

# teen *inside* MS

## See What's Inside

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- *National MS Society Scholarship*
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- *Young Persons with MS Network*
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# Strange thing

## MS's impact on my life

By Luke Byers

*To a child of 7, multiple sclerosis is a couple of words that are really hard to pronounce with no real meaning. To a boy of 14, the words might scare. To a man of 18, the words represent a challenge, a hope, and an inescapable part of his life.*

### A child

I consider it nothing more than another unique feature of my mother's life, which might have no detrimental effects. I watch her in the garden planting and culti-

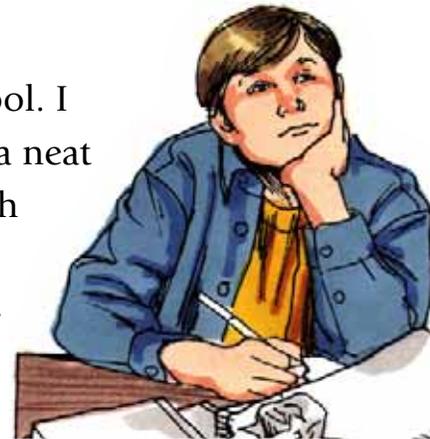
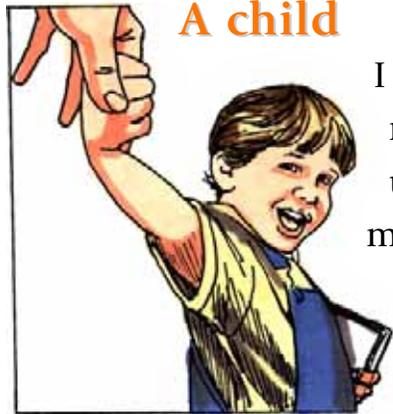
vating all sorts of plants, everything from carrots and cucumbers to an interesting pumpkin wigwam. She absolutely loves the garden and the backyard. A few years pass. I see she is starting to limp a little and doesn't seem to be able to get around quite as fast as she used to. At first I think she might have hurt herself. Oddly enough, I am not so far from the truth. MS is affecting her and slowing her down. Being the strong-willed woman she is, though, she does not let this get her down. She gives my

brother and me a few more responsibilities—such as vacuuming the house. She is beginning to come to grips with what MS can do.

### A boy

I reach middle school. I decide it would be a neat idea to do a research paper on the nervous system and various ailments.

Oddly enough, it turns out my teacher who helps me with the paper also has MS. Her MS is in remission. This paper and the personal interview I have with her reveal my mother's disease. I hear from my teacher what MS can do. From my research, I find there is no cure. The scientific community is trying to figure out what causes MS. This is something that sits in the back of my mind.

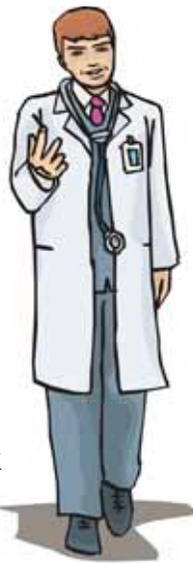


## A man



I am 18. "Bright eyed and bushy tailed"—so my family says. Getting ready to graduate from high school and make something of myself.

The fact of MS being this mystery is something that's still on my mind. I now watch MS and what it can do to a person. Now I have chosen to try to help others like my mother cope with their ailments by becoming a neurologist. I am fascinated with the workings and mysteries of the human body. This area of study is both comfortable and very familiar to me. I don't go into this with the naïve view that I am going to conquer this disease with one hand tied behind my back. I do go into the field hoping to provide a helping hand, informing patients with various neurological disorders of their options and hopefully contributing what I can to finding a cure for some of these ailments.



Strange thing multiple sclerosis is. 🌿

# National MS Society 2006 Scholarships

Applications will be available beginning in October. The Scholarship program is open to:

- High school seniors who have MS who will be attending an accredited post secondary school for the first time.
- High school seniors who have a parent with MS who will be attending an accredited post secondary school for the first time.
- High school (or GED) graduates of any age who have MS and have never attended college, who will be attending an accredited post secondary school for the first time.

Scholarship applications will be accepted between January 1 and February 15, 2006.

For more information or to download the application (beginning in October), go to [www.nationalmssociety.org/scholarship.asp](http://www.nationalmssociety.org/scholarship.asp), or call your local chapter at 1-800-FIGHT-MS.

# *"My Life" Photography Contest*

## **Grand Prize Winner**



**Ben Herold, age 17**

# Runners-up



**Andrew Staley, age 19**



**Samantha Staley, age 19**



**Craig Schenker, age 19**



**Anna Friedland, age 19**

# Runners-up



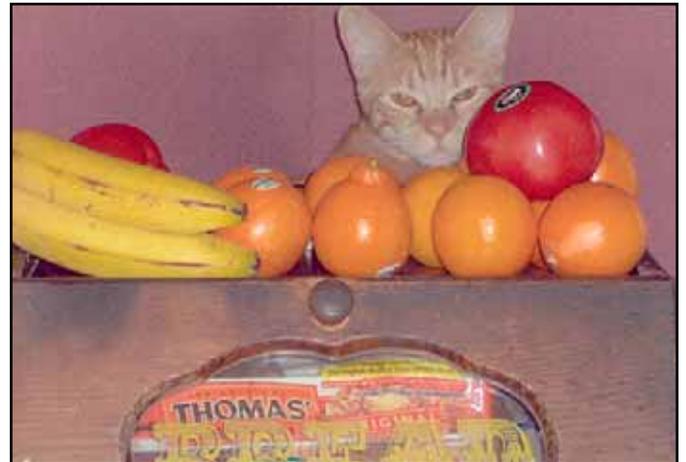
Yael Maxwell, age 17



Emily Kiraly, age 15



Matthew Zimmerman, age 14



Roseanne Marie Bonevich,  
age 16

## Additional Runners-Up

Patrick Lunczynski  
John Moore

Many thanks to  
our judges and  
advisors:  
David Godlis  
Bill Rosen  
Andrea Furey

# Attitude is EVERYTHING

by Megan Schaaf

"You have multiple sclerosis," said my cute, freckled faced neurologist. He confirmed what I already knew. He looked at me as I sat with my parents in a cold doctor's office, the walls covered with informational posters about all kinds of neurological diseases. There were no posters about MS on the walls, but I knew what it was, and I knew what it did to people.

My brain had lesions. These lesions were causing my right leg to go numb. I knew it was true. I myself had seen the MRI results. I tried to put everything into perspective. I began to think about my life, everything I wanted to make of it and the way I wanted it to be. I hoped to be a mom, a teacher, and a hero. How could I be what I wanted if my fate contained a wheelchair and loss of memory?

"Attitude is everything," I heard my doctor say. Ignoring him, I glanced over at my parents. They sat with tears in their eyes and I knew that this was not going to be a joy ride. My doctor began to talk about treatment. He told me I was going to have to give myself a shot. I felt my body stop. I looked at him with fear. I was scared of shots and not willing to inflict pain upon myself. I wanted to crawl under a rock.

It was like being hit, then hit again, knocked down, and knocked down again, all within a matter of minutes.

My doctor handed us information about some disease-modifying drugs. They were modifiers, not cures. Thoughts continued to travel through my head. What am I going to tell people? Am I going to die?

Walking out, I noticed a few people sitting in the room. I wanted to tell them my fate. I wanted to scream that I was just diagnosed with a chronic disease. I kept quiet and

walked out the door. Everyone I passed did not know. I thought they should. I wanted them to know. Maybe if they knew I would not have to tell them later. I would not have to describe it to them. They would already know why I was not able to walk without stumbling. I wanted the world to know.

I felt weak, like falling over. I wanted

*"Everyone I passed did not know. I thought they should. I wanted them to know."*

## *Attitude is Everything (continued)*

to cry, but I had to stay strong for my parents.

Stepping into the small elevator, I thought about my doctor's words, "Attitude is everything." My thoughts shifted from negative to positive. Maybe I could do something about this damn MS. Stop being a baby I told myself. I needed to get through this, even if I did cry a little bit, or a lot for that matter. I was a strong person with will power.

*"I was going to have a good life with or without multiple sclerosis."*

I stepped out of the elevator and out the door onto the pavement. I looked outside and the world was the same. The sun was shining. I was going home to

call my best friend. He and I were going to have fun, without worrying about MS overtaking my life. I was going to continue. I was going to have a good life with or without multiple sclerosis.

Calling my friend, I told him what happened. He reassured me that he would always be there for me. We talked for hours. I knew then, I was not going to be overtaken. MS may be a part of me, but it is not who I am and what I can become. I will be a mom, a teacher, and hero. 

## **Young Persons with MS: A Network for Families with a Child or Teen with MS**

A support network that provides multiple program options for families living with a child or teen diagnosed with MS. The network targets two distinct populations:

- Children with MS (Under 21)
- Parents of a child or teen with MS

Contact the Program Coordinator, Toll free: 1-866-KIDS W MS (1-866-543-7967); or send an e-mail to [childhoodms@nmss.org](mailto:childhoodms@nmss.org). U.S. residents can also contact your Society chapter. Toll-free: 1-800-FIGHT MS.

### **A message from Dr. Lauren Krupp, director of the National Pediatric MS Center at Stony Brook, New York:**

"MS is typically diagnosed in adults, but children as young as two have developed it. In our center, 95% of the children and teens with MS do not have a parent with MS. It is critically important for adults with MS not to think that their children are at risk.

"It is just as vital for young adults who have a parent with MS not to think that they are at risk. Genetics plays a very small role in making a person susceptible to MS."



## Waiting on the Edge

It all began with one phone call September 02, 2001. I was fifteen, just beginning my sophomore year of high school. It was a beautiful Sunday morning of Labor Day weekend. My brother and I were getting ready to go out to our lake property with some friends. My parents were getting ready to take my little sister to her summer league basketball games.

I was talking to my friend Monica on the phone when someone beeped in on the other line.

"Monica, can you hold on a minute? I've got another call."

"Sure," she replied.

I clicked over to the other line. "Hello?"

"Hello! May I please speak with Mr. or Mrs. Thiessen?" the unknown caller asked.

"Yeah, may I ask who's calling?" I replied.

"Um . . . Yes, Dr. Bulky."

Hearing those words made my heart drop a thousand feet. I told Monica that I'd call her back later. Why would Dr. Bulky be calling me on a Sunday, let alone a holiday? I kept thinking to myself. After handing the phone to my mom, I walked back to my room where my sister, brother, and his friend Dan were waiting.

While waiting, no one spoke. We were all

trying to listen in on the conversation. The silence grew and I could feel the puddles of sweat dripping from my hands. I couldn't take the suspense any longer so I just began packing for the lake. My sister and brother left the room. Dan stayed. After a while I couldn't handle knowing

that my whole life was on the other side of the wall. I walked to the kitchen. I saw my dad sitting at the end of the island and my mom sitting at the other end of the dining room, listening on their phones, crying.

Seconds later I heard the answer to my unasked question. "Yeah, her aunt has it," my mom said. Right then I knew. My brother and sister held me as I cried.

Eventually my parents got off the phone. My dad told me, "Adriane, everything is going to be okay. Honey, they got your results back from your MRI and it's multiple sclerosis."

My mom added, "They found four lesions on your brain and one on your spinal cord."

As a 15-year-old teenager I was confused. I am now a 19-year-old college student. I look back and realize that scary as it was, I wasn't alone. I realized that even though none of my friends will ever understand or let alone know what MS is, with my family by my side, I am full of HOPE! 🐾



## **Talk to us and other teens about MS!**

**Send us your letters, stories, poetry, photos and art. E-mail: [editor@nmss.org](mailto:editor@nmss.org). Mail to: Teen InsideMS, National MS Society, 733 Third Avenue, NY 10017-3288.**

**Please send artwork (photographs, cartoons, drawings, or pictures) via e-mail or on a CD (jpeg format). We cannot return material or be responsible for original artwork, so please send your work this way. We will notify you if your work is going to be published.**

**Please include your age, name, and address or e-mail address. We will not release this to anyone. (If you are under 18, we may need a form signed by a parent or guardian.)**



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