We'd like to share this letter with you as a reminder of the powerful words that have given us the courage and strength to form the

CODY DIERUF BENEFIT FOUNDATION FOR CYSTIC FIBROSIS

We don't want to see another family endure a similar situation such as ours.

CODY NICOLE DIERUF ❦ NOVEMBER 8, 1981–APRIL 28, 2005

Cody Nicole Dieruf lost her courageous battle with Cystic Fibrosis April 28, 2005, with her loving family around her. Cody was born Nov. 8, 1981, to George A. and Ginny Dieruf of Bozeman, Montana. In lieu of a typical obituary, this is the story of Cody's life as told in her own words:

I used to lie awake at night thinking of the futures I would never achieve–graduate school, an established career, the archetypical house with the white picket fence and matching porch swing, Saturday morning cartoons with the kids and playing catch in the yard, even things like wrinkles, cellulite, and the way my hands will spot and satin with age. I used to dwell on the could-nots" and the "impossibles." Now, however, I dream about how I can make the time I have remaining as incredible and meaningful as is possible, and then more. I want to fill my life with as many experiences as my body will allow and to fill each day, each minute, with as much beauty as I can, because I know this body and these minutes are not forever.

Also, I seem to feel as if every moment in my life now, not just the typical emblematic incidences, is a milestone, a turning point, to be marked as an epic event, as things have become so difficult and require so much energy. I am now trying to make each moment as special and memorable as I can, whatever it may be—a new outfit for a first date, a sassy haircut at a stylish salon so that I can walk into a college party feeling like an edgy princess (Supercuts may be able to copy the do but not the attitude), taking my poor college friends out to dinner, or maybe even a triple latte instead of a single. Perhaps that sounds silly, but I have talked with elders in the past about what they would do differently if they had their lives to live over again. I have heard "walk around barefoot," "be impulsive, extravagant, and spend thrift," "stay up past my bedtime," and "eat two helpings of dessert ... first." Well, I guess you could say that I am approaching my old age now. Cystic fibrosis is my old age. No, I will never see the skin on my hands turn into wrinkled silk as they sleep in the hands of the one I love. However, I already have the aching joints, and the crepe paper lungs, the cough of an 80-year-old man laughing in my abdomen, snoring behind my sternum. My rib cage is every bit accommodating to the elder in house—the body—stretching and expanding, temporarily with each breath, permanently with each year and my spine shakes hands with gravity. So I am lucky, I guess, to be simultaneously young and old. As a result, I won't look back on life and say, "If I had it to do over again, I would..." It is funny, but it is almost as if I am living in the present and in the future and am thus conscious of what I want now and what I will want later in life. A perfect blend. No regrets.

Facing one's mortality can be a very scary and painful experience, but I also strongly believe that it can be beautiful, too. It is just hard to see sometimes. The sicker I get, the more difficult the little things become, but consequently, the more victories I have—making it up a flight of stairs or down the block or through a slow dance with a close friend, without getting short of breath—triumph. Before long, taking a breath will be the sweetest victory imaginable. But, all so beautiful. Perhaps I, we, should count ourselves fortunate to be able to find the grace, the splendor, the potential in the ordinary, the expected, the taken for granted, *"Life"*.

Special thanks to my best friend, my brother, Levi.

—Written by Cody Dieruf in hopes of touching individuals lives in their day to day struggles—

Send monetary donations to: Cody Dieruf Foundation
P.O. Box 6044, Bozeman, MT 59771
www.breathinisbelievin.org
www.codydieruf.com

breathin' is believin'™
CODY DIERUF BENEFIT FOUNDATION