



Becca Reitz
2014 Jingle Bell Run/Walk
Youth Honoree
St. Louis, MO

My daughter Becca was diagnosed with polyarticular juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA) at 13 months of age. She has arthritis in both her wrists, one of her fingers, her knee and her neck. She went from a very active child to barely being able to crawl. About 2 years after her diagnosis of JIA, Becca was also diagnosed with Uveitis. In laymen terms, it is arthritis in the eye. This can cause blindness, glaucoma and cataracts. Becca is treated weekly with a medication called Methotrexate. This medication is given via injection into her stomach. She is such a brave little girl. Each week she faces her shot with no fear.

Since she was diagnosed, we've been involved in participating in Arthritis Foundation programs such as Fall Fun Day, Cabin Fever and the Silver Ball. We have attended these events so our family can learn more about arthritis from other families, and for Becca to feel that she is not alone.

We were lucky enough to have the opportunity to attend our first Juvenile Arthritis Conference in Keystone, Colorado this year. This was a life-changing event for us. As a parent, I was able to meet with many specialists in the field of Rheumatology and Uveitis. I was able to come back home with the knowledge that in the last 50 years the treatments for kids like Becca have improved exponentially. Children like Becca are in less pain, and are suffering so much less than children diagnosed years ago with this disease. I attended round table discussions with doctors and other parents. The parents were able to share stories, and be there to laugh and cry together.

Becca was able to meet other children and adults that have arthritis like her. It combined learning and fun to make the children's experience unforgettable.

Becca and I both made friendships that will probably last forever. We met people from all over the country. It was such a wonderful shared experience. It was like a family we never knew we had.

I can't say how much we appreciate the generosity of the Arthritis Foundation, and the assistance they provided that enabled us to attend the conference. The importance of continued fundraising efforts is crucial for research and camps for families like ours.

We are honored for Becca to be the 2014 Jingle Bell Run/Walk Youth Honoree.

Becca has been so courageous facing the day-to-day challenges of living with juvenile arthritis. We are grateful for her and her mom, and their continued support and participation. We are thrilled to have Becca as this year's 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.