

NOMINEE SUBMISSION

I am humbled to be nominated by Epilepsy Ireland for the Golden Light awards and I am absolutely delighted to be considered for such an accolade.

I was first diagnosed with epilepsy at 11 years of age and ever since then, I have always tried to be as open as possible about my epilepsy. Of course, there are times when you wish you did not have to and rather not talk about epilepsy but throughout my life, I have always seen these conversations as crucially important to helping others understand epilepsy and how it affects me & others.

I love being a media volunteer for Epilepsy Ireland. It gives me and others like me the opportunity to speak to a wider audience about the condition and hopefully, helps them learn so much more. Through this role, I've been able to talk about my experience with epilepsy to wide audiences – particularly around International Epilepsy Day 2020 when I participated in a [live TV interview with Ireland AM](#) and also took part in a written interview with one of Ireland's leading publications – [The Irish Independent](#).

I know that if I can reach one person with my experience – be it a member of the general public or another person with epilepsy - that it can have an immense impact on helping them understand or be more open about the condition.

Like many people with epilepsy, I have had negative experiences associated with living with the condition but in so far as possible, I have used those experiences to try and help increase understanding and awareness. My participation in the 2020 International Epilepsy Day campaign was one such example of this. I was the "Myth-Buster" for the myth that there is only one type of seizure.

The tag line for my image was "I'm not drunk, I'm having a seizure." This is something that I had first-hand experience of, and I know how the public can have a fixed image of epilepsy in their minds. I enjoyed embracing and thereby dispelling the myth through the campaign and sharing my image to help others learn more.

I have also experienced stigma because of my epilepsy – particularly at the outset of my journey with the condition when I was first diagnosed. Living with epilepsy can be difficult enough but this can be exasperated during a person's teenage years. Despite how difficult this experience was and how it can be still difficult to talk about until this day – I still recognise the importance of speaking about it; particularly for others who may now be going through a similar situation. This is something I spoke about with the Sunday Business Post as part of the campaign for International Epilepsy Day 2021.

Outside of my public awareness raising, on a personal level I am also running a grassroots campaign to help draw attention to a long-standing advocacy issue for people with epilepsy in Ireland and that is the issue surrounding a Free Travel pass for people with epilepsy. Unfortunately, unlike other countries, there is no mechanism in Ireland for people with epilepsy in Ireland to directly access a Free Travel pass – should they temporarily be put off the road due to a seizure or choose not to drive as a result of their condition. This is an issue that Epilepsy Ireland are campaigning on but alongside this, I launched a specific page and petition on this issue to help raise awareness of the impact this issue is having on people with epilepsy in Ireland. The petition has received over 1,500 signatures to date.

I would be absolutely delighted to receive a Golden Light award; however, I must say that I am delighted to be considered by the IBE and to be nominated by Epilepsy Ireland. I know there are wonderful young epilepsy advocates across Ireland – many of whom have also shared their experience to help increase awareness. If selected as a recipient of this award, I would not look at this as an individual award but an award representative of all the work that has been done by young people across Ireland to increase understanding of epilepsy.

Thank you for the time and consideration given to my nomination and please do not hesitate to contact me should you wish to discuss any aspect of my nomination further.