



Cornell University
Gannett Health Services

110 Ho Plaza
Ithaca, NY 14853-3101
t. 607.255.5155
f. 607.255.0269
web: www.gannett.cornell.edu

**Mathew Kleiner “Create Change: Health Leadership Award”
2014 Awardee**

MAISIE ORSILLO '15

Gannett Health Services is pleased to announce the 2014 recipient of the “Create Change: Health Leadership Award”: Maisie Orsillo. This award is established to honor and carry forward the legacy of Mathew A. Kleiner '93. It is awarded to Cornell University students who demonstrate the courage and commitment to create change that will enhance the health of the Cornell community, as Matt did as a student leader at Cornell. Maisie’s leadership in creating “Students of Diabetes Awareness” is a fitting tribute to both Matt and his many family members and friends whose love and generosity created this award.

When Maisie came to Cornell as a freshman in 2011, she was hopeful about connecting with other students with her medical condition. Maisie has Type 1 diabetes, and consequently has to closely monitor her diet and blood sugar levels, giving herself multiple insulin injections each day. Balancing school, personal life, and her health proved challenging at times, especially when also adjusting to a new environment and lifestyle at Cornell. However, as her first year drew to a close, Maisie still had not met any other students with Type 1 with whom she could share her experiences, exchange tips and information, and find support.

Thus was born the idea for “Students of Diabetes Awareness,” or “SODA.” After much research and hard work, Maisie created the organization with three goals in mind: to provide support for students living with Type 1 diabetes; to educate the campus community about diabetes, including dispelling common myths associated with the disease; and to create community engagement events to fundraise for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation. She chose the acronym “SODA” to be intentionally provocative in challenging popular beliefs about diabetics not being able to consume any sugar, including soda.

Thanks to Maisie’s vision and leadership, the organization found an immediate audience, attracting members and student leaders – both those with and without diabetes. SODA has held numerous events since its inception, including educational tabling and bake sales, to raise awareness of diabetes and funds for juvenile diabetes research. The group also initiated an annual effort to celebrate Diabetes Awareness Month in November with campaigns and small fundraisers. And, perhaps most notably, SODA organized Ithaca’s first Walk/Run for Diabetes on Cornell’s campus, partnering with local businesses to raise \$10,000 in both 2013 and 2014 to benefit

the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation.

In addition to these successes, SODA – and its subset group, SODA POP (Students of Diabetes Awareness: People on the Pump) – serve as an important resource and support network for those living with diabetes. In Maisie’s words: “To see the expression on a fellow student’s face when they learn about an insulin pump and see that life can still be enjoyed to its fullest (even with those frustrating days); to see the relief on a freshman student’s face when they can talk about their sugar levels and someone understands; to see a multitude of students pour forth their support despite not being directly affected by diabetes ... these have been the greatest rewards in creating this organization.”

Maisie has given her time, her personal story, and her passion to promoting the health and wellbeing of the Cornell community. She saw a need and worked to create a solution, creating a change that we believe will serve students at Cornell for many years to come. For this reason, and to convey our gratitude and our support, we are pleased to recognize Maisie with this year’s Mathew Kleiner “Create Change: Health Leadership Award.”

Maisie offered this tribute to Matt:

“Words truly cannot express the honor I feel in receiving an award named after such an inspiring, hardworking, dedicated, and passionate individual as Mr. Kleiner. Reading all that Mr. Kleiner was able to accomplish at Cornell and beyond is truly amazing and I can only hope that the efforts for which I was recognized can have as much of a meaningful impact as Mr. Kleiner’s work clearly had.

“It has been an incredibly rewarding experience to reach out to my Cornell community (through the creation of Students of Diabetes Awareness). I can only imagine that these type of emotions were experienced by Mr. Kleiner during his tireless efforts to dispel the common myths his campus community and the world held about HIV/AIDS. I can only hope as I begin to transition my organization over to passionate first-year students that our rewarding outreach work will continue for years to come.”

Mathew P. Kleiner "Create Change: Health Leadership Award"

The “Create Change: Health Leadership Award” was established to honor and carry forward the legacy of Mathew A. Kleiner, CU '93. It is awarded to Cornell University students who demonstrate the courage and commitment to create change that will enhance the health of the Cornell community. The award recognizes the personal investment of time, energy, dedication, and vision that effective leadership requires. Made possible by the generosity of Matt’s family and friends, this award will be administered by Gannett Health Services, Matt’s partners in creating change during his years at Cornell. For more information, visit: www.gannett.cornell.edu/campushealth/HealthLeadershipAward.html.

Sharon J. Dittman
Associate Director, Community Relations
Gannett Health Services, Cornell University

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