



Elena Soto
Arthritis Walk Honoree
Fort Wayne, Indiana

It was 2006 when Elena was diagnosed with the early stages of Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA), Sjogren's Disease, Raynaud's Syndrome and Fibromyalgia. She is currently on an Acute Glaucoma Watch.

Elena was scared, angry, frustrated and confused when she received her RA diagnosis. She became depressed and felt sorry for herself. The uncertainty of not knowing what was happening inside her body, and how to "fix it" really made Elena mad. The inflammation caused by her Positive ANA (Anti-Nuclear Antibodies) left her feeling like she was in a gray zone; not knowing when and how the antibodies might land within her body.

Today, Elena is at peace and she has reached a stage of acceptance. She believes she was "chosen" to have this disease or diseases because of her strong faith. Elena said, "I have the faith to turn this into a positive and I believe I can help many people because of my faith, and the way I have handled my disease." Despite her battles with pain and fatigue she is moving forward with no fear and a strong belief that tomorrow will be better.

Since receiving her diagnosis Elena feels she has a better understanding of how to help others. She is more patient, accepting and sincere to others. She has given herself permission to rest, and to say no to an invite if she isn't feeling well; and to enjoy every minute of her life that she is feeling well.

Elena remains active by exercising daily, teaching jazzercise and faithfully using Advocare products. She has defied the doctors who predicted that by 2009 she would be in a wheelchair. She knows her choices in life are so important to her health. Elena said, "If I don't exercise for 3 days I feel like I'm 80 years old; and I am reminded that I have this disease. There are certain foods that I can't eat because I feel worse after eating them."

Elena is grateful for every sunrise and sunset she is blessed to see. Through her trials and tribulations she has developed a stronger faith and a true relationship and friendship with God.

Her family life has been altered, but she remains focused on her boys, Josiah and Immanuel. They have learned that Mom can't play as aggressively as she would like, and if she needs to "chill" she needs a restful nap.

Daily tasks can present challenges like holding a pen, or always having to wear shoes because walking barefoot can be very painful. The loss of strength in her fingers and painful knuckles do present some limitations, but Elena still feels blessed that she has not had further complications.

Elena's doctor visits have gone from every 6 months to just once a year and she has been totally released from her neurologist. She looks for the good in all things and said, "With perseverance we will find it." She finds comfort in reading positive quotes every day; and often writes them down to read them again later. One of her favorite quotes is, "People are like stained-glass windows. They sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when the darkness sets in; their true beauty is revealed only if there is a light from within."

Elena is an inspiration and she is our hero. We are proud to honor her as a 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.