

Arthritis Foundation, Northeast Region Youth Ambassador Program Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Youth Ambassador Program?

The Youth Ambassador (YA) Program is a new advocacy initiative for children/teens with arthritis. Youth Ambassadors share their story of life with arthritis to help raise awareness of the disease. As a representative of the Arthritis Foundation (AF), Youth Ambassadors will enable those who do not have a connection with arthritis – especially the nearly 300,000 children with juvenile arthritis – to put a face to the disease.

How do I know if the Youth Ambassador Program is for me?

The AF is looking for Youth Ambassadors, ages 10-18 years, who are:

- Willing to share their personal story, both in writing and in front of groups, at AF programs and events, meetings with elected officials, etc.
- Enthusiastic and passionate about finding a cure for arthritis
- Interested in meeting with peers and receiving individual/group training from AF staff and volunteers

I'm interested! How do I get started in the Youth Ambassador Program?

- Request a YA application from your local AF office
- Draft your arthritis story and submit it with your application and photo
- Once your completed application packet has been received, the AF will send you a letter that officially welcomes you to the program and provides information on your first activities.

What types of activities will I be asked to complete as a Youth Ambassador?

- Writing a letter to your elected official telling them your story
- Scheduling a visit with your elected official in his/her local congressional office
- Telling your story at an AF event
- Helping to recruit advocates at an Arthritis Walk or Jingle Bell Run
- Recruiting adults you know to become e-advocates
- Recruiting your pediatric rheumatologist and other health care providers to become advocates within the Arthritis Providers and Researchers Advocacy Alliance (APRAA)
- Attending a town hall meeting with your parent
- Finding a way to tell your arthritis story (or do research on kids with arthritis, etc.) through one of your existing activities – school project, etc.
- Participating in phone calls or reading emails/written directions to learn about the activities
- Brainstorming other meaningful ways for YAs to get involved with the AF
- At some point over the next year, we would hope to provide an opportunity to get the YAs together in person.

**What is the expected time commitment?**

Consistent with the existing Ambassador Program for adults, YA tasks will be distributed on a bimonthly basis. Some will be quick and easy while others a bit more time-intensive. In between, if opportunities to share one's story arise, they could be added in as an optional task. YAs will need to complete at least 4 of 6 activities over a 12-month period to maintain active status in the program.

While we of course are looking for committed YAs, in no way do we want program involvement to become too demanding. It is our overall vision to provide the YAs with a series of meaningful – and reasonable – opportunities for engagement.

How can I get more information about the Youth Ambassador Program?

You can always reach out to your local Chapter office for information about any of our programs, including the YA Program. You can also contact Michele Disken Greco, MPA, Regional Director of Public Policy & Advocacy at mgreco@arthritis.org for further information.