



**Elizabeth Esposito**  
**2014 Walk to Cure Arthritis**  
**Youth Honoree**  
**Chicago, IL**

Elizabeth was first diagnosed with juvenile rheumatoid arthritis (JRA) in 1997, when she was just two years old. She has had endless doctors' appointments and suffered through countless blood draws. Overall, she does not feel too bad, but there are the occasional flare-ups and days when she feels sore. Elizabeth has persevered and has learned to ignore the pain and pushes through her limits.

She doesn't remember much about her early days with JRA, but she does remember how difficult it was to walk at times, and not being able to play with other kids. Even though she hated every second of her doctors' appointments and all of the tests, she knows it has been worth it, because without it she would not be where she is today.

When asked about the day-to-day activities that are difficult for her, Elizabeth responded, "I think the biggest challenge at this point is writing. My hands lock up a lot and tend to swell a bit more. I also find walking up and down stairs all day at school to be extremely difficult on my body. I am much slower than I have been in recent years. The winter season and rainy season are really what triggers my flare-ups but I know what to do and I really don't let my arthritis get in the way of anything as much as possible anymore."

Elizabeth is most proud of her volunteer and service work. She says, "It makes me feel good about myself." She is also proud and excited to have been accepted into St. Ambrose University, where she will attend this fall. The days have not always been easy; Elizabeth was made fun of, but she overcame the negativity and is confident in her abilities. She has faced the worst and conquered it.

She enjoys hanging out with her best friends, Taylor, Jordan and Stephanie. They enjoy shopping, movie nights, Panera Bread for lunch and so much more! Elizabeth loves music and attends as many concerts as possible. Her job at a local restaurant helps defray the costs of her many activities.

Elizabeth has played Varsity Golf and was a cheerleader in elementary school. She tends to stay away from sports and stays active by working out at the gym a few times a week. She is avidly involved in the youth group, CRUSH at her church; where she is also a peer minister. Elizabeth is also on the prom committee at school.

Elizabeth's support team includes her sister Alex, brother-in-law Josh, older brother Vince, younger brother Joe and two dogs Maisie and Kaner. Her favorite subject in school is history. This focused and determined young lady hopes for a career and family, and wants to become a counseling psychologist practicing out of Chicago or Washington D.C.

Elizabeth understands the challenges of living with arthritis and is hopeful a cure for arthritis will be found soon, so that no child or adult has to go through the pain she has experienced. She has participated in Camp JAM where she developed life-long friendships with other kids facing the same difficulties that she has suffered through.

We are inspired by Elizabeth's courage, determination and strength, and we are thrilled to recognize her as the 2014 Walk to Cure Arthritis Youth Honoree.

**About the Arthritis Foundation**

The Arthritis Foundation ([www.arthritis.org](http://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.