

Mother writes about friends with food allergies

One local mother and author is on a mission to increase awareness about the increasingly common food allergies that can threaten the lives of young children.

On Saturday, May 9, Middleton's Amy Recob will hold a launch party for her new book, "The Bugabees: Friends with Food Allergies" and Oompa - a toy store located at 1970 Cayuga St.

Most parents would agree that setting out bowls of poison at a birthday party or handing out loaded guns to trick-or-treaters at Halloween is a very bad idea. However, the risks for fatalities in children like 5-year-old Mollie Recob - the author's daughter - are about the same if the treats that are given contain peanuts or tree nuts.

It is estimated that nearly 3 million children like Mollie are currently managing life threatening food allergies, and that number is on the rise. While a child could be allergic to any type of food, eight foods account for 90 percent of all allergic reactions. They are: peanuts, tree nuts, milk, soy, fish, shellfish, eggs and wheat.

So what's a parent to do? According to Amy Recob, creating awareness is key.

"I think there's a bit of a misconception out there that a food allergy is just intolerance to certain types of food, rather than a serious medical diagnosis," she explains. "While deaths related to food allergies are generally uncommon, they are always an ever present possibility, depending on the level of exposure."

The Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Network reports that food allergies are believed to be the leading cause of anaphylaxis outside the hospital setting, causing an estimated 50,000 emergency department visits each year. It is also estimated that anaphylaxis caused by food results in 150 deaths annually in the U.S. Deaths can be sudden, sometimes occurring within minutes.

"The good news is, more and more people are becoming aware of this issue," says Recob. "The bad news is, it's because more and more kids are having to deal with a food allergy diagnosis."

Most schools, daycare centers and restaurants are making strides in helping to prevent against any serious physical repercussions from allergic reactions from food, but there are real emotional consequences to consider as well, she continued.

"It's hard to explain to a 2-year-old that the candy or cake or treat that everyone else is eating could make them sick," she says. "Instead, they perceive it as some level of punishment, and as a parent, that's hard to watch over and over again."

To help take the focus away from food and all the things her daughter can't have, Recob has written a children's book that focuses on all of the things that she can.

"The Bugabees: Friends with Food Allergies" is a story of eight friends and the different food challenges they face on a daily basis. At home and at school, at the park, or on the beach, Bugabees find ways to stay safe, have fun, and remember that the most important thing in life is the joy of friendship and the love of family. This 24-page book with bold color illustrations is intended for children with pea-nut, milk, fish, wheat, tree nut, soy, egg or shellfish allergies.

Recob hopes her story will help put more of a positive spin on what it means to be a kid, who just so happens to also have a food allergy. For more information, log onto www.the-bugabees.com or attend an upcoming launch party, scheduled in conjunction with National Food Allergy Awareness Week. Launch parties will take place on Saturday, May 9 at Oompa Toys in Middleton from 2-4 p.m., and on Saturday, May 16 at Barnes & Noble West in Madison from 10 a.m. until noon.



Author Amy Recob with her daughter Mollie, who lives with severe food allergies.