

All About Awareness!

By: Steven Nguyen

As many of you know, October is a month of awareness for many different causes. From something widely known like breast cancer, to something probably less known like Retts Syndrome, and everything in between.

October is also Spina Bifida Awareness month. For me, Spina Bifida awareness will always be near and dear to my heart, because it's something that I live with every day. Spina Bifida, which in Latin means "*split spine*", is a birth defect in which the spine does not completely form. Many who were born with Spina Bifida also develop secondary diagnoses.



Although it is considered a common birth defect, affecting 1 out of every 1,500 births, chances are you or someone around you may have never heard of it. The message that is widely shared, for Spina Bifida, during the month, is the importance of including folic acid in your diet. Research suggests that if women of child-

bearing age take 400 micrograms of folic acid, daily, it can reduce the incidence of Spina Bifida by up to 70%. For more information about Spina Bifida, please visit: www.spinabifidaassociation.org

As someone who uses a manual wheelchair to get around, I often notice a lot of adults and children staring out of curiosity. I do my best, daily, to leave the lines of communication open to those interested in learning about my disability. I live my life in the most meaningful and most productive way possible, and by being a positive role model to other youth who are going through what I go through.

Whatever cause(s) you're passionate about, I hope you take the opportunity to educate others, spread the message on social media platforms, participate in community functions, and what I think is most important, celebrating the lives of all affected. If you're on the other side, take the opportunity to learn about difference causes and get involved. Everyone can do their part in raising awareness and celebrating!

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