



## **Alyssa Slater** – Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis 2013 Purdue Arthritis Walk<sup>®</sup> Honoree

Alyssa is a busy 21 year-old junior at Purdue University studying Dietetics with a minor in Food Science. Her hometown is Evansville, IN, and from the age of 12, Alyssa has been living with Rheumatoid Arthritis.

The first sign of pain for Alyssa began in her thumbs when she was learning to play the violin. Her parents thought the pain resulted from playing the violin, and Alyssa almost gave up the instrument. She first went to the doctor for the pain at the age of 12. It was not until two years later that she finally received her diagnosis of JRA. Alyssa's diagnosis was difficult because her blood tests never came back with a positive RH blood factor, but as soon as she found out, she began treatment for JRA at Riley's Children's Hospital. She traveled to Indianapolis for five years until she switched to an adult rheumatologist in Lafayette. Alyssa tried many treatments from one pill a day to a steroid once a week. Eventually she needed to give herself an injection of medication twice a week. This is clearly something no teenager ever wants to face. Today, Alyssa's arthritis is under control, and she no longer needs to take regular medication; however, there is no way to know if the arthritis will get worse.

Despite arthritis, Alyssa does not let it slow her down. She still plays the violin and competes in pageants through the Miss America Organization. She now holds a local title, Miss Northwest Territory, and will compete for Miss Indiana in June. Alyssa's promotes her personal platform, Healthy Choices: Habits for a Lifetime, and this all began because of her experiences with arthritis.

Alyssa hopes to graduate from Purdue to become a Registered Dietician and work with community nutrition programs.