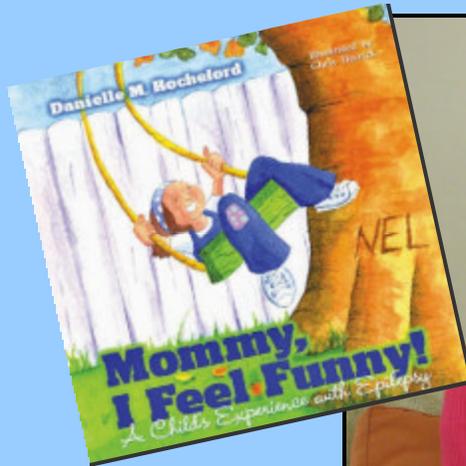


Westminster author pens children's book about epilepsy



Danielle Rocheford's children's book, which is based on her own issues with epilepsy, was just released this month as a way to help explain the condition to children.

By Caitlyn Kelleher
JOURNAL REPORTER

Thirteen years ago at 27-years-old Danielle Rocheford was preparing for brain surgery when she decided she was going to write about her childhood just in case something went wrong in surgery and she lost her memories.

The Westminster resident wrote more than 14-typed pages about the medical issue that impacted her childhood and her young adult years, the medical issue that had her spending three weeks in the hospital preparing for brain surgery.

Now those memories have been turned into "Mommy, I Feel Funny: A Child's Experience with Epilepsy," which explains epilepsy from a child's perspective.

"It was a tingling feeling that came up and

down my back and a feeling of fear that came about me," Rocheford said. "It was like there was a monster there."

The feelings she now knows as the warning signs of an oncoming seizure - formally called an aura - were what she used to describe "as feeling funny."

"The story is based on what I remember," Rocheford said.

Epilepsy is a neurological disorder that causes seizures and it affects about nine out of every 1,000 people, according to epilepsy.com.

The story made the transition from a collection of memories to a children's book through the encouragement of Rocheford's mother Gerri Faivre, who is a former elementary school teacher and the headmaster of an

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elementary school on Long Island, N.Y. The book is being released this month.

"My mom was the biggest supporter," Rocheford said.

The women worked to take Rocheford's pages of memories and make them into an informative and ageappropriate book. After being diagnosed with epilepsy, Rocheford said the only information she got was pamphlet filled with medical terms.

"It was something that bothered me," she said.

Along with helping children understand their diagnosis, Rocheford said she hopes money raised from book sales can help kids with epilepsy have a "normal life."

If, for example, a child with epilepsy wanted to attend a summer camp but needed an aide to go with them, Rocheford said she would consider funding the aide's trip.

"With a positive attitude anything is possible," she said. "The more attention I can get for the book the more children I can reach."

Rocheford's epilepsy continued into adulthood.

"I've always had (seizures) even being on medicine," she said.

Rocheford's epilepsy was at its worst her freshman year of high school. She spent all but eight weeks of the school year in the hospital.

"I felt like a guinea pig as they tried all types of medications," she said.

It wasn't until she moved to Massachusetts after college that Rocheford decided to have brain surgery to, hopefully, end her seizures. She wasn't able to get a driver's license and felt like she had lost her independence.

"I wanted that surgery," she said. "I was determined, and setting the goal that I wanted to be off the meds, a year after the surgery I was off meds."

Rocheford's pediatric neurologist thought her epilepsy was caused by a high fever she'd had as an infant - her first seizure didn't occur until Rocheford was two years old. She does not remember that seizure but

does remember one at age four, which helped create the storyline of the book. As she prepared for the surgery as an adult, her neurologists decided the fever was the cause, though they couldn't pinpoint another cause.

Now more than a decade after the surgery Rocheford has not had another seizure or any seizure activity.

Telling her story isn't unusual for Rocheford whose parents encouraged her to be open and honest about her condition. Her parents are still proud of her being open and honest today.

"They are very emotional with the story coming," Rocheford said.

Rocheford's parents are not the only one proud of the book. Her son - a student at Westminster Elementary School - is already trying to set up a chance for his mom to read the book to his class.

For more information on her book or her story visit Rocheford's Web site, www.mommyifeelfunny.com.