

Gluten-free Vermillion-style

By Amber Margheim
For the Plain Talk

Imagine hearing "You have severe malnutrition," the likes of which your doctor has only seen "when I went to Africa and helped the little children there" and you eat a typical American diet. Cassondra Keller heard this from her doctor the February of her freshman year at USD.

The cause? An autoimmune disorder where the ingestion of gluten damages the small intestine, a.k.a.

Celiac disease. The cure? There isn't one. The treatment? A lifetime commitment to a gluten-free diet.

A lifetime gluten-free diet is easier said than done. It is more than eating a bun-less hamburger. It is avoiding that hamburger getting anywhere near a bun where a single stray crumb as small as 30 milligrams can provoke an autoimmune response with damage lasting, in some cases, as long as six months.

While Keller was diagnosed in 2011 her senior year of high school, staying gluten free in college at USD has been a challenge.

"When I went to college was when I had the worst time. I was forced to have a meal plan that I could barely even use, they did have some gluten free options, but the cross contamination made that point pretty much moot. I was sick most of freshman year."

While Keller tried to follow her treatment plan, she remembers how "Being away from home gave me the opportunity to cheat without anyone knowing. So that's what I did".

Which resulted in her freshman year of college including a week in the hospital in November, two weeks in February and the doctor telling Keller her liver was enlarged and her body was "shutting down".

"Needless to say I don't cheat anymore, it's definitely not worth the pain!" Keller exclaims.

Life for Keller and those afflicted with Celiac disease and other gluten reactive conditions confront food safety issues every day, if not with every meal. While not as immediately deadly as some food allergy reactions to, for instance, peanuts or shellfish, the continued ingestion of gluten destroys body tissues over time. For sufferers, even the occasional "cheat" or as more often happens, a case of cross contamination, results in tissue damage with some studies showing that the body can react for up to six months after a single exposure.

For Keller and those like her, they have to be ever aware of not only what they eat but how and where it was prepared, who touched it and what else might have been in the kitchen with it. Restaurants, church potlucks, even a friend's kitchen can become a battleground requiring constant vigilance against the stray crumb of gluten.

"I have become a little bit of a pessimist when it comes to the food service industry because in the past I have been wronged. A ton of people get gluten free confused because although the food is gluten free, the preparation is not," Keller shares.

For example, Keller was "glutened" after eating at a national chain. While she ordered a gluten free meal, the one she received had at least one regular noodle in it. Her mother contacted the manager of the establishment and "they admitted that they boil (gluten free) noodles in the same water as the regular noodles. They didn't think anything of it because it was just one noodle, how could that hurt?"

"What people don't understand is that whether it's me licking a crouton or eating a whole pizza the pain is the same, either way," emphasizes Keller.

Living with a gluten problem affects relationships, impacts social situations and takes an emotional toll as well. Keller lost 25 lbs in 2011 when she was

first diagnosed not from a change in diet but "because I was too afraid to eat anything for fear of the pain."

She recalls that first year "I would get so upset because I couldn't have the things I wanted and your body craves gluten after you cut it off cold turkey... I was upset when all my friends went out and would get pizza or go to IHop and I couldn't get anything."

Attending college has been "a lot harder emotionally" Keller notes. "Because of how sensitive I am to gluten I don't go out to eat much, which really puts a damper on my social life because in small town South Dakota...what else is there to do?"

"I never go to the pasta feeds or pancake feeds because I don't like to be a bother...Or pot lucks. What if someone has a veggie tray, you would think that's gluten free, but my brother has dunked a piece of bread in the ranch on a veggie tray before, didn't tell me and I was sick the rest of the night. Little things like that I have to be very cautious about".

While at home she has to "have separate everything! Utensils, condiments, toaster, etc. Mainly a whole second set of things just for me!" But things are not all bad for Keller. She shares that Vermillion has venues that make life easier.

"It's not as bad as everyone thinks. Yes if I lived in a bigger city the options would be better, but for a small town I am blessed to have so many options! Cafe Brulee to go out to eat. Hy-Vee for all my necessities!...It's kinda nice being in a small town because I know a ton of people who work at these places and if I want something special ordered at Hy-Vee, I can just ask! If I'm worried about cross-contamination I know people at Cafe Brulee and Dominos to ensure I'll be safe. That's one of the perks of a small town-everybody knows everybody and I've got a good gluten free support system here!"

Country Music Hall of Fame

The South Dakota Country Music Hall of Fame announced the 2015 Hall of Fame inductees in conjunction with Grand Opening of the South Dakota Country Music Opry House and Museum (SDCMO).

The stage was dedicated to Mr. Roy King, Wilbur Foss 2014 Lifetime Achievement award winner, announced the 2015 Lifetime Achievement award winner Mr. Edean Landmark, and also presenting the new inductees: Sam Tulio, Micah Small, Dan J. Small Sr., Isabel Trobaugh, Skip Harding, Rita Harding, Leland Harding III, Del Woodard, Pete Donker, Jim Anderson, Donnie J. Williams and Gary Gibson.

Woodard; Greg Poppinga, Lennox City Councilman; Wini Iverson, SDCMO president; and, Dana Jensen, 2013 inductee, rounded out the festivities of the ribbon cutting, officially opening the Opry House and Museum. Mylan Ray, KLOH radio personality, was on hand to help emcee.

During the day, a decorated guitar, auctioned for a Jon Richter tribute, was presented to the Richter family.

Many donations were presented to the Opry House and Museum throughout the celebration, including several drum sticks for the stick collection.

Wilbur Foss was honored with a copy of an album about his father to be added to the museum artifacts.

An "American Made" band banner, was also donated to the Hall of Fame in memory of Gary Huska who was inducted in 2008.

Veterans Town Hall Meeting

The Disabled American Veterans (DAV) will be hosting a Veterans Town Hall Meeting Friday, May 1, 2015 at 3:00 p.m. at the DAV Department of South Dakota Convention at the Holiday City Centre, 100 W. 8th St., Sioux Falls, South Dakota. All veterans are invited to this Veterans Town Hall Meeting. Invitations have been sent to Congressional Delegation Staff of South Dakota, Veterans Employment Representatives, VA Medical Center Directors, and VA Staff.

There will be questions and answers concerning the VA budget, health care funding, medical healthcare, veterans benefits, full concurrent receipt, veterans legislation, veterans employment and preference, claims processing, agent orange, post traumatic stress disorder, treating traumatic brain injuries (TBI), Persian Gulf Syndrome, nursing home care, and other information for our veterans and their families.

USD Offers Interest-Free Loan to Help Students Buy Textbooks

The University of South Dakota will offer undergraduate students an interest-free, \$500 loan to help them buy books and supplies starting with the Fall 2015 semester.

"We know students have a lot of expenses at the beginning of each semester, and we don't want anyone to delay buying their textbooks because of cash flow," said Sheila Gestring, USD chief financial officer. "We are offering this as a pilot program to see if students find it helpful."

"Students will be able to charge up to \$500 worth of books and class supplies at the USD Bookstore and pay for them over the rest of the semester on their USD bill," she said.

The program is open to any full-time, undergraduate student who is taking at least one class face-to-face on the Vermillion campus. There is no requirement to prove financial need.

The \$500 charge account will be available starting three weeks before classes begin and will continue for two weeks into the semester, said Angela Miller, manager of the Barnes & Noble bookstore in the Muenster University Center.

The bookstore will have a list of students who are eligible for the charge account, and students will visit the bookstore in person to take advantage of the program.

"At this time the \$500 loan is not available on our website," Miller said. "But that is something we may look at in the future. Students can use it on all textbooks in the store whether they rent or buy, new or used, hard copy or digital books."

Gestring and Miller said they will evaluate the response to the pilot program to see if any changes will be needed in the future.

Foundation seeks youth

The Clay-Union foundation has one adult male and female who are ready to serve as mentors to a child in Vermillion. The target age for these mentors is age 7-12. Youth age 5-17 are welcome to join. Volunteers are background checked and interviewed prior to matches, and spend 2 hours/week in year round mentoring matches. Apply at www.clay-unionfoundation.org or call John Gille 605-421-5050 for more information on being a mentor or signing up a youth.

The Big Squeeze To Continue Into May

By Anne La Brake
For the Plain Talk

Vermillion Sanford Medical Clinic, even in the face of time constraints, has reached more than half of its goal to perform 1,000 blood pressure screenings in the month of April.

"This is only our second year, but Sioux Falls has done 'The Big Squeeze' since 2011," shares Carol Lavin, Sanford Vermillion Wellness nurse. "Last year, the goal of Sioux Falls was to get 5,000 screenings, of which we ended up contributing 1,400 just from here in Vermillion."

"The Big Squeeze" here in Vermillion, however, has now extended the events encouraging blood pressure awareness into the month of May, having the last event scheduled on May 13 for the Great Strides post party bash at the USD Wellness Center where walk-in blood pressure screenings can be done at 5:30 p.m.

"Our goal remains to just increase awareness of what blood pressure actually is, and so we are doing this through some screenings throughout the community," shares Lavin. "Really, however, we are asking people to know their blood

pressure numbers. Whether this is through the screenings we are doing, by going to their primary care provider and the county health nurse, or just going to Davis Pharmacy and sticking their arm in the blood pressure cuff, we're just asking individuals to heighten their awareness of blood pressure and how many people it really does impact."

"Screenings only take a few minutes," she assures. "If you choose to have one done at a location such as a pharmacy like Wal-Mart though, normally you should sit for a little bit, catch your breath and then take your blood pressure."

"I don't think many people really understand that high blood pressure can be a silent killer," Lavin continues. "Whether through diet, exercise or medication, however, for the most part, we can have control over it."

"There have been some new guidelines which are 140 over 80 for blood pressure," continues Lavin, "though everyone's normal is obviously a little different. Age, you should, also, know, doesn't alter whether or not you should have your blood pressure taken. By becoming aware of your blood pressure numbers, at any age, you can know if you are in the normal limits and if not, you can seek your health care provider."

For more information on "The Big Squeeze" events, you can go to Sanford Vermillion Website, or contact Wellness Nurse Carol Lavin at (605)638-8367.

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