



Trumpeter sounds call about epilepsy

Friday November 16, 2007

By EUNNIE PARK
STAFF WRITER

Victor Aguero was diagnosed with epilepsy at age 12. But he obviously hasn't let the disease hold him back: He's a nursing student, a Continental Airlines employee and an accomplished trumpet player.

The North Bergen resident, 33, will perform tonight with the Ridgewood Symphony Orchestra in "Notes of Inspiration," a benefit concert for the Epilepsy Foundation of New Jersey. He recently chatted with The Record about what it's like to live with epilepsy:

How did you find out that you had epilepsy?

I had just gotten my bicycle painted and it was early in the morning. I was with a friend. We went together to ride. That's when I had my first seizure. It felt like lights were going off. I couldn't control the balance of my body, and I fell. I felt everyone else was going in slow motion and getting darker at the same time. I was scared, but at first I was just confused.

Is living with epilepsy a daily struggle?

On a daily basis, I don't really think about it. I'm used to it by now. But I have encountered certain problems. I used to work for [a company], and when I wanted to transfer over to another [division], I was not qualified because of seizure problems. ... That was a big is:

Has epilepsy ever interfered with your music?

When I was in high school, I had to skip a few events because one of the triggers for seizures is lack of sleep. So when I knew I was going to be up late the night before and I had [rehearsal] early next morning, I would skip it. It was kind of frustrating, but I wanted to play it safe.

What are some common misconceptions about epilepsy, and what do you want people to know?

Many believe that it's the worst thing that could happen. I don't see it that way because I lead a normal life. There are so many things that are way worse than epilepsy. Many people have this idea of epilepsy being really bad, but in reality, you can manage it if you know what to do and what to follow.

FAST FACTS

WHO: Victor Aguero.

WHAT: Ridgewood Symphony Orchestra with clarinetist Jose Franch-Ballester.

WHEN: 8 tonight.

WHERE: Benjamin Franklin Middle School auditorium, East Glen and North Van Dien avenues, Ridgewood; 201-612-0118 or ridgewoodsymphony.org.

HOW MUCH: \$20 advance, seniors \$15, students \$10. Prices go up \$3 at door.