



Mariska Oberg
2014 Jingle Bell Run/Walk
Youth Honoree
Chicago, IL

Mariska Oberg's diagnosis of polyarticular juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA) in 2005 came at the end of a long and hard process. She has had two to three yearly flare-ups since she was two years old. The doctors thought she had jumped off something unnoticed by her family. Her mom urges parents to be aware of their child's symptoms, patterns and behaviors to aid in their child's diagnosis.

Having JIA has made her love of playing sports like volleyball, which she has played since the fifth grade, and track & field difficult, but she continues to persevere. Even writing at school can be a challenge when the pain of arthritis attacks her fingers and wrist.

Mariska has met every challenge head on and recently graduated from eighth grade with seven awards, and is slated to attend an amazing four year high school program!

She remains as active as possible and enjoys going to concerts with her mom, fishing with her dad, hanging out with friends and taking care of her two cats, Trouble and Olive. Always thinking of others, Mariska has volunteered at the Chicago Canine Rescue and has helped out at the fire department. When asked about her hopes for the future Mariska said, "I would like to be a neonatologist and help newborns live a long and healthy life like they should."

Mariska said, "The Arthritis Foundation has helped me realize that I am not fighting arthritis alone and that there are many people on my side." She went on to say, "Camp JAM was great and getting a pen pal was too!" Mariska just completed her fourth year as a camper at CAMP JAM and looks forward to continuing as a Counselor in Training (CIA) and eventually a counselor.

The Arthritis Foundation is proud to be on your side Mariska. Thank you for inspiring us with your courage and determination. We are thrilled to recognize you as the 2014 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.