

## Epilepsy Association of Central Alberta provides critical local support

Carson is starting Grade 3 in Blackfalds this fall, he'll be 9 years old in December. His mom, Mary, describes him as kind, quiet, giving, and loving with his family. Carson was diagnosed with Epilepsy when he was almost 5. After a process of testing, doctors from Calgary put him on medication. Then, Mary turned to the Epilepsy Society to help Carson cope at school and help her "just as a parent".



"You don't know what you don't know," says Mary. "Norma has been so supportive, encouraging and understanding." Norma Klassen is the Program Co-ordinator at the Epilepsy Association in Red Deer. United Way Central Alberta funds programs like those at the Epilepsy Association under its Wellness Priority area, making it possible for people to be healthy and communities to be strong.

"The learning side - info nights, guest speakers, they give you hope. Norma came to Carson's school two years in a row, worked with teachers, and gave them supports." Norma also

gave presentations to Carson's schoolmates so they weren't afraid of Epilepsy.

"Just knowing that if I need someone to understand, I can just pick up the phone and call Norma," says Mary. "Sometimes the doctors don't have all the answers, it's not their area of expertise. It's a joint effort. I was surprised by the emotional effect of the diagnosis and everything that preceded it, like everyday things that come up. I get support from Norma because it's not just about taking pills."

"Carson is doing awesome, so good. No seizure since April". Mary says having local support is critical. "You are more likely to use something that isn't far away. It's comforting to know the help we need is right here." And, she adds that there are even more services they haven't been able to take advantage of yet. "We've only scratched the surface of the help available," she says.

