

Matthew VanZandt: Kansas City Youth Honoree:

Matthew VanZandt is 9 years old. He was diagnosed with Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis and Stickler Syndrome in March 2016. Due to his diagnosis of Stickler Syndrome which can cause osteoarthritis younger in life it was much more difficult to determine that he also had arthritis. When Matthew was around the age of 3 his mom and dad became concerned because he would wake during the night and complain of hurting legs and feet. During the day, he would tire easily during family outings saying "my legs are too tired." During the summer of 2017, there were a couple of times that Matthew struggled to walk and move in the morning for several days at a time. This led to a visit with the orthopedic doctor who said he didn't show any injury. He was treated with a mild over the counter and he would improve. Several months later, based upon continued concerns of fluid and swelling and Matthew's complaints of pain the orthopedic doctor made a referral to rheumatology. In October 2017, Matthew had his first visit with the Pediatric Rheumatologist. The doctor noted that Matthew still had fluid on his right knee and ordered an ultrasound for more information. The ultrasound confirmed a diagnosis of arthritis.

Matthew works so hard to not let JA impact his life or the activities he chooses. He often needs to rest or relax after activity packed days. He is a good example of arthritis sometimes being an "invisible" illness. Matthew LOVES baseball, especially playing it.

At his last two appointments Matthew did not show active arthritis! We are so excited!

Matthew has taught his family so much and he has a lot to show the world! Matthew and his family want others to be encouraged that our kids are strong and resilient despite the challenges they face. Supporting the Arthritis Foundation means that we can support other families and future children during their journey. This past summer Matthew got to experience JA camp for the first time and words can't express how much he loved it. We want to make sure that both kids and families are able to continue such an amazing experience. Ultimately, we also hope that the current research leads to better and faster help for children in future years and we hope to do anything we can to contribute.