



Emily Gebhardt
Arthritis Walk Youth Honoree
Indianapolis, Indiana

Emily had always been a happy and healthy baby, and she was hardly ever sick; except for the occasional cold or ear infection. All of that changed in November, 2007. Emily was eight years old when her dad noticed her right knee was swollen. It didn't hurt, and she had no complaints of pain. Emily went to her pediatrician where an x-ray of her knee was ordered. She was diagnosed with a sprained knee and her mom & dad were told to give her Advil for the pain; which she didn't have, and apply ice to the swollen area.

A couple of days later her parents received a call from the pediatric nurse informing them that Emily had to see an Orthopedic Oncologist to rule out a "mass" on her knee. Panic set in. Their appointment was scheduled for the next day. Emily's parents were so scared. They had no idea what was happening. The Oncologist performed an MRI and said he would call with the results.

The six days of waiting for results seemed like an eternity. The news was both good and bad. The good news was there was NO CANCER. The bad news was they still didn't know the origin of her swelling. Emily would have to undergo a laparoscopic surgery on her knee to see what was going on inside. The surgery took place in December 2007 and the results were inconclusive. Her family still had no cause for her swelling.

After the inconclusive results from the surgery, Emily's mom was told to make an appointment with a Pediatric Rheumatologist at Riley Hospital for Children. It would be a month before Emily could be seen. While waiting for her appointment Emily had more joints flare up; all of her fingers on her left hand, and her left knee were swollen. She woke up one morning and could not get out of bed. The rheumatologist was called for an emergency appointment. The next day Emily and her family had their answer. She was diagnosed with Polyarticular Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis. Emily's mom described the diagnosis as, "the scariest thing ever." How did her 8-year-old daughter have arthritis? Isn't arthritis an old person's disease?

Emily was placed on a prescription pain medication, and a steroid to control the pain and the swelling. Eventually, she was prescribed an arthritis medication in pill form and then the injectable form. Emily does not let arthritis get in her way. She is an honor roll student and is able to play sports, her favorite being volleyball.

Emily has displayed courage and strength in the face of the unknown. She is an inspiration to those around her. Her fierce determination to live well with arthritis makes us proud to have Emily Gebhardt as the 2013 Arthritis Walk Youth Honoree.

About the Arthritis Foundation

The Arthritis Foundation (www.arthritis.org) is committed to raising awareness and reducing the unacceptable impact of arthritis, which strikes one in every five adults and 300,000 children, and is the nation's leading cause of disability. To conquer this painful, debilitating disease, we support education, research, advocacy and other vital programs and services.