your **Open Houses**. You provide me with a great way to make connections and form bonds with others who live with epilepsy."

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FUTURE GENERATIONS CAN BENEFIT FROM YOUR GENEROSITY AND PLANNING!
Please consider leaving a bequest or beneficiary designation in your will for the Epilepsy Foundation of Michigan. Leaving a legacy gift will ensure that the Foundation will always be here to help individuals touched by Epilepsy. Thank you!
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