



Sarah Smith
2013 Jingle Bell Run/Walk Honoree
Council Bluffs/Omaha-Metro, IA

Sarah was diagnosed with reactive arthritis in July, 2012. Her diagnosis process was extremely stressful. Sarah starting having pain in the baby toes on both feet during the summer of 2011. She went to see a podiatrist that told her she was developing Taylor's bunions, and to wear more comfortable shoes. She followed the advice of the podiatrist, but the pain only increased. A second podiatrist confirmed the bunions, and announced that corrective surgery would be needed.

Sarah continued to have pain that was now spreading to other toes. It became so bad that she was beginning to limp when she walked. Now in her third year of law school and nearing graduation, she was determined to tough it out. After graduation she went to see an orthopedic surgeon who also confirmed the bunions, but was puzzled by the amount of pain she was having. He referred Sarah to a rheumatologist.

By this time the pain had spread to multiple joints in her feet, and a few in her hands. Walking was becoming more difficult, and some days she could only walk a very short distance without support. This was all happening as she was studying for the bar exam. There were many days when Sarah was confined to her bed with her law books, barely able to walk to the bathroom.

After a series of tests and MRI's, Sarah was diagnosed with arthritis, just two weeks before the bar exam. The shock and devastation gave her concern about taking the test, but she persevered and passed!

Sarah is now virtually pain free. She attributes this to her early and aggressive treatment that got her arthritis under control before it could spread to other joints. Sarah made the decision to not let arthritis stop her from living her life and accomplishing her goals. Today, Sarah is a litigation attorney, and says, "I am having a great time getting to know more people in the Omaha legal community."

Sarah went on to say, "I am doing extremely well, but I understand that I might not always be so lucky. I plan to continue taking on new challenges, spending time with my family and not letting arthritis stand in my way."

In her spare time, Sarah works out at the gym, and is an avid music lover who enjoys attending musical events and singing with local music groups. This self-proclaimed book worm loves to read and is a member of two book clubs.

When asked why she volunteered to tell her story, Sarah replied, "I want to raise awareness that arthritis affects more than just older people. People in their 20s, 30s, and even young kids get diagnosed with arthritis. These people need our love and support just as much, if not more, than older people facing the disease. For most people, arthritis is a life-long disease. Young people diagnosed with arthritis are facing a long road ahead of pain, doctor visits, surgeries and

medications. I want to inspire others not to let arthritis get in the way of their hopes and dreams. If you are truly passionate about accomplishing a goal in life, nothing, not even your arthritis can stop you!"

Sarah's bravery and courage in the face of doubt and pain make us proud to recognize her as the 2013 Jingle Bell Run/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.