

EPIC Long Island Inc., formerly the Epilepsy Foundation of Long Island, Fights Bullying with its Extensive Community Outreach Program

The Organization's Community Education Program Impacts Over 100 Schools, Corporations, Nursing Homes, and Fire Departments Throughout Long Island Communities

Garden City, NY, May 2014 - Bullying has become a dangerous epidemic across our country. Children, and even adults, are bullied for a host of reasons. But, there is one less-talked about cause of bullying that is impacting up to 35,000 children and adults on Long Island and 3 million people nationwide. These individuals struggle with epilepsy, a condition characterized by recurring seizures.

In its ongoing quest to provide education, support, and help prevent bullying as it relates to epilepsy, EPIC, which stands for or *Extraordinary People in Care*, conducts over 100 free community outreach programs a year all across Long Island, according to Janet Romeo, the organization's Community Education Coordinator. Ms. Romeo brings life-size puppet shows to classrooms, educating children as young as second graders, about epilepsy. Other education programs are offered for middle to high school audiences, nursing homes, companies, fire departments, and just about any group interested in learning about epilepsy.

"Locally and nationally, bullying is an everyday occurrence. For those struggling with epilepsy, it is much more pervasive," Romeo says. "I was contacted by a distraught parent who related that her child was being ostracized because of his epilepsy. This new kind of bullying is growing and needs our attention right now through consistent education and public awareness."

EPIC's Community Outreach Program would make a fascinating story for your readers. You could accompany Janet to one of her programs, and interview students, families, teachers, and others one-on-one and on-the-record. Talking to those individuals with epilepsy, particularly young adults would make for a powerful story on their struggles and their ultimate triumphs over this illness.

But, it is not just their stories alone. The numbers of individuals who will develop epilepsy at some point in their lives are staggering. Nationally, epilepsy impacts more people than those with autism spectrum disorders, Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, and cerebral palsy combined, according to the Epilepsy Foundation. Epilepsy is one of the oldest known diseases, and yet it is one of the most misunderstood.

EPIC's multitude of free programs include: **Seizure Smart**, which helps teachers learn to recognize the three most common types of seizures and how to respond effectively; **Take Charge of the Facts**, which teaches middle and high school students about epilepsy and seizures, causes and treatments, and first-aid procedures; and the very innovative **Kids on the Block**, which provides life-size puppets for children to dispel some of the myths about epilepsy. Other EPIC programs include the **School Nurse Workshop**, **Seizure Awareness** and **Training for First-Responders**, and a **Seniors and Seizures Program**. Some of these programs offer continuing education credits.

For more than half a century, EPIC, formerly known as the Epilepsy Foundation of Long Island, has quietly served the Long Island community, evolving from a small organization with a very specialized focus to a \$23 million agency providing multiple layers of services to a complex population of individuals. Since its inception as a group of families supporting each other and their loved ones struggling with epilepsy, to the current multi-dimensional focus that has grown beyond services to people with epilepsy and includes individuals with developmental disabilities and mental health challenges, the agency has maintained its commitment to high quality care. But it's not growing quietly anymore.

ABOUT EPIC Long Island

EPIC began in 1953 with a small group of parents whose mission was to help children with epilepsy lead productive lives. Sixty years later, the organization has fulfilled that promise, with 15 residences, two clinics, dozens of programs, and serves over 10,000 individuals annually. Today, EPIC looks toward a bright future as it broadens its mission to offer more social and health services across Long Island. EPIC has grown to serve not only individuals with epilepsy, but also those with developmental disabilities and mental health challenges. While epilepsy is at its core, the organization offers a spectrum of superior services that also serves individuals and families with different needs. EPIC's mission is to enrich the lives of those they serve through quality care, a broad range of services and an unwavering commitment to excellence.

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