

## **Story Idea: *Abusive Internetting—the Latest Playground for Bullies***

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In recent years, school officials across the country have adopted strict guidelines to combat bullying, but the Internet has spawned new generations of the schoolyard brutes. Now, they can terrorize to the point that a single child can be plagued from school to school by online groups created specifically to hate them.

For instance, witness the plight of Olivia Gardner. When she was in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, she had a seizure in class. Classmates not only ridiculed her in real life, but online, with an Olivia Haters group on MySpace. When Olivia tried to escape them, they made sure all the children at her next school, and the school after that, knew all about how substandard and different Olivia was.

Fortunately, for Olivia, two sisters she didn't know helped her out of the quagmire of depression she entered. But who knows if others subjected to abusive Internetting will have similar saviors?

### **Story Resources**

- Collateral Materials (*available in both English and Spanish*):
  - a) *True or False: Fast Facts about Seizures and Epilepsy*
  - b) *Get the Word Out About Epilepsy*
  - c) *Seizures and First Aid*
- [CNN's Anderson Cooper's 360° Blog: Bullies Beware](#)
- **The Epilepsy Index**, an educational Web resource for general epilepsy information, [www.epilepsyfoundation.org/answerplace/index.cfm](http://www.epilepsyfoundation.org/answerplace/index.cfm).

### **Suggested Interview Questions**

- How is the Foundation empowering youth who experience seizures?
- What's being done to raise awareness in schools?
- What responsibilities do public schools have with regard to children with epilepsy?
- What is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act?
- What should or should not be done if you see someone having a seizure?
- What are the different types of seizures?
- What causes seizures and can they be prevented?
- Is there a difference between epilepsy and seizure disorders?

## Fast Facts

- More than 3 million people in the U.S. have some form of epilepsy.
  - Thirty percent of them are children under the age of 18.
- Epilepsy primarily affects the very young and the very old, although anyone can get epilepsy at anytime.
  - Twenty percent of cases develop before the age of five.
  - Fifty percent develop before the age of 25.
- A large number of children and adults have undetected or untreated epilepsy.
- Epilepsy affects people of all ages, races and ethnic backgrounds.
- Every year, 181,000 Americans will develop seizures and epilepsy for the first time.
- With proper antiepileptic medications, most people with epilepsy can lead normal lives full of everyday experiences such as driving.
- In December 1997, about 700 Japanese children had seizures while watching Pokémon, an anime series.
- The condition can develop at any time of life, especially in early childhood and old age.

## Interview Opportunities

- Eric Hargis, president and CEO, the Epilepsy Foundation.
- Physician specialist.
- Olivia Gardner, 14-year-old California girl who has epilepsy, and has endured phenomenal Internet bullying because of her epilepsy.

## About the Epilepsy Foundation

The Epilepsy Foundation, a national nonprofit with affiliated organizations throughout the United States, has led the fight against epilepsy since 1968. The Epilepsy Foundation will ensure that people with seizures are able to participate in all life experiences and will prevent, control and cure epilepsy through services, education, advocacy and research. For additional information, please visit [www.epilepsyfoundation.org](http://www.epilepsyfoundation.org).