

Remembering Melissa: November 25, 1984 - March 13, 2022

A tribute from her parents



While Melissa Schlobohm-Clover lived with us on earth, her character is best summed up as fun-loving, independent but a pure and simple person who loved her family. She leaves behind a bevy of friendships created and fostered throughout every stage of her life. While growing up, she showed her horse in 4-H and in high school was captain of the volleyball team. She was a devoted wife, stepmother, daughter and sister. She was known for her laugh and smile, they both lit up a room. Melissa liked to work hard and play hard. Her business management career took her to support stores in several other states, including her favorite, California. But her home was always Minnesota. In her 37 years, she only missed one Christmas Eve at home with Mom, Dad and her sister, because of a snow storm in Wisconsin where she went to college.

Melissa went to live in Heaven on Sunday March 13, 2022 because of SUDEP, or Sudden Unexpected Death in Epilepsy. *She was napping that Sunday afternoon on the couch while her husband sat nearby watching TV. She had a seizure, and when it was over, she had stopped breathing, and her husband and paramedics couldn't resuscitate her.* She was 37 years old, and had epilepsy for 20 years. She had break through seizures while sleeping for many of those years. Being independent, she didn't want her family to worry about the seizures and didn't talk to us about them, because she thought she had it under control. Not knowing her risk of SUDEP was 15x greater because her seizures happened at night, she socially drank alcohol, and didn't have her medications adjusted when she had seizures. Her odds of SUDEP went from 1 in a 1,000 to 1 in 150. Yikes! She thought she could just shake it off when she had a seizure and go about her normal life. None of us were aware of SUDEP. Losing a child unexpectedly, even to God, is traumatic to the family and causes unimaginable anguish. To help us work through our grief, we have done several things to memorialize her and give her death purpose.

Taking Action

Within a week of her passing, I was mad because I didn't know about SUDEP. I felt compelled to do something about it, better late than never! I posted on Facebook about Melissa and SUDEP and asked that everyone keep sharing her story. I heard from people all over the country. One of them was Tom Stanton from Danny Did. His comments were very supportive and much appreciated. I talked to Melissa's neurologist at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN, about SUDEP and came up with a better way the clinic can educate both newly diagnosed and longtime epileptics about SUDEP. My family also wanted to sponsor a billboard to create awareness of SUDEP, and have a picture of Melissa on a busy highway that goes into Rochester. I talked with a billboard company that has several electronic billboards around Rochester. They came up with a deal where they would help support my cause and Melissa could be on up to 5 billboards at any one time for 6 months! I started to cry when they told me that because I never would have been able to afford all that. Since the billboards are electronic, the message can easily be changed, so for the month of October, the SUDEP Action Day Logo and the date has been added.

I knew this was something special, so I contacted the three TV stations in town and asked if they wanted to do a human-interest story on Melissa, SUDEP and the billboards. ABC News KAAL TV said they would love to do a story. I think the story was a wonderful tribute to Melissa and helped create SUDEP awareness. The story is [online here](#).

There isn't a lot of community support for people with epilepsy, but we just learned how epilepsy is considered a disability that qualifies for Social Security Disability Income if you have uncontrolled seizures for more than three months. This would provide some income if you can't drive to work while you get your medications adjusted. This was always a concern for Melissa. Also, employers are usually required under the Americans with Disabilities Act to provide a leave of absence so you have a job to come back to.

Creating this awareness has snowballed and one thing lead to another. We are sure that Melissa is happy knowing that her death is helping other families avoid this terrible tragedy.

- **As shared by David and Evonne Schlobohm**