



Markie Bullington

Arthritis Walk Youth Honoree - St. Louis, Missouri

Markie went down a slide on the playground and suffered a swollen ankle. Her parents were concerned, but didn't feel it was serious. When the swelling returned her mom called their doctor who referred them to Children's Hospital. Markie was seen by pediatric rheumatologist, Dr. Gitlin who diagnosed her with Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis (JRA) at just 16 months of age.

When asked how arthritis has changed her life Markie replied, "It affects my everyday life, not as much as in the past. I have a higher pain tolerance now, but some days I know I'm in pain whether my body gives me signals of pain or not."

Markie has been involved with the Arthritis Foundation since 2000. She remembers her first Arthritis Foundation Conference; and Arthritis Camp, and has attended Cabin Fever Getaway Weekends for many years. Markie has been an inspiration to others going from camper to junior counselor. Prior to her involvement with the Arthritis Foundation, she often felt like "the outcast kid with arthritis." The Arthritis Foundation helped her realize that "she wasn't the only one", and she has gained many new friends who also have arthritis. Markie went on to say that, "The Arthritis Foundation also helped my parents because they were able to talk to other families about how they cope with the challenges of having a child with arthritis."

Markie has remained active despite her diagnosis. She has had some difficulties in the past at school, especially in her physical education class. Markie was able to participate in most sports like soccer, ping pong and basketball. Other sports like volleyball proved to be too painful. It didn't help that her physical education teacher didn't believe that she had arthritis. Markie had to bring a note from her doctor explaining her condition. The myth that young people don't suffer from arthritis is always quickly put to rest when people learn that some 300,000 children nationwide suffer from arthritis.

Markie has displayed tremendous strength and bravery. She has had her thumbs injected, knees drained and taken countless medications seeking relief from the pain and suffering her arthritis can bring. Today, she shrugs off the negative comments and hearsay about her condition. Markie says, "I am who I am. I am Markie, and I have arthritis."

Markie is our hero and our inspiration. We are proud to recognize her as the 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.