

Audience Testimonials and Professional References - Amy Oestreicher

Audience Testimonials:

Jenni, Oncology Patient, Washington, US

“You are the first person I have heard of that has been through something similar, although much worse than I can even imagine and I just had to tell you our story and tell you how much I admire you. I will never stop thinking about your performance.”

Roni, NY Survivor Advocate

“I’m the one you invited from Sexual Violence Response. I think it is important that you know that I have worked as a social worker with interpersonal violence and I am a survivor myself. Interestingly enough, one of the audience members asked someone what they thought the play’s message was, which started a meaningful dialogue. I know that this one conversation alone signified the importance of your play – that one person will leave with a better understanding of how trauma not only affects the individual but the family as well. The more people talk about it, (write about it), acknowledge it, the better people will learn to deal with it in a genuine way. That is why this play needs to be seen.”

Mindy, Medical Student, New Zealand

“Thank you for opening up and touring and turning your personal challenges and trials into something that others can learn from, that may well save someone else’s life one day. You can’t live in this world without suffering some kind of trauma or tragedy; I believe your sharing your story so widely will literally give someone on the edge the hope and vision they need to move forward instead of continuing down their road of despair and loss. I’m sure it already has, many times, whether these people contact you or not. Life can be so difficult; thank you for spreading light and love where you can.

Also, thank you for sharing your story from a patient’s perspective. I’m a medical student, and decided to study medicine at age 34 after working in both professional and volunteer capacity throughout underdeveloped countries and with vulnerable populations- genocide refugees, people living under communist governments, communities with limited resources, etc. I decided to make a career switch to medicine because everywhere I went there was a shortage of much-needed doctors. I’ve noticed in med school that many of the students don’t understand the empathetic side of medicine. They don’t realize that they are not treating a disease, they are treating a person. They don’t realize that treating patients means treating the whole family, because everyone is suffering together, and everyone is worried and feeling scared and helpless. I watched a fellow student get overly excited when she had made a correct diagnosis, crying out “YES! It’s cancer!” and I cringed in horror that she hadn’t connected that this likely meant that someone was going to die.

So I want to thank you for sharing your story from that perspective as well. I hope lots of medical students read your words, and understand that behind every “interesting” condition or disease, there’s a real person, with a real story. Thank you for spreading kindness and light. We need more of it.”

Marilyn, Surgeon, New York, US

“I saw your show and was moved by your honesty and your bravery. I was a general surgeon (I now do wound care) and so I can fully appreciate your struggles. I am inspired by your pursuit of life and all you can experience. You do not let being an “intestinal cripple” keep you confined”.

Tina, WOCN Nurse, Regional Conference, NY

“You did such an amazing job with the presentation and I have to be honest – we had some excellent speakers over two days but none got a standing ovation!”

Daniel, NJ, US

“I’m sure you received many emails in regards to Gutless and Grateful. Thanks for inspiring us to look at the problems we face down the road as detours. I’m not sure what sense to make of the current detours I’m facing and it’s hard to love your detours when they sometimes hurt so much. However we can’t let those detours determine where we’ll end up simply that they’ve made the trip a little longer to where we want to be. That’s what I got from your show, and then I found your TEDx Talk, and it came right on time for me to have a new perspective on the issues currently sending me down another road. Your New Fan and Fellow Human”

Roger, Pennsylvania, US

“This was theatre unlike I’ve ever seen. I just want to say Thank you for having the courage to let others know about your issues- as a 47 year old survivor of currently 12 major surgeries(at least 1 more to go soon) and uncounted minor procedures- it is always good to see others talk about it – especially younger people- letting others know they are not alone and though a struggle, we can still function- even if it is modified.”

Janet, Pennsylvania, US

“I was drawn to your show because my son had similar ostomy issues for several years and I recall the endless leaks from his fistula additional 3 ostomies. I wanted to reach out to you and thank you. There are many of “us” who can relate to your story, and I hope you hear from others, for your own encouragement as well as for the great tips that many often share along the way. You are a brave, inspiring person and I hope that your show reaches even more. We need to hear this daily. Thank you again for sharing your story and for your example of strength and hope.”

Dan, sent via online form (was given national resources for suicide prevention)

“Good Morning, I was thinking this morning of taking my own life. This 64 year old body, pectus excavatum, psoriasis and double vision from detached retina. Maybe I don’t have it so bad. I was watching your video clips and now I want to hold on for more and more days. Thank you. Dan.”

Lisa, London, England

“I just found out about your story and your show, and it was such an inspiration to me. Last year I had elective weight loss surgery. In 2 weeks, an infection developed creating a 9cm abscess and sepsis. I was rushed into surgery to clean the infection but it was nearly too late. My kidneys completely shut down and my lungs had started to shut down. I was hours from death. I was suicidal many times and struggled with depression. I read all about your show and it changed everything for me. I went through only a small fraction of what you have experienced and yet you remain so upbeat and positive. Your zeal for life after your ordeal is an inspiration to me. Thank you so much.”

Lee Goldstein, TLAN Network Conference Attendee, Missouri US

“I’m writing to express my appreciation of your wonderfully ingenious operetta. The Broadway sense of your performance was very, very clever a thing to compose and perform on..”

Cathy, WOCN Nurse

*“Thank you for an inspiring talk at this weekend’s **WOCN** conference. The part that you should be most excited about, is that the people who were in your audience for this talk (nurses!) can act on your shared insights. My biggest “take away” from your talk is to remember to just listen. Sometimes I just want to make things better, but I’m often defining that by what I think will make things better. I wanted you to know what your perspective meant to me. Thank you!”*

Professional References:

**Talya Kingston, Visiting Assistant Professor of Theatre, School for Interdisciplinary Arts
Hampshire College**

“Recently, Amy Oestreicher performed Gutless and Grateful, to a packed house at Hampshire College, framed around her remarkable life journey from teenage ingenue to survivor of trauma and countless complicated medical procedures and finally to a place of gratitude. The production, which received rave reviews in its off-Broadway debut, contains beautifully sung musical theatre numbers as well as honest personal narrative. Gutless and Grateful was co-sponsored at Hampshire by the Theatre Program and the campus wellness center, a useful tool to talk to students about mental health issues and a powerful testament to the healing potential of the arts. Amy’s seemingly unlimited energy and enthusiasm is infectious.”

Aaron Ferguson, Disability Counselor, Hampshire College

“You are what every campus needs right now. If we had more people with your desire to get the student body talking, a lot of issues could be brought to light.”

Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg, Kansas Poet Laureate 2009-13, and founder of Transformative Language Art at Goddard College

See reference letter from TLAN Coordinator, Terri Grunthaler: [TLAN Letter](#)

“Amy Oestreicher not only shows us the power of the purest kind of perseverance, but she does so in song and dance, telling her astonishing story of surviving a daunting and lengthy medical nightmares without allowing her challenge to strip her of her dreams. She brings to life the transformative power of music, theater, dance, and storytelling along with many other arts to educate and inspire our souls as to what is possible. It was a privilege to have her perform her breathtaking one-woman show at the Power of Words conference.”

Roy Sander, critic for [BistroAwards.com](#)

One part moving testament to human indomitability, the other a thoroughly satisfying evening of song. While each element is strong enough to stand on its own, combined they illuminate and enhance each other. Rarely have I seen narration and song so artfully meshed, and Oestreicher’s likeability, good humor, interpretive skill, and manifest commitment to what she is saying and singing make us not only understand her story, but also feel it on a very deep level.

Elizabeth Tomey Annual Regional Ostomy Meeting

“Thank you for sharing your story from a patient’s perspective. I’m a medical student, and I’ve noticed in med school that many of the students don’t understand the empathetic side of medicine. They don’t realize that they are not treating a disease, they are treating a person, who is likely scared, desperate, and feeling helpless. They don’t realize that treating patients means treating the whole family, because everyone is suffering together, and everyone is worried and feeling scared and helpless. Your presentation alone shows that behind every “interesting” condition or disease, there’s a real person, with a real story.”

Josh Rivedal, Founder, Executive Director of The i’Mpossible Project, International Speaker on Suicide Prevention and Mental Health

I have worked with Amy for several months and truly have seen her aim to make a difference in the college community come to fruition and take form. Amy has a uniquely innovative idea of combining mental health, sexual assault prevention and Broadway Theatre as a way to address the gap between mental health resources and students. Amy is a force of so much that is good in a person and an artist.

Dr. Sharon Weiss-Greenberg, Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance Conference

She delivered a moving talk and performance at the JOFA conference, was an amazing contributor in publicizing the event, and I am confident that that her efforts paid off. We are so grateful for the experience, passion, and enthusiasm she brought to us. We were grateful to have had the opportunity for Amy to present with the strength, story and resilience that have moved and empowered the members of our community.

Adrienne Thoman, Activities Director, Central Penn College

It was wonderful to have you on campus. Thank you for sharing your story with our students! Your story was so powerful, and the students and other attendees took so much away from it.

Leslie McKay, Executive Director of the Eating Recovery Center Foundation

“Through her theatrical performance of Gutless & Grateful, Amy Oestreicher invites us along for her personal journey through challenging medical, social and emotional experiences in her life, all the while dancing—not walking—on the eggshells that typically come with discussing tough topics like eating disorders. Amy’s narrative brings her life challenges into perspective, allowing the audience to contemplate life’s possibilities amidst their own pitfalls.”

Gwen Ossenkop, Coordinator of Student Activities; Fulton Montgomery Community College

“Amy is an exceptional artist whose talent far surpassed our expectations! We are so happy to of had the opportunity to have her on campus! Our clubs were thrilled with her performance!”

Rebecca Greene Van Horn – Lesley University Adjunct faculty

“We loved your show...it was a wonderful example of how drama is therapeutic. Congratulations, Amy. What you’re doing is not only making a difference in your life and healing, but making a difference in so many other lives as well.”

Lee Goldstein, TLAN Network Conference Attendee

“I’m writing to express my appreciation of your wonderfully ingenious operetta. Indeed, I was moonstruck! The Broadway sense of your performance was very, very clever a thing to compose and perform-on the drama of your illness- and authentic at that.”

Robin Nasitir, Friends of Ostomates Worldwide Foundation

“I find you an inspiration. You’re proof that we all need to tell our stories. Then your story becomes intertwined with another’s and whether we ever know it or not our personal story may just be enough to give another HOPE.”

David Friedman, film and theatre composer

“She is, at once, one of the most independent and one of the most collaborative people I know. She is an inspirational figure to be sure, but her creativity expands well beyond her story.”

Jeanine Esposito, Founder, Beechwood Arts

“Amy has continued to inspire and surprise me, our patrons and other artists through her consummate, ever-flowing creativity, incredible message of strength and resilience, her overwhelming joy and love of life against great odds and her dedication and passion to her creative work. If I were reading this letter, I would think this was hyperbole, but I would be mistaken. She is a force of so much that is good in a person and an artist. She knows what she wants to say, yet is open to input to shape her output and to collaboration with many art forms. In her case, it is a benefit that she is so prolific in her writing, her art and her music. They all inform the work she is doing and it makes her an empathetic collaborator.”

Carole Rubin, Professor at Mercaz Hebrew High School, Bridgeport, CT

“Amy Oestreicher did an amazing presentation to a large group of Jewish high school students at a one night a week Hebrew High School meeting at Congregation B’nai Israel in Bridgeport, CT. The course title is ‘Hope and Survival’ and was extremely fitting to her inspiring story. Students felt comfortable enough to reach out to her after her talk, and she was a tremendous support and much-needed lift.”

Larry Berger, Technical Director/Music and Dance Hampshire College

It was an honor to have Amy Oestreicher’s presentation of Gutless and Grateful on our campus. Her performance was riveting in its candor. Her technique, delivery and artistry were all impressive and equally effective. She took a unique and deeply personal story and turned it into something that every person in the audience could identify with. Amy is a great talent and she carries an important message.

Boston College (Contact UGBC for a personal reference)

“She uses her triumphant tale to inspire others to reevaluate their approaches to life.”

Raechel Segal, Diversability Committee, Clark University

Despite the show's serious content, Amy effectively used comedy and acute vocalizations to tell a sometimes funny but consistently captivating story. Don't sit back and relax, because Amy Oestreicher's Gutless and Grateful is a musical thrill-ride!