

Teen turns epilepsy experience into a novel

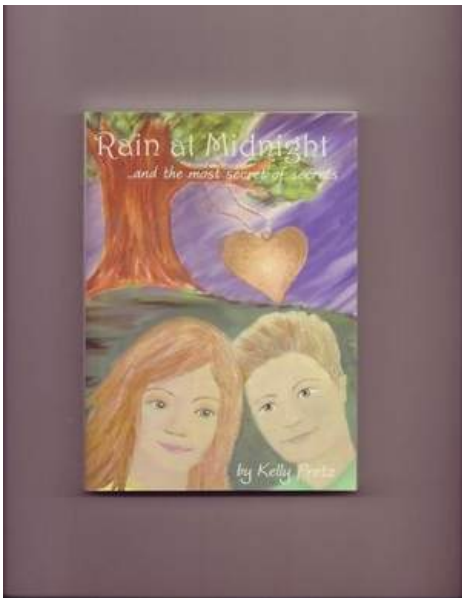
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Kelly's book, "Rain at Midnight ... and the most secret of secrets," is about a teenage girl who hides her epilepsy from others.

Written by **Linda Walls | For NJ Press Media**

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Kelly Pretz admits she probably won the lottery of seizure disorders.

"I'm very lucky," said 15-year-old Kelly about her experiences with benign rolandic epilepsy. "The doctor said it's the only type of epilepsy you can outgrow."

Still, being unexpectedly gripped in seizures that produce uncontrolled movements, sounds, excess saliva, pain and loss of consciousness can be frightening at any age. For a young girl — Kelly was 10 when first diagnosed — the onset of epilepsy can be especially traumatic.

Her initial reaction was confusion, the Brielle teenager said.

"I didn't know what was happening to me," she said. "I'd never heard of epilepsy."

She also was unaware that the perplexing "feelings" she had been experiencing were partial seizures, and she didn't report them to her older sisters, Ami, Jenni and Kimberly, now 18, 22 and 26 respectively, or her parents, Ellen and Todd Pretz.

The only clue, in retrospect, Todd said, was when "she would suddenly run to the sink to spit out saliva" that was rising in her mouth. But she never talked about the buzzing in her head or other symptoms, her dad added.

When the partial seizures ultimately accelerated into a grand mal seizure, the entire family took notice.

She was diagnosed and treated at

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Kelly Pretz, 15, enjoys time with her father, Todd, and mother, Ellen, at their Brielle home. Kelly recently wrote a book about her experience with epilepsy. / LINDA WALLS/FOR NJ PRESS MEDIA

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Children's Hospital of Pennsylvania (CHOP) in Philadelphia.

Luckily, again, she received a medication — Trileptal — that proved effective in controlling the seizures. Life resumed, but with restrictions — no bike riding, no baths, no attending sleepovers. And some of the medication's side effects, such as drowsiness, were sapping her energy.

And Kelly — because someone in the medical community cautioned her about letting others know about her condition — took the advice to heart and kept it secret from her friends. Her social life suffered, because her peers thought she was avoiding them.

Meanwhile, she poured her feelings out in a book, a novel for young people. "Rain at Midnight ... and the most secret of secrets," which tells the story of a young girl who hides her epilepsy from others, went on sale this summer at Booktowne in Manasquan, which will host a book signing on Oct. 15.

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