

Porter returns to Gothenburg to deal with disorder

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
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Epilepsy: A neurological condition which affects the nervous system. It's also known as a seizure disorder and is usually diagnosed after a person has had at least two seizures that were not caused by some known medical condition like alcohol withdrawal or extremely low blood sugar.—epilepsy.com

Bill Porter had a hunch that epilepsy was in his cards.

His grandfather drowned while having a seizure at Lake Helen. Porter's mother had epilepsy as did another brother who died after brain surgery. A sister has the disorder as well.

"A lot of people don't think epilepsy is genetic but in our family, it has to be," said the 1986 graduate of Gothenburg High School who returned to the town of his alma mater last February.

Porter was living in Omaha and working in purchasing and sales for a company when he first experienced symptoms at age 27.

"I started biting the left side of my tongue in the middle of the night," Porter said. "Some mornings, I could hardly talk."

After a few occurrences, Porter made an appointment with a neurologist who performed some tests.

The diagnosis? Epilepsy.

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SUPPORT GROUP FORMED

A new peer group, for people with disabilities, is available in Gothenburg. Bill Porter attends the group that meets the second Friday of each month, at 1:30 p.m., at the Senior Center. The next meeting is June 8. For more information, contact Irene Britt, program manager for Independence Rising, at 308-258-1914.

EPILEPSY

■ Affects nearly 3 million Americans and 50 million people worldwide and is the third most common neurological disorder in the United States after Alzheimer's disease and stroke.

■ Strikes most often among the very young and the very old although anyone can develop epilepsy at any age.

■ Cases in the elderly are climbing as the baby boom generation reaches retirement age. More than 570,000 adults age 65 and above have the condition.

■ Affects returning veterans as studies show an increased risk of developing epilepsy following traumatic brain injury.

■ Is among the least understood of major chronic medical conditions, even though one in three adults knows someone with the disorder.

Epilepsy Foundation.org