



The Matty Fund®
Epilepsy Resource Center
Helping Others with Epilepsy
www.MattyFund.org
February, 2011

February is a special month for all of us here at the Matty Fund. We celebrate Matty's birthday, February 18th, all month long with "Matty Hatty", a statewide elementary school epilepsy education and awareness program. Students of both pre and elementary school age learn about epilepsy in a fun, uplifting manner. The program celebrates diversity and students learn seizure protocols and how to be a good friend to children who live with seizures and epilepsy. Over 30 schools participated last year touching nearly 7,000 students. This year, as we visit schools around the state, we see the impact of this program as students remember "Matty Hatty" and what they have learned about epilepsy and seizure protocols. "Matty Hatty" is such a wonderful way to celebrate Matty's life and make a positive difference in the every day lives of children living with epilepsy. Believing that knowledge is power in fighting the myths and stigma surrounding epilepsy, consider inviting your child's school to participate in next year's Matty Hatty! This month's Matty Matters focuses on the importance of raising epilepsy awareness among school aged children.

- Richard and Debra Siravo

Happy Valentine's Day! Did you know...St. Valentine was considered by many to be the patron saint of epilepsy



Thank you!

Brotherly Love...

Taylor Ingram turns a school project into a fundraising effort to help his brother, Trevor and other children living with epilepsy...

The 4th graders at Ashaway School had a project to make bracelets using beads and the tabs from cans to make bracelets for Christmas presents. Taylor's family loved his art work, everyone wanted a bracelet, and they joked they should sell them.

Taylor thought this was a great idea and decided to make more bracelets... and to donate the proceeds to the Matty Fund to help other children and families. Taylor has been very busy trying to keep up with the demand. Taylor has sold 50 bracelets so far! He reports that "purple" is the most popular color because it represents epilepsy. Everyone is very proud of Taylor for his ingenuity and thoughtfulness!



The myths and stigma associated with seizures and epilepsy are centuries old. Unfortunately, the perceptions and misunderstandings surrounding this condition are centuries old too! According to an Epilepsy & Behavior journal article, Epilepsy Myths: Alive and Foaming in the 21st Century, "although the scientific understanding of epilepsy as a condition increased tremendously through the century, cultural attitudes have failed to keep the pace, and to this day, movie portrayals continue to perpetuate many of the ancient myths." One myth continues to this day, the need to put something in the person's mouth to prevent them from swallowing their tongue. This is clearly a safety issue that can be demystified by education. According to this study, people who know someone with epilepsy were significantly less likely to believe all the myths than those with no personal knowledge of epilepsy, and actually seeing seizures in public improves the knowledge of first aid procedures.

(Epilepsy & Behavior 11-2007 192-196)

In a separate journal article, a self-report study found that adolescents with epilepsy were more likely to be bullied than teens in a healthy control group. According to this study, "children with epilepsy were more frequently victims of bullying (42%) than were children in the healthy control group (21%). The article went on to say that further study was necessary to look at other risk factors and determine the impact of other environmental factors including seizure education of children in school." (Epilepsy & Behavior 15 - 2009 - 500-505)

Lastly, the results of a separate study showed that "viewing a first aid educational video was effective in both enhancing the level of knowledge of epilepsy and improving attitudes towards epilepsy...the study illustrates the effectiveness of using a simple, cost effective educational intervention with specific knowledge-based information to improve knowledge and reduce stigma regarding epilepsy." (Epilepsy & Behavior 18 - 2010 - 474-480)

In the absence of good information and education, the myths and false perceptions about epilepsy will prevail. **Matty Hatty** is a wonderful opportunity to reach out and educate children at an early age in the hopes we can dispel the myths, discourage bullying and encourage acceptance for a lifetime!

Gifts to the Matty Fund allow us to expand programs to help more families

To make a donation visit www.MattyFund.org or mail your donation to P.O. Box 5300, Wakefield, RI 02880