



## Why I am doing the “Leap of Faith”

by Samantha Loucks

...continued from front page

*AboutFace volunteer Sam will be jumping out of an airplane this July in support of Camp Trailblazers. This will be her second time participating in the Leap of Faith event, and over the past few years she has volunteered her time at other AboutFace events, as well as hosting her own fundraising bake sale. Read what Sam says encouraged her to participate in Leap of Faith and what AboutFace means to her.*

My name is Samantha and I have a facial difference.

Since 2008 individuals, teams and corporate teams across Canada skydive while fundraising to bring awareness and money in support of sending children aged 10-18 with a facial difference to Camp Trailblazers. Camp Trailblazers is an annual camp, hosted by AboutFace, which allows children and teens with a facial difference to bond with others who understand what it is that we with a facial difference deal with on a daily basis.

Consider for a moment what life could be like raising a son or daughter with a facial difference...or to be someone with a facial difference...surgeries, school, and the challenge of facing life every day with a difference that everyone can see, not to mention the challenge of dealing with societal ignorance and ridicule.

From the AboutFace website...

*Facing such challenges as a parent and as a child requires a leap of faith - faith in the knowledge that there is a strength of spirit in each of us that transcends outward appearances. Children with facial differences need courage to master the challenges of everyday life. The Annual Leap of Faith Skydiving Fundraising Event was created to provide people with the opportunity to mirror their daily "leap of faith" and raise funds in support of AboutFace youth programs including Camp Trailblazers - a unique and wonderful place for children ages 10 -18 with facial differences.*



I have had my facial difference for more than 14 years, since the age of 10. I underwent more than a dozen invasive surgical procedures between 2005 and 2010 in order to attempt to correct the damage caused by my condition: Linear scleroderma. Linear scleroderma is a degenerative auto immune condition which caused my body to destroy all the fat, tissue and muscle in the right side of my face. By the time I was 13 years old, I had only skin and bone on one half of my face. I was bullied, stared at, and have had rude comments made towards me by children and adults alike. In high school, I was picked on, called things like "Quasimodo", "freak", "ugly", "bruised apple" and at one point a



group of guys used to say "flip a coin!" whenever I came by, in reference to Two-Face from Batman. Once, I was even fired from a job after being told by a new manager that I was "not pretty enough" to continue working there.

I struggled a great deal with depression, anxiety and incredibly low self-esteem from the time of my diagnosis until the age of 21, when I sought out professional help. Although I am much happier and confident than I ever thought possible in my teenage years, having a visible difference is still a struggle. People can be cruel and judgmental, and not being able to walk out my front door without being stared at everywhere I go is sometimes quite a challenge.



I decided to take part in Leap of Faith again because I so firmly believe in what AboutFace is doing and I love what Camp Trailblazers provides to young people with a facial difference. When I was first diagnosed, I wanted more than anything to have someone who understood me and what I was going through. Unfortunately, I didn't discover AboutFace until I was in my twenties. Although I'm too old to attend Trailblazers as a camper, I love the idea that I can face my fear while simultaneously helping to send deserving kids to camp and hopefully help those kids to avoid many of the emotional hardships I had to endure. I really knew I did something right in jumping last year when, in December, I received a beautiful card from a camper named Braidy who attended Trailblazers last September. In her card, Braidy thanked me for raising the money I did and told me what a great time she was having.

If you can, **please donate** to this wonderful cause. Each jumper has to raise a **minimum of \$1000** in order to jump. EVERY little bit counts (last year my donation amounts went from \$10 to \$500) and your money will be going towards something that is so near and dear to my heart.

And please **share** this note with your friends and family and encourage them to donate. Even if they can't, if they read my note/my sponsorship page and share it and/or if they visit the AboutFace website, we can raise awareness of this charity and what it is they do. I hope that, one day, I and others in my community will be able to walk out in the world without fear of judgment.

**[Want to sponsor Leap of Faith and help send kids to camp? CLICK HERE!](#)**

**[My photo album - see my journey with my facial difference HERE.](#)**

**[www.aboutface.ca](http://www.aboutface.ca)**

Thanks for reading!

xo  
Sam