



Faces of the Foundation

As a seventeen year old living with epilepsy, Erin Vander Pas, is eager to demonstrate her passion, commitment, and enthusiasm towards those living with epilepsy, as well as the Epilepsy Foundation of Greater Chicago. This year, Erin has been selected to represent the foundation at the annual Kids Speak Up! Conference in March. She will be traveling to Washington, DC to personally address the latest issues surrounding the epilepsy community with her congressional representatives.

Erin was diagnosed with epilepsy when she was three years old. Even though Erin's seizures are now under control, the side effects from her medications are a daily struggle. Growing up with epilepsy did not make Erin's life any easier, either. She was often made fun of and ridiculed. Because of those experiences, however, Erin has emerged as a stronger person who works continuously to help other children living with epilepsy.

"During middle school, the students were very mean to me. They wouldn't even sit by me at lunch," Erin recalls. "So I worked with the principal to find an organization to help students understand what I was going through."

Erin and her principal found the Epilepsy Foundation of Greater Chicago and had Tracy Schultz, the Director of Education give a presentation about epilepsy to the school. After meeting Tracy, Erin began coming to Foundation events such as Camp Blackhawk and Teen Group.

As Erin's involvement in the Foundation's activities continued to grow over time, she decided to "give it her all" and take a stand to support its services. Last year, Erin submitted the Epilepsy Foundation of Greater Chicago as a candidate to win \$40,000 for a community-wide high-school sponsored fundraiser. This required her to present on behalf of the Foundation and demonstrate why it was deserving of the funds. The Epilepsy Foundation finished in a very close second place and is extremely proud of what Erin accomplished. She also plans to nominate the Foundation again this year and we could not be more please to have someone like Erin representing the face of our organization.

With an eye on advocacy and public speaking as a future career, her enthusiasm and commitment are just what is needed to grab the attention of the politicians she will face at the Kids Speak Up! Conference. Thrilled about the possibility of going to Washington, DC, Erin and her family are looking forward to helping us make a real and tangible difference for people living with epilepsy across the country.