

Your Team Makes A Difference

Support the fight against arthritis.

Start off your holiday season running or walking at the Jingle Bell Run/Walk for Arthritis®. Join our honoree Eric and run, walk, pledge or donate to support the 1.1 million Wisconsin residents living with arthritis.

Just after starting kindergarten **Eric**, now 7, told his parents that his foot hurt. A few days later, Eric's knee was swollen and hot to the touch. Following blood work and tests signs of inflammation directed Eric to UW Health Children's Hospital. Eric, who was 5 ½ at the time, was diagnosed with pauciarticular juvenile rheumatoid arthritis (JRA).

Eric struggled taking medicine because he had difficulty swallowing the meds that only came in pill form. Medicine time turned into tears every night. In the mornings, Eric would wake up to get ready for school but his leg was too stiff to walk, so he hopped on one leg to get where he needed to go. Walking to school meant a much-needed ride on his dad's shoulders until his medication allowed him to move freely. At first, Eric found himself sitting a lot at recess and during gym class, but soon he was skipping and not letting anything stop him from joining the fun. His teachers and support staff helped build his confidence. In the coming months, Eric took anti-inflammatory medications along with Plaquenil and weekly methotrexate injections. Some mornings Eric's reaction to his injections would be bad enough that he'd miss school. He was also fighting to keep weight on with his diminished appetite. Swelling in his knee caused growth differences in his legs and his doctor was concerned that if Eric's hips were tilting he would need an orthopedic device. Eric tried physical therapy to strengthen and stretch his weakened thigh muscle. During this time, Eric could be seen "on the sideline" of football and soccer games cheering for his brothers, but Eric knew that he could not be on a sports team because of his sore leg.

Eric's family wanted him to have a team picture on his bedroom wall like his brothers, so they ran the Jingle Bell Run/Walk as a family. As the Team Captain, Eric was treated extra special, and he proudly wore his hero hat. The Jingle Bell Run/Walk was a very positive experience for Eric where he met others who shared his experience with arthritis, and he didn't feel like he was the only one. Eric is now showing signs of being in remission. His family is thankful every day and are ready for whatever challenges may face them.

Come join Eric and his family at the Jingle Bell Run/Walk for Arthritis to find a cure for Eric and the millions who have arthritis.

