



Evansville, IN
Jingle Bell Run Youth Honoree
Gretchen Garrison

“Isn’t that what old people get?” How many times has Gretchen heard this? She was diagnosed with Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis (JRA) at just fourteen months old. She had always been a happy, healthy baby; but one morning as her mom lifted her out of her crib, she collapsed to the floor in tears. Within a week her day care teacher phoned her mom saying, “Gretchen can’t walk!” This began a litany of doctors’ visits, tests and worry. After six weeks of x-rays, blood tests and mounting concern, Gretchen’s mom finally learned what was wrong with her beautiful baby girl, it was JRA.

Gretchen was immediately placed on medication as arthritis attacked her knees, ankles and fingers. It would be two years before her symptoms were under control and her JRA was in remission. Gretchen has traveled a long and difficult road; clothing without buttons (too painful for her fingers) no climbing on the playground, giving up gymnastics and cheerleading, difficulty writing notes in class, painful flares and medication changes. Through it all Gretchen has learned to accept some limits on what she can do physically, but this has not dampened her spirit. She remains as active as possible and participates in her favorite activities when she can, and try’s new things when she can’t. This little dynamo never gives up!

We are honored to have Gretchen as our 2012 Jingle Bell Run Youth Honoree.

About the Arthritis Foundation

Striking one in every five adults and 300,000 children, arthritis is the nation’s leading cause of disability. The Arthritis Foundation (www.arthritis.org) is committed to raising awareness and reducing the unacceptable impact of this serious and painful disease, which can severely damage joints and rob people of living life to its fullest. The Foundation funds life-changing research that has restored mobility in patients for more than six decades; fights for health care policies that improve the lives of the millions who live with arthritis; and partners with families to provide empowering programs and information.