

Saint in Service-

Bailey Thumm' Class of '18

From the Reading Eagle

Bailey Thumm, who is in remission, organized a 5K and 1-mile walk for Epilepsy

WRITTEN BY HOLLY HERMAN

BERNVILLE, PA —

For eight years, Bailey Thumm stayed silent about her illness.

It started when she was 10 years old. Bailey was driving with her father, Bernville Police Chief Brian Thumm, and mother, Janet, when the first epileptic attack occurred.

"Bailey got very quiet and started staring," her mother said. "We took her to the pediatrician, and she was diagnosed with epilepsy."

"I kept it a secret for eight years," Bailey said Saturday as she hosted the Bernville Unstoppables 5K and 1-mile walk to raise money for the Epilepsy Foundation Eastern Pennsylvania. "I would fall down the stairs and fall when I was running during cross-country practice.

"It can be scary," she said. "But I am in remission now. I became an advocate for Epilepsy Foundation of Eastern Pennsylvania in November of last year. I know that epilepsy can physically and emotionally damage a person."

Bailey, 18, graduated from Berks Catholic High School and is going to Lebanon Valley College to study business.

Bailey thanked her father for coming up with idea of hosting the 5K and walk as part of the annual Bernville Community Day, which featured crafts, food and fireworks in Umbenhauer Park.

More than 100 people participated in the 5K and walk Saturday morning. Bailey anticipates raising about \$500 for the foundation.

Gaines Taylor, a social media manager for the foundation based in Philadelphia, was manning a table, giving out purple bracelets and brochures about epilepsy to the participants.

Purple is the color associated with epilepsy, which sometimes has no apparent cause but at other times is attributed to brain injuries. It is characterized by seizures.

Taylor noted that one in 26 people contract some form of epilepsy. He thanked Bailey for her dedication to educating the public about overcoming the challenges of living with epilepsy.

Bailey said that in 2010 she was diagnosed with focalized epilepsy, which meant that she had seizures in one part of her brain.

Four years later, the condition progressed. Bailey started having convulsions, with her eyes rolling.

Bailey said that once when a seizure stopped, she saw that her father was crying.

"My dad never cries," Bailey said.

Another incident left Bailey on crutches.

Bailey said she wanted to end the seizures so her parents could live a worry-free life.

Bailey said that on Aug. 1 that happened. Bailey said the doctor told her she was in remission.

"I will not be having any seizures," Bailey said.

Bailey's teammates from the cross-country team at Berks Catholic provided refreshments, including water and bananas.

Annie Focht, 16, a junior, said the team is proud of Bailey.

"We were so lucky to have Bailey on our team," she said.

Amanda Maddona, 27, a volunteer at the Bernville Area Community Library, said Bailey is the sweetest person she knows.

Bailey said she plans to continue to lobby state and federal officials to provide additional funding to educate the public.

"This run turned out great today," she said. "I want to thank my parents for helping to organize this."

