Sam Laflin
Arthritis Walk Honoree
Kansas City, MO

Arthritis doesn't always rear its ugly head at once. Symptoms can vary and mimic other illnesses. Such was the case with Sam Laflin. As a 3rd grader, she suffered pneumonia and that seemed to be the catalyst for a host of other problems that plagued her for years. Loss of appetite, fatigue, sinus infections and bronchitis were continuing problems that she battled, only to hold them at bay temporarily with antibiotics and prednisone. For years doctors treated her symptoms as allergies and put her through the rounds of shots, surgery and meds - none of which resolved her troubling illness.

All the while, Sam continued to participate in year-round swimming with the Kansas City Blazers. Her parents even speculated that the sport was just "taking its toll" on her young and ailing body. At 5'7", Sam weighed a slight 95 pounds and she appeared unhealthy. Her mother comments that she "knew in her heart something was wrong." At the age of 15 a cough developed and refused to go away. Fortunately, Sam was referred to a Rheumatologist who diagnosed her with Polyarticular Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis and wisely introduced her to a regimen of injections and medications that have attempted and partially brought resolution to years of debilitating illness and suffering.

Today, Sam has a zest for living, persevering and actively participating with the Blazers, as well as maintaining a part time job with Swim Quik. She is eagerly anticipating graduation and a post high school education with a college that offers a swim program. Where once her days were filled with anguish, pain and despair, she is now promised a bright and happy future thanks to the intervention of doctors and medicines. Sam still suffers from painful days and is actively searching for the right antidote of medications to control her arthritis.

We're proud that Sam Laflin, 18, is the 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.