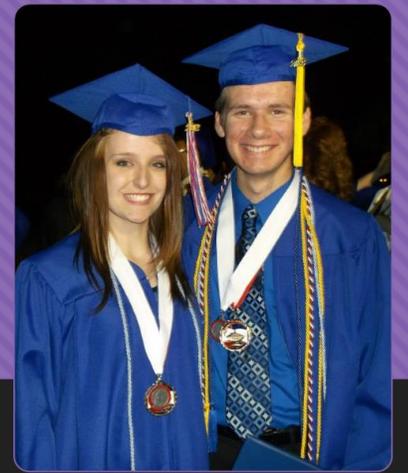


# Emily Levi:

- My name is Emily Levi. I am a twenty-three year old female with Cystic Fibrosis. My disease does not define me, but rather has changed my views on life for the better. I make sure that no matter how many times I get knocked down and CF creates obstacles for me, that I never give up and always find a way to live my life to the fullest. I make sure every day I work hard to accomplish my dreams, adapt to any challenges, and help improve the lives of those around me. Allow me to show you a glimpse of how I overcome my challenges with Cystic Fibrosis.
- Managing CF has always been a part of my daily routine, which can take hours out of the day. I have found that even this works to my benefit as it is time I have to sit down and remain in place, which is the perfect time to do homework, crochet, or practice my Spanish and Swedish. Dealing with hospitalizations and daily CF management doesn't have to be a negative thing. These treatments literally save my life. But I also have found that during these times I don't have to dwell on the differences in my life from those of a healthy person. I can use this management time to improve myself and constantly move forward.
- Countless people have helped me during my journey with CF. Many in ways that I will never be able to repay. I have made it my personal responsibility to give back to my community as others have given back to me. I have volunteered with over ten different organizations since 2014 and have plans to continue to do so. Most of the organizations I volunteer with focus on helping or improving the lives of children, in honor of my own. I believe if we all volunteer to causes we are passionate about, the world would be a much better place.



# Education



- I began high school at Moon Valley in the fall of 2008. After infancy, and up until high school I had been blessed to be extremely healthy. While I was in school I participated in many programs such as the Varsity Swim Team, AP courses, DECA, Spanish Club, Key Club, and worked two part time jobs. During my sophomore year I began coughing up large volumes of blood and spent a large amount of time in the hospital. I eventually was diagnosed with Mycobacterium strains. Excessive absences due to hospitalizations led to me missing too much school and was forced to drop out my sophomore year of high school. I continued to try online programs for the next year and a half. My senior year I felt I had a handle on all of my IVs and medications and wanted to return to campus. At that point I had fallen so far behind, the counselors at the school discouraged the idea, but I persisted. I enrolled back at Moon Valley, took extra classes before and after school on top of my regular classes and work. I graduated at the top of my class with a full ride scholarship to my local college and received an unsung hero award from my school's administration. Overcoming the barriers my CF presented and being able to graduate with my classmates was a huge deal to me. And the first of many victories and accomplishments to follow.
- I began college at Glendale Community College in Glendale, Arizona. While enrolled I was a part of the Honor's College program and Phi Theta Kappa. Although my major did change several times, I was learning what I wanted to be and where my life would take me. In 2014 I transferred to Grand Canyon University, where I also belonged to the Honor's College, to continue my degree in Secondary Education. I had found my calling and was going to do anything to achieve my goals. Unfortunately frequent hospitalizations did not work well for me when it came to GCU. As much as I loved the school, I knew there were better options for me in higher education that would fit better with my unpredictable health. I enrolled at Western Governors University in 2017 where I currently attend to finish my Bachelor's. The transition has been wonderful and I have been succeeding with a school that is able to work around my treatment and hospitalization schedule.

I met my husband Cody while we were still in high school. We both worked at our local Dairy Queen. He quickly became one of my best friends, and I always looked forward to working alongside him. After high school, we began dating and were soon engaged. He has always been incredibly supportive of my journey with CF and never misses an opportunity to help me with chest percussion, mixing IV bags, or encouraging me to push forward. Shortly before we were married, he left to join the US Army. We were married as soon as he graduated Airborne school. His first duty station was overseas in Italy. I was so excited at first at the idea of living with my husband in Italy. But while going through the EFMP process I was denied moving with him because of my CF. I decided that was not going to stop me from being near my husband, so I began working towards getting an Italian work visa and applying for jobs overseas. Tricare then informed me that if I chose to move to Italy without orders I would not be able to be covered under our insurance. So, I waited back in Arizona for my husband to return stateside for orders. Two and a half years later my husband received orders to be stationed in North Carolina. I cannot express how elated I have been being able to live with my husband again and getting to see his smiling face everyday. He has always been and will always be worth the wait.



# Family

Cody and I knew we never wanted to pass on Cystic Fibrosis to a child. Before we were even married we saw a fertility specialist to have complete work ups done to ensure we would be able to have healthy children and that I would be healthy enough to sustain a pregnancy. Once we got the green light from our specialist we began trying for children while my lung function was stable. Our path to parenthood was not without loss. My husband had a son from a previous marriage who passed away due to hospital error. I was able to get pregnant fairly easily, but had numerous miscarriages, due to complications from Cystic Fibrosis. Our hearts were heavy with the losses of what could have been. Those children changed our lives and our hearts, no matter how brief their stays. We do our best to honor our children's lives so that when they look down upon us, they have parents they can be proud of. The love we have to give did not pass away with our children, and we knew we had the resources to help other children. Even if we couldn't do the same for our own. We are currently in the process of becoming foster parents, with the hopes of adoption. We know that the children who come to us are in need of love and stability, and that the circumstances that will occur to cross our paths are terrible. We know as a family we will be able to cope and learn together, and love every child who comes into our home as our own.

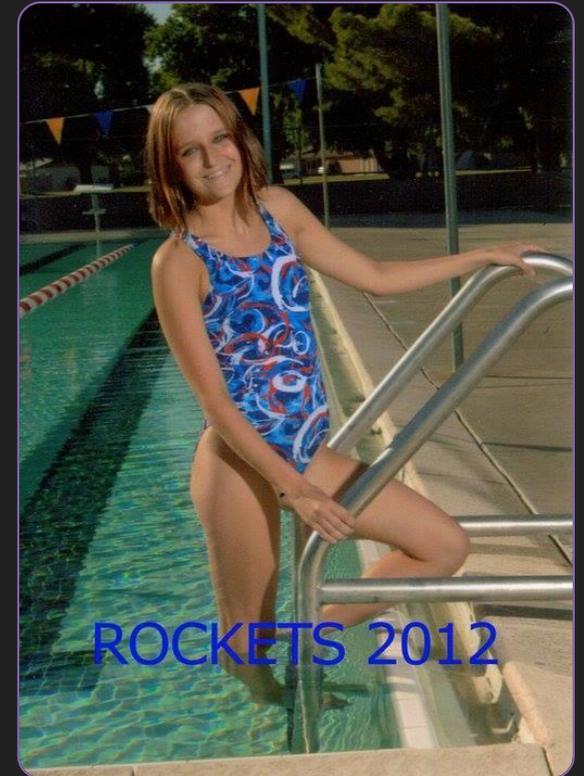
# Employment

- Throughout the years, working with CF has provided some interesting situations. I have worked while toting around an IV pole as a pharmacy technician. I have plugged my pump for my feeding tube into the wall while teaching students how to write a resume. I have taken countless pills while at work, and taken breaks to use my nebulizers. CF never stopped my drive from wanting to work and continuing to show up and do my best every single day, even if that meant equipment came with me! I did have to stop working after my third intestinal rupture, due to major complications. That was an incredibly hard decision to make, but a necessary one to give me the time I needed to recover. Although I still have lots of appointments, and days where I am too ill to work or hospitalized; I am currently back teaching in the classroom as a substitute teacher. I absolutely love what I do. I know that teaching is my calling. Being able to help students understand, learn, and grow isn't a kind of reward you can receive in any other career if you ask me. Being a substitute also allows me the freedom to be able to work when I can, and take care of myself by meeting all my appointments and resting when needed. CF couldn't keep me out of the classroom forever!



# Sports

- I attribute my long standing good health in my youth to being an avid swimmer. My freshman year of high school I placed in State and earned my Varsity letter. By my sophomore year I was one of the top eight female swimmers in the state of Arizona. I loved swimming, it was where I felt the most at home. And the exercise kept my lungs clear of mucus, my body in shape, and the tan was definitely a plus! Once I was diagnosed with the Mycobacterium's though, I had to stop swimming. I couldn't get my Broviac, PICC, or any other lines wet. It took a long time to find a sport I could take all my lines with me in without risking damage, as well as finding an activity that kept me active and happy. Although I miss swimming dearly, I also know that chapter on my life closed, allowing me to open a new one. I now am an avid hiker, and love hiking trails with my dog. While I have lines that are covered by dressings, I do not have to worry about them getting wet or injured by an oncoming flying ball. If my medication is in the form of IV party ball I have even been known to pack up my IVs and hike with them! Hiking is vastly different from swimming, but without it I would have never have been able to see the miles of beautiful nature I have been able to explore.



# Accomplishments and Goals

- I have accomplished many things in my life I am incredibly proud of. The majority are even more significant in my mind because I had to overcome challenges unique to those with CF. I have had my writing published, received an Unsung Hero Award, received recognition from the US Army Volunteer Corps, attained medals and certificates in my ventures. But none will ever make me as proud as my most cherished accomplishment: Letters from my students. When my intestines ruptured all of my students wrote me letters wishing me to get better and saying what I meant to them. That was when I knew, no matter what else I ever did with my life I had done something that mattered. I had made an impact on every single one of those students. And that is an accomplishment beyond measure. CF may create difficulties to achieving my dreams, but I know I will always find a way to achieve them. My goals and dreams for the future include: Travel to Europe, earn my P.H.D, adopt a child, perform with my cello on stage, be on the Board of Education, have the research conducted on me at the NIH improve the lives of all of us with MAC. I know these goals are obtainable, no matter how long it takes me to get there, because I believe in myself and know that I have the love and support of those around me to reach all my dreams and beyond.



Additional information available at:  
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/emily-levi-a17026141/>