



[www.ReadingForRachel.org](http://www.ReadingForRachel.org)

*Help us find a cure for transverse myelitis!*

Dear Participants in the Reading for Rachel Program:

Let me introduce myself. My name is Cathy and I am the mother of three wonderful young children: Matthew, Kevin and Rachel. Our lives were changed forever on October 9, 1999 when Rachel (who was 6 1/2 months old at the time) woke up and was paralyzed from the neck down. She spent 18 days in the hospital where she was diagnosed with a rare condition called Transverse Myelitis, a neurological syndrome caused by inflammation of the spinal cord. In Rachel's case, doctors feel the virus she had at the time caused her immune system to attack her spinal cord, causing her spinal cord injury. Thankfully, Rachel has regained the use of her arms, but she remains totally paralyzed from the waist down.

The prognosis for Rachel is uncertain; as it is for everyone who contracts TM.

Transverse Myelitis can occur to anyone of any age and it can occur at any point along the spinal cord. TM is a devastating condition that effects persons in a variety of ways. Typically the outcome is eventual paralysis, sensory loss, and bowel and bladder dysfunction. However, many individuals also report experiencing chronic (sometimes severe) pain associated with their TM. It is estimated that there are only about 34,000 people in the United States with TM. The Transverse Myelitis Association represents and advocates for people in the United States with TM, as well as the members of the Association from more than 40 countries around the world.

Rachel's birthday is March 24th. In honor of her birthday, her brothers, Matthew and Kevin, launched the inaugural Reading for Rachel Program in March 2000.

Matthew and Kevin are starting a tradition in honor of their sister, and we are hoping that you will become a part of this tradition by participating in this wonderful learning experience. All funds received by The Transverse Myelitis Association for the Reading for Rachel Program will be used exclusively for research to better understand TM, to find treatments for the symptoms of TM, and to ultimately find a cure.

Matthew and Kevin are asking other students to help raise funds to support TM research by finding sponsors who will pledge and pay for each of the books they read during the month of March. Not only does this project provide research funds for

The Transverse Myelitis Association, but it provides wonderful lessons about life and educational opportunities for all who participate. We have provided all of the materials you will need to get started on the internet at <http://www.ReadingForRachel.org>. These include the following forms, in addition to a brief video clip of Rachel:

- A letter from Rachel's brothers, Matthew and Kevin
- m** Bookmark forms to keep track of all of the books you read for Rachel
- m** Sponsor and pledge forms
- m** A Reminder/Receipt for your sponsors

The Transverse Myelitis Association is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to providing mutual support to families affected by Transverse Myelitis, to offering education and advocacy and to encouraging research in the area of TM. To learn more about TM or The Transverse Myelitis Association, please visit the TMA Website at: [www.myelitis.org](http://www.myelitis.org).

All tax-deductible contributions can be mailed directly to:

The Transverse Myelitis Association  
Paula Lazzeri, Treasurer  
10105 167<sup>th</sup> Place NE  
Redmond, WA 98052-3125

My husband, Dan and I are so proud of our sons for starting this wonderful annual project in honor of their sister, Rachel. It gives them a real sense of purpose as we patiently wait for Rachel's uncertain recovery. We are most appreciative of your support of the Reading for Rachel Program and The Transverse Myelitis Association. Your generosity and caring offers hope to Rachel and to the many other children and adults with TM.

Sincerely,

*Cathy Dorocak*

Rachel's Mom

And National and International Chair of the Reading for Rachel Program

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