

## **Testimony**

**Sophie T.**

Ladies and gentlemen,

My name is Sophie. I am fifteen years old. I was diagnosed with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome four years ago when I was eleven.

Over these years I have missed half of sixth grade and almost all of seventh because I was always tired, achy, and sick to my stomach.

It all started when I was in fifth grade and had to stay home because I had mononucleosis. I also missed three months of fifth grade.

All this time being home separated me from my friends and social life. The lack of friends sent me into a depression.

When I was sent to Kildonan, a boarding school for dyslexia in mid-state New York, everything was different. It was difficult for me. I didn't have my parents and I was surrounded by strangers. It is still a constant struggle for me to get out of bed in the morning. All day I am tired, all day I ache, and at the end of the day I am utterly exhausted and have an awful headache. Sometimes the next day, I have to confess to my tutor that I spent the entire two-hour evening study hall resting on my bed unable to muster the strength even to open my reading book.

Last year I was competing in a horse show and I was doing great until the last two jumps. Midway over the jump my legs were suddenly struck with aching pains shooting all over my legs. This caused me to flinch, jerk back, and almost fall off. I made it over the last jump, but when I got out of the ring I was crying from the pain.

As we were cooling out the horses it became harder for me to stand—my legs felt as if they were made of jello. After a hard and painful walk back to the dorm, I took a pill to reduce the pain, but that didn't work.

When I woke the next day, the pain in my legs was still there, but it was bearable.

Living with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome is not just affecting me now, but it will affect my future too. Ever since I was little, my dream has been to be a surgeon. Yet with my conditions that doesn't look possible.

Surgeons are on call twenty four seven as residents, and interns are run ragged all over the hospital.

My second career choice is a marine biology, and it looks to me as if I could aim for that. I do struggle all throughout the school day to get the straight A's I deserve. I love playing sports and being active, even with the torturous side effects.

I know it is hard for someone not living with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome to imagine what it would be like for someone who does, but I hope I have succeeded in explaining what it feels like. In spite of all the problems, I am proud to say I have Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, just as I am proud to say I have Dyslexia. They are not the bad things that happened in my life; they are what makes me who I am. They are what makes me strong on the inside if not on the outside.