



Katie Ruppenkemp
2013 Jingle Bell Run/Walk Honoree
Iowa City, Iowa

Katie's family knew something was wrong when they woke up one morning and she could no longer walk. She was just 15 months old at the time. Six weeks later, and after lots of lab work they received the official diagnosis of juvenile arthritis (JA).

Katie was started on hydroxychloroquine and Naproxen which provided some relief. In July 2004, she had her first joint flare, and received the diagnosis of uveitis, a disease that affects the eye. She received a steroid burst and was started on methotrexate and steroid eye drops. Her knee improved, but never fully extended. At age 3 her family started her in dance classes because they felt it was a fun way for her to stretch and not realize she was doing physical therapy. When she was 4 years old, she was able to come off the hydroxychloroquine, and she began to sleep through the night for the first time. Katie was well managed until this past January when a reduction in the medication dosage for her eyes was attempted. She was treated with Humira in February with immediate positive results.

Katie's mom said, "We do not treat her as if she has a disability and she is a happy healthy 10 year-old. Even though she is stiff and not as flexible as her peers she has had two big accomplishments this past year; her leg can finally fully extend, and she was able to do the splits for the first time this summer!" Her mom went on to say, "We are so very lucky to live where we do and have access to some of the best doctors for Katie. Her primary rheumatologist is Dr. Ferguson, and her ophthalmologist is Dr. Olsen.

Katie will be in 5th grade at Weber Elementary in Iowa City this fall. She dances 3-4 days a week and plans on being a part of the Nutcracker, which is the same weekend as the Jingle Bell Run/Walk this year. Her favorite style of dance is jazz, and she plays the piano and the violin in her school orchestra. Katie will be adding the clarinet to her repertoire this fall. She is an avid book worm and enjoys trips to the library to get more books. She loves her cats and dog so much that she is considering becoming a veterinarian when she grows up; or maybe a teacher!

Whatever Katie decides to do in the future we know that she will be successful. Her amazing strength and courage has proven that. We are thrilled to have her as our 2013 Jingle Bell Run/Walk Youth 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.