

The Epilepsy Foundation: New Face, Same Mission

Executive Review

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Most people don't know this, but I was originally overlooked when applying for a position with the Epilepsy Foundation many years ago. I was 24, fresh out of graduate school with an MS in Psychology and two years of case management under my belt. I wanted to branch out into other non-profit work but wasn't sure how to go about it. Around this time, I saw a job posting on the University of Missouri-Kansas City's alumni portal. It was for a programming position within the Kansas City office of the Epilepsy Foundation. I applied and was contacted immediately for an interview. Although I hit it off with the staff, another candidate was selected and I went back into case management.

Several months and a few interviews later, I found myself reflecting on EFMK once again. Before my initial meeting, my knowledge about epilepsy was limited and academic in nature. The short conversation I had months earlier left an impact. Whether it was the caring staff, the phenomenal work EFMK was doing or the impact of this neurological condition more broadly, something was bringing me back to the Epilepsy Foundation. I reached out to confirm that I was still more than happy to work for the Foundation and was even willing to relocate if need be. As luck would have it, there was an opening available at that time in the St. Louis office.

In the years that followed, I worked out of both the St. Louis and Kansas City offices. I held many titles including Communications and Development Coordinator, Program Director and Associate Director. I educated thousands of people on seizure identification, first aid and emergency response. I provided countless information and referral calls for families who needed assistance. I traveled to Jefferson City, Topeka, Washington DC and other locales to advocate on behalf of people living with epilepsy. I worked to expand treatment access for those with intractable seizures. I participated in IEP planning sessions. There is little I haven't done to help those living with the effects of epilepsy.

I have spent much of my working adult life dedicated to improving the lives of people living with epilepsy. Now, as the Chief Executive Officer of the Epilepsy Foundation of Missouri and Kansas, I will continue that effort many times over. Whether it was raising funds, providing direct assistance, educating the public or meeting with community leaders, my career has given me the skill set to lead EFMK. This organization holds a very special place in my heart. As do the people we serve. While a new era has arrived for our organization, rest assured that our mission has remained unchanged. We are still dedicated to improving the lives of all those impacted by seizures. We are your unwavering ally in the fight against epilepsy and we aren't going anywhere.

James Townsend
Chief Executive Officer