



Joy Hedtke
Arthritis Walk Youth Honoree
Fort Wayne, Indiana

Joy Hedtke (age 4), was diagnosed with Juvenile Dermatomyositis (JDM) at the age of three. She has had to learn the pain and struggles of a serious disease at far too young an age.

Joy undergoes bi-weekly IVIG treatments that take all day via IV to provide medicines to her body. She takes several medications daily including steroids and an immune suppressant. Joy also receives an injection of an immune suppressant drug once a week. Her parents, Scott and Zara have had to make adjustments in their family's life to accommodate Joy's medical needs. Joy has been on "house arrest" since November due to her weakened immune system. She must stay out of the sun during the middle of the day to avoid the harmful UV rays. Her JDM makes her body very sensitive to the sun, and her prescribed medications complicate the situation. However, Joy is a very spirited little girl and is refusing to let this disease get the best of her.

Joy has three sisters, Grace (age 10), Hope (age 6) and Glory (age 2). The girls are very full of energy. Joy struggles to keep up with the energy level of her sisters but she plays hard for a period of time and then rests until she is able to rejoin her sisters. This does not stop her from wanting to be the "boss" at all times.

Joy has an avid interest in her medical care. She has recently been assisting her nurses with filling her vials of blood for bi-weekly blood tests and flushing her port-a-cath during her procedures. Joy says that she would like to be a nurse or a doctor when she grows up so she can help other children. She has also been training the family dog to be like the service dogs that visit her during her long days at the hospital. He still needs quite a bit of work as Joy has high expectations for his ability to listen.

Joy is an amazing little girl with an awesome smile. She has a remarkable faith in Jesus, a joyous spirit, loves to sing songs and dress like a princess.

Joy's determination and strength makes us proud to have her as a 2013 Arthritis Walk 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.