



**Rachel Drury**  
**2014 Jingle Bell Run/Walk**  
**Youth Honoree**  
**Evansville, IN**

Hello, my name is Michelle Drury, and this is my daughter Rachel's story.

At the age of six, I noticed one day in December in a restaurant that Rachel's left knee was swollen and a little warm to the touch. She couldn't think of anything specific that she had done to injure it other than falling on that knee at her cousin's house. We (my husband and I) took her to see her pediatrician who referred us to an orthopedic doctor. He took an x-ray of the knee and thought it might be arthritis. He recommended that we come back in a month and see if the swelling had gone down any. We returned in January and the swelling had gone down some. He seemed to think, since the swelling had gone down a little, that it might just be an infection of the synovial lining in the knee.

We played a waiting game for a couple of months, but the swelling did not decrease significantly. In fact, she was having more issues with bending the knee. So in April, our pediatrician recommended we go up to Riley Children's Hospital. We met with a pediatric rheumatologist there. She thought at first, since only one knee joint was involved, that it might be Lyme disease. She recommended that an MRI be completed on the knee and blood work be done.

When the results came back, it was determined that Rachel did indeed have juvenile rheumatoid arthritis (JRA). It was a very scary day for us that day. We didn't know a lot about the disease or the treatments available. At first, we tried Naproxen to try and help reduce the swelling. We tried this for several months, but it did not seem to help. In September of 2009, Rachel had a steroid injection. Luckily, for her she was sedated for the procedure. I can't say the same for her parents! It was terrifying watching the process, but we all survived and the injection reduced the knee to normal.

For a time, everything seemed good. We worried about every little ache or pain, but we didn't have another flare. We were happy to see the one-year anniversary of the injection pass. I think we thought at that point maybe that was all that would ever be. However, her body had other plans. I picked her up from summer camp one day in June of 2011 and Rachel said, "Take a look at my knee." It was once again swollen. She had been fine that morning. The flare occurred that quickly.

We called her rheumatologist and we were in their office within a week. This time they did the steroid injection that day, and Rachel was not sedated for it. She was scared, but she handled it like a trooper. Once again, the knee went back to normal.

Over the summer months, she started complaining that her jaw was hurting especially when she had to open wide or chew something chewy. So at a follow up appointment, we told the doctor. She did an examination and said, "Let's do an MRI just to be safe."

When the results of the MRI were returned, it indicated arthritis in both joints of her jaw. We had never had the thought that the arthritis could possibly affect her jaw, but in thinking about it, it is a joint and arthritis can attack any joint. Steroid shots were ruled out because they are not as effective for the jaw. At that point, the doctor

recommended that we start on weekly Methotrexate shots. My husband Mark and I were wary of starting the injections since we didn't know much about the medication. After researching and discussing with our doctor, we decided that this would be the best route to go.

Rachel was not happy at the prospect of getting weekly shots (especially when I started giving them to her instead of the nurse) and neither were we, but I can honestly say that they have been a Godsend. We seemed to finally be in some control of the disease.

But once again, Rachel's body had other thoughts. When she was ten, she showed us her left thumb. It was swollen and stiff. We mentioned it at a follow up appointment and the doctor recommended an x-ray. They couldn't really determine anything from the x-ray, and since Rachel had only been getting the Methotrexate shots for a short period of time, we decided to see if they helped reduce the swelling. It took a while, but the swelling finally reduced in the thumb.

Rachel has been on the medication for three years now. Other than the thumb, which could have been swollen prior to beginning the shots, we have been blessed with no other flares.

She has always been an active child. She played soccer, basketball, and did karate all during her flares. She began karate at age six and still does it today. She is a second-degree black belt and competes at regional, national, and international tournaments with the trophies to show for it. She still plays basketball every fall and loves it. We have tried very hard to keep her active because we know this is a huge part in the management of this disease.

She has days when she feels sorry for herself and has asked, "Why me." I tell her that we can handle this disease and it does not change who she is. She is still a bright, funny, athletic, and well-rounded child.

We are honored that Rachel was chosen as this year's Youth/Young Adult honoree. She has been an inspiration to us with how well she has handled this disease, and I hope she can be an inspiration to others.

It's great to have a resource like the Arthritis Foundation for information regarding this disease. Let's raise awareness that kids get arthritis too! And do what we can to raise the funds necessary to find a lasting cure for kids and adults that suffer with this sometimes-crippling disease.

Thank you Michelle, for telling Rachel's story! She is an inspiration, and we are thrilled to recognize her as the 2014 Jingle Bell Run/Walk Youth Honoree.

### **About the Arthritis Foundation**

The Arthritis Foundation ([www.arthritis.org](http://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.