

## A Family Portrait

# ED BUCKNER



Ed Buckner is the Chief Meteorologist at KTHV-TV in Little Rock, Arkansas. He has a mild case of Tourette Syndrome plus OCD, ADD and Autism, but nothing stands in the way of his dedication to his television audience, family and charitable work. He recently shared his personal experiences with local viewers in a program segment entitled *Ed Buckner — Living with Tourette Syndrome*.

### We've featured many people with interesting careers but you are our first meteorologist. Please tell our readers a little about your career.

I grew up interested in music and wanted to be a disc jockey. I went to Steven F. Austin State University in Texas and majored in communications. I had no earthly intention of being on TV. I did get a job as a disc jockey, but there wasn't much money in it and so I went on to operate a camera at a TV station. I loved being behind the camera. But one day the weather girl was out sick and I was asked to fill in. I loved it. So from music and radio I ended up in front of the camera.

I never knew why God put me there until now. My prominence helps people. I inform people about tornado warnings and sharing my TS story helps people, too. I had not dreamt that I could help others this way. I'm a big fish in a small pond. Although I'm not that kind of person, I have that kind of role.

### Is it true that you did not receive a definitive diagnosis until you were an adult and already working in the media?

That is the blessing of my life. There's no way to know how I would have reacted at 13 to a label (of TS). The doctor said it was just nervous tics. I fidgeted a lot. It's a mild case but I did have those movements that grew worse as I grew older. It wasn't until I went to a neurologist at 38 that I learned it was a mild form of TS. I tried medications, but I had a horrible time with them.

### How do you handle tics while you're on air?

I hide them in public and on TV during my three minutes on the news. I had always hidden them in public. When I don't hide my tics I tell people that it's TS. But on the air I didn't dream of talking about TS.

### What made you change your mind about talking about TS on the air?

Prayer, talking to my wife, thinking about it. My tics were getting worse and I have true faith in God. Maybe he was allowing me to have this so I'd take a chance, a leap of faith and tell people about my TS. The gist of my message is that everyone has something. It's how you deal with it that shows who you are.

This is the way I can help. You would not believe the response I got from my local community. I've given hope to so many, received so many e-mails, started visiting schools. If we all understand TS it becomes easier for everyone.

### How did you cope with your tics during your teen years?

I learned how to suppress them. Other than that, I didn't have to cope. I'm very literal, I'm not embarrassed around other people and don't give folks who don't accept me the energy I'd need to worry about them. It's the way my mind works. I'm not going to worry about them. It's always black or white. It's a blessing that I was wired this way. It made me stronger and better able to deal with it.

### What do you think of media portrayals of people with TS and other neurological disorders?

I haven't noticed it being very negative and getting out the word is wonderful. It's

important for the media to get the word out about TS, but I think people tune it out if they are not affected by it. It's a natural reaction. If you don't have a child with Autism, you're not interested in studies about mercury or National Autism Month. If you do, you are interested.

### You work in a high stress position. How do you cope?

What works for me is alone time. I'm an introvert in an extrovert's job. When I'm dealing with a tornado or speaking in front of 500 people I don't want to be there. I have to recharge when I'm alone. An extrovert recharges in the crowd. I do feel guilty about taking time to myself but my family supports me. I need to lie there and let the tics out. I lie there, I pray and relax. Music, listening to it and playing it, is also a good.

### What is your advice for children with TS and their parents?

For parents — love your children for who they are and don't try to change them or hide anything. Accept them and encourage them. There's a hidden gem under all those tics. My daughter is developing facial tics. She has Autism and ADD. I tell her, "You are perfect. This is the way God has wired you."

As for advice to kids — accept what you have and try to do good with it.

## Champion of Children Awards Dinner

The 2008 Champion of Children Awards Dinner will be held February 27 at the Beverly Wilshire in Beverly Hills, California. Longtime TSA supporters Jeffrey and Ashley McDermott will be honored. If you are interested in attending, call Mark Levine in the Development Office at (718) 224-2999 ext. 230.

