

December 28, 2016

Dear Task Force Members:

As a child who has grown up with many food allergies and who is now 15 years old, I have noticed many things throughout elementary school and middle school that have been very upsetting.

In elementary school, for the first four years at every lunchtime I had to sit at the peanut-free table rather than sit with my friends to eat--which I hated. I felt alone and isolated. Eventually in fourth grade, I asked my mom to talk to the nurse to allow me to sit at a regular table because I just wanted to sit with my friends at lunch. By the fourth grade, my friends knew me and my needs but sitting at the peanut-free table, I was being separated from my friends just because of a few allergies. Instead of making kids feel singled out and different, a simple solution is to teach kids about allergies and how to adapt to their peers who have allergies. Kids want to help their friends but they first need the education to know how to help.

Another major problem I noticed throughout elementary and middle school is that teachers single out kids with allergies. Every single year when the holiday season would come around and students would ask the teachers why we were not allowed to bring food to the class parties, the teachers would blame it on the kids with allergies. Once before a holiday party, I had a teacher actually say to the class, "And we're not allowed to bring food to the party tomorrow because those allergy kids ruin it for everyone." I remember just turning completely red and having some of my friends who knew about my allergies look over at me. At the time, I felt completely singled out and it was definitely not the first time something like that had happened. If students and teachers had been taught about allergies and how to deal with peers having allergies these situations could have been avoided.

I thank you for looking into food allergies in schools and for considering the point of view of students with food allergies. In the end, we just want to be considered students.

Sincerely,

Juliette Donovan
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