

Kelly Lyons

CCFA 2014 Youth Ambassador

Born in Houston and schooled in the ways of Mardi Gras and king cake in Louisiana, Kelly Lyons moved to Katy five years ago. In many ways, Kelly is your typical 15-year-old Texas girl. Her schedule is packed with homework, school activities and dance. She is funny and smart, and all about having her own style. This girl has never been one to pass up an extra challenge. Ask any of her teachers, and you are likely to hear that Kelly will always go the extra mile to do things right. She is a perfectionist of sorts.

Life in Katy seemed good for Kelly. Still, something was not quite right. Lots of foods seem to upset her stomach and she was losing weight. She had not grown in nearly two years. Eventually, Kelly's parents took her to see Dr. Stephanie Chandler, who sent Kelly to several specialists all in one two-week period. At the end of the two weeks, Kelly learned that she had Crohn's Disease.

It was only after the diagnosis that Kelly shared with her family all she had been going through. She was getting up several times during the night to use the restroom, always worried about eating something that would make it hard for her to keep control, and was especially frightened that she would not be able to use a bathroom when she needed to. She had no energy and lots of pain. She was really sick and really scared.

Kelly was distressed to learn that she had Crohn's Disease, but she was relieved to know that she could feel better again. She was so happy that she could enjoy eating—and she grew. However, steroids are no picnic, and as a sixth-grade girl with a moon face, Kelly had to learn the toughest compassion lesson of all—acceptance and love for yourself.

Then she recognized that if she would put her face on the disease that affected so many, more people would realize that help was needed. Kelly decided to share her secret and her story. And then she went the extra mile.

In the summer before her eighth-grade year, Kelly started developing an idea for a project called "Lucky 15." Her goal was to raise awareness about the need for a cure for Crohn's. She went to her new principal, Dr. Medrano, and her counselor, Jennifer Porter, and asked for help.

The answer was "yes." One of the most amazing lessons that the Lucky 15 founder learned is that often, all you have to do is ask. The school donated a holiday booth so



that she could sell her Gutsy Girl jewelry, held a pep rally and helped her market the first Lucky 15 T-shirt, "Spartans have guts!" Kelly also organized a spirit night, and friends volunteered donations. All told, Kelly raised nearly \$4K last year for CCFA. As one of CCFA's Honored Heroes, Kelly was featured in "Coping Until a Cure" on ABC-13. By now, she is quite sure that she does not have to worry about anyone finding out she has Crohn's disease. She assumes that people already know.

In August, Kelly began her freshman year at Seven Lakes High School. She is learning to balance her school work, dance and Lucky 15 projects with medical treatment and rest. Still, she expects the best from herself, always striving for As, perfect dance technique and ways to serve others. She was also invited to the Children's Patient Advisory Council of Memorial Hermann Hospital and the Star Chapter of the National Charity League. Whatever the opportunity, if Kelly can serve, she will.

If you ask Kelly about the name "Lucky 15," she'll tell you that 15 is her favorite and lucky number. But then she'll say that really, it is a challenge to stop when things are tough and think of 15 good things or people that you are lucky to have. It's about finding the joy in life.

Although she is grateful to those whose work and support have made it possible to get the treatments that have made her life better, she still wants more from life. She dreams of the day when she will be cured of Crohn's and free of the medicines that affect her. Kelly is so grateful to be named CCFA 2014 Youth Ambassador!