



BETA
PHILADELPHIA
Local Diver Featured on NBC10

Some say diving is on everybody's "bucket list"; it is one of those things people say they have always wanted to do but they just don't get around to it. But, Kit McElwee is not like everybody. That's why her amazing quest to dive caught the attention of NBC10 sports reporter, Jade McCarthy. Kit's story was filmed for the Philadelphia channel 10 feature "Game Changers for the Dec. 8th 11pm broadcast.

"When I was at my lowest point...I decided to take up diving" said the 28 year old.

A little known disease, histiocytosis, began wreaking havoc in Kit's bones, joints, skull, and heart between the spring and summer of 2007. The tumor producing condition banished her to a wheelchair and ultimately crushed her optic nerve, stealing her sight.

As she struggled to hold on to her life and hope, her brother, a certified diver and lifeguard reminded her of a promise. He had previously been to Epcot and promised his sister that the next time she would dive the aquarium there with him. During the Game Changers interview, Mark McElwee, Jr proudly admitted: "This is all my fault."

That promise gave Kit the motivation she needed to battle her disease. In time her doctors at the University of Pennsylvania found some treatments that helped. Certainly she has had far more operations, hospitalizations, medications, and shots than any twenty-something ever should. But, as her mother Christine explained: She can walk through the mall now."

It was Christine who first learned of Indian Valley Scuba's connection to IAHD and enrolled Kit in the Adaptive Scuba program. Kit (the daughter of a swim coach and once competitive diver) trained fearlessly. IAHD-certified instructor, Butch Loggins describes Kit as "the best student you could ask for." And so it was that on her sister Cassie's birthday in late October, Kit and her family and the IVS crew headed up to Dutch Springs for her check out dives.

Even watching Kit gear up is an impressive sight. But, it doesn't begin to compare to the adapted communication needed for Kit to be safe and informed under water. At Dutch that day, underwater photographer Randy Rudd asked if Kit would mind if he photographed her. The answer shows not just how much Kit has been through but also what strength and determination she reflects:

She replied: "I've had my head operated on and my chest opened up. I almost died twice last year. Do you think a camera can bother me?"

Just after filming the segment for Game Changers the McElwee's were heading off on vacation—to Epcot. The dream they clung to in their darkest days about to be realized. Their future is still uncertain. But there is no doubt that life has made Kit McElwee a fighter and scuba has put a trainer in her corner and a community of buddies on her side.

It is probably not the way Butch Loggins imagined when his son's war stories from Iraq prompted him to get his IAHD certification. Maybe that just goes to show that the fight for freedom and definition of a hero is broader than one might think.