



# MYASTHENIA GRAVIS FOUNDATION OF AMERICA, INC.

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August 2010

Dear Friend,

*There's nothing as exciting as watching your child work hard to fulfill a dream.*

*And nothing is as frightening as finding out your child is ill with a little known disease.*



When my son David became the fourth member of our family to enter The United States Military Academy at West Point in the fall of 2003, he was living his dream of serving our nation. Just two years later, David was diagnosed with myasthenia gravis and it looked like his dream might be cut short.

Myasthenia gravis (MG) is a chronic neuromuscular autoimmune disease, in which antibodies mistakenly attack and destroy neuromuscular connections, causing weakness in muscles that control such basic movements as walking, swallowing, blinking, breathing and smiling.

For David, an ardent athlete, training to be an Army parachutist, the diagnosis was devastating. Myasthenia gravis impacted David's ability to meet his demanding academic and physical fitness training requirements. David had to withdraw from West Point and his future seemed uncertain.

**We turned to the Myasthenia Gravis Foundation of America (MGFA) — the only national volunteer health agency dedicated solely to the fight against myasthenia gravis.** The MGFA website – [myasthenia.org](http://myasthenia.org) -- was a lifeline for David and our family, an invaluable source of information and inspiration that gave us hope when we learned that MG was treatable, even if it was not yet curable. We found the information we needed—and physicians who knew what to do

Fortunately, David's physicians recommended a surgical option — thymectomy — along with the proper medications that worked. The surgery went flawlessly and David recuperated at home. Eventually David regained his strength, returned to West Point and graduated in May 2008 — just one year later than his original graduation — with a degree in engineering management.

Over the next year, David completed his airborne training, became an Army parachutist and graduated from the most difficult and physically demanding Army training at Ranger School. Today, David is an armor (tank) officer in Iraq where he leads his platoon on combat patrols.

**While David is living his dream, 80,000 Americans live with the debilitating and life altering symptoms of myasthenia gravis.** Every day, new cases of MG are diagnosed. And MG strikes people of all races, genders, and ages.

To date, there is no cure, but there is hope. MGFA is committed to finding a cure for MG, improving treatment options, and providing information and support to people with myasthenia gravis through research, education, community



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programs, and advocacy. Their vision is “A world without myasthenia gravis.”

**Today, I am asking you to help MGFA in their fight.** Your support is vital to the continued work of MGFA and your donation will continue the strides that have been made.

Your donation will enable MGFA to continue their vital work supporting research, developing diagnostic techniques and treatments, and providing professional education and family outreach programs.

Please give today and help MGFA in their goal to create “A world without myasthenia gravis.”

Many thanks for your generosity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Edwin L. Kennedy, Jr.".

Lt. Col. (Retired) Edwin L. Kennedy, Jr.

***P.S. Every day, MGFA helps people living with the disease. But there is more to do. Please send your donation today in the enclosed envelope or give online at [www.myasthenia.org](http://www.myasthenia.org). And again, many thanks.***