

Katrina Bosma

Lupus Chick Scholarship

Being a girl is tough with the many different pressures of looking pretty, having the right clothes, and having the perfect body. Being a girl with cutaneous lupus is even tougher. I have learned how to cope with lupus in not only my everyday health but also in my attitude of self-image and responsibility.

Middle school was when I started to notice that something was not right with my body. I was not growing, I started to lose a lot of my hair, strange red spots started to appear on my face, and I got sick a lot. Finally after seeing numerous doctors, I was diagnosed with cutaneous lupus my freshmen year of high school. After living with lupus for that long and not knowing about it, my body was not in good condition. The red spots on my face had scarred and I was four years behind in growth. This was a very hard time in my life. Attending high school while having the body of a 90 pound sixth grader was just as humiliating as the giant red scaly spots on my nose and cheek that no makeup could cover up. During my junior year of high school, I met with a doctor who helped me grow to where I needed to be for my age. The many medications made my body grow in less than two years what most teenagers grow in five years. So while all my friends were done growing, I was stuck with a face covered in zits and a body going through its awkward middle school stage. There were so many days when I looked in the mirror and dreaded going out in public. Along with the outward effects of lupus came the internal effects like constant fatigue, catching just about every sickness that came through, and finding out that I had to radically change my diet. The change of diet and fatigue that came with not having a full 9 hours of sleep each night made it very hard to hang out and have fun with friends.

Living with lupus has changed my perspective on beauty and has helped me grow in responsibility and self-control. I struggled and continue to struggle with the scars on my face. The insecurities are always there but I have learned to be secure in more than my appearance. I can be confident in my inner beauty and know that those who truly love me accept me for who I am and not based on appearance. Learning responsibility and self-control is never easy and I have learned from many mistakes. I have learned to be responsible in managing my rest, taking my pills and not pushing myself to the limit. Self-control was one of the hardest lessons I had to learn. Changing my diet was extremely hard for me. Going out with friends to my favorite restaurants and watching everyone enjoy my “used to be favorite foods” was and still is torture. I had to learn to say no to temptations. Learning all these life lessons was not only beneficial for me but for my high school pupils as well. My senior year, I had the opportunity to speak in front of my whole high school about my story. It took a lot of courage to stand up in front of all those people and talk about something that I kept hidden for so long. I am so glad I did it because so many people thanked me for weeks afterwards telling me how touched they were with my openness about my struggles.

Living with an autoimmune disease is seen by others as a misfortune. While I have struggled with the reasons of why I have this disease, I see it not as a misfortune but as an opportunity. I would not have learned all those lessons and had the opportunity to talk about them with others if I was healthy. College is going to be challenging but I have already learned to conquer obstacles. I hope to conquer more obstacles, learn more about myself and about life in my next adventure in college. I believe I should be awarded this scholarship not because of my misfortune but because of my triumph over my misfortunes.