

Young woman shares MS journey

By Mike Rodrigues

Receiving the diagnosis of a serious illness is never an easy thing to comprehend, especially at the age of 16.

When Amanda Piron was that age she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS).

Since Amanda's diagnosis, the Aurora resident has volunteered her time to making sure that people with MS feel they aren't alone.

"I enjoy helping people along with their journey in finding comfort and someone they can talk to," said Piron. "One of the scariest things that you hear people say is that we don't want to be alone."

Along with volunteering her time to speak to people with MS, Piron has gone into schools to share her journey with MS.

May is MS Awareness Month and the MS Society has kicked off a across-Canada campaign with the hopes of raising awareness and funds for MS research.

After Piron was diagnosed with MS her life took a different route than what she believed it was going to be.

As a teen, she played baseball for a competitive team and had a goal of pursuing the sport.

"I was supposed to go away to school on a scholarship for baseball," said Piron, who is now 25. "I had to figure out what I was going to do after high school now that I couldn't play baseball."

When Piron first started to feel the effects of MS, her academics and ability to play baseball suffered. This was her first indication that something was wrong.

"I started to notice that I was falling at practice, but I didn't consider it to be a problem," said Piron. "We would train five times a week and I noticed that my fitness level would never improve."

Due to her battle with MS at the beginning her grades began to suffer.

"My grades began to drop in class just because I couldn't focus, said Piron. "From September to the start of the next semester in February there was a noticeable difference in my grades."

Multiple sclerosis is the outcome of immune system attacks on a person's myelin, a substance that surrounds the nerve fibers within the central nervous system. Once the nerve fiber is damaged nerve impulses that travel to and from the brain are interrupted and cause the symptoms of MS.

When Amanda's symptoms first started to present themselves, doctors were having a tough time trying to figure out what the cause of the problem was.

"All the doctors thought I was way too young for MS," said Piron. "The doctors believed that I was just overworking myself with baseball."

Due to the doctors' struggle to diagnose the problem and Amanda's mom asking them to keep information away from her, Amanda started to think the worst.

"I spent three days at Southlake so I was starting to think that it was a lot worse. All I knew was that I wasn't going to die and that I didn't have cancer," said Piron.

One symptom of MS that Piron suffers from is fatigue. This has caused a change in how her day to day life is run.

"I have to be very selective about what I can do in a day because I only have so much energy," said Piron. "It has made me really focus on figuring out what I want because if I really don't want to do something I won't get around to it because I have to budget my time."

Using the hashtag #TeamFlight on social media will help spread awareness to help battle MS in Canada.

Other events include a MS Walk in more than 160 communities across the country and a MS Bike ride that is set to take place from June to October.

Visit endms.ca to see how you can help the battle against MS.