

Youth Honoree

Braylee Bevier

Polyarticular Juvenile Arthritis

What was thought to be an ongoing ear infection for a small toddler turned into an astonishing education that **kids get arthritis too**. Jackson resident Braylee Bevier was only 16 months old when her parents could tell something wasn't right. Braylee was crying often and repeatedly falling down when trying to walk. One day when Braylee's mother tried to put a shoe on her daughter's foot, a shriek like no other reaffirmed that something was seriously wrong.

Braylee was taken to see the doctor immediately, and it was visually apparent her right ankle had become very swollen. Yet, x-rays confirmed nothing was broken. The family was encouraged to see an orthopedic specialist, but was simply told that all babies tend to walk "funny." The family opted for a second opinion. This resulted in Braylee being in a cast for an extended period of time. However, this was no help. Finally, the family was asked to see a pediatric rheumatologist. After extensive testing, Braylee was diagnosed with polyarticular juvenile arthritis. Polyarthritis affects five or more joints, most commonly the knees, wrists and ankles. It also often affects the same joint on both sides of the body.

Her parents couldn't fathom the fact that a small baby could have arthritis and quickly had to learn more about this disease. Initially, it took almost a year to get the arthritis under control. Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs were initially prescribed, but eventually, weekly injections of methotrexate needed to be administered, as well as IV infusions of a biologic drug. Braylee was prone to upset stomachs, ear infections and strep throat because her immune system was constantly compromised due to the drugs needed to combat her arthritis. She still has flares and medications need to be adjusted along the way. Fortunately, she is currently on a medication that is not as immune suppressing. Braylee has a fear of shots due to all the injections she's had to endure over the years. However, she has conquered her fear of having her blood drawn and is now quite the pro at it. Two years ago, Braylee was very excited to be able to receive treatment in pill form.

Now 11 years old, Braylee has overcome many challenges. Most of her life has been about physical therapy, doctor visits, terrible tasting medication, shots, stiffness and pain.

"I have had arthritis since I was a baby, so this is all I know," said Braylee. "I really don't know what it would feel like not to have arthritis or not to take medicine."

With the disease medically controlled, Braylee continues to do the things she enjoys most, which includes hanging out with her friends and playing basketball, softball and golf. Braylee wishes to pursue a career in medicine so she can help other kids feel better.

"I really hope that they can find a cure one day, so no kids have to live in pain and take medicine every day," said Braylee. "I love walking to find a cure. It is so important to raise money so they can continue to do research. I look forward to this event every year, and I am SO honored to be the 2016 Youth Honoree."



Join **Braylee's Boosters** for the 2016 Detroit Walk to Cure Arthritis to support Braylee and the 300,000 children in the U.S. battling arthritis.