

Kaylin Weakley: Youth Honoree: JBR Wichita

Shortly after **Kaylin Weakley** turned 3 years old, her mom and dad noticed she was having some trouble walking, jumping, and with most other large motor skills. Her pediatrician referred the family to a physical therapist. While in physical therapy, they noticed Kaylin was not using her right wrist and hand to its full capacity (even for a 3-year-old) and had a lot of pain in that wrist. Because of that, the PT recommended Kaylin also start occupational therapy. This was early 2020. The next thing the family knew, covid hit and therapy decreased and then eventually ceased early that summer. Later in the summer, Kaylin started seeing both the PT and OT again. The OT suspected arthritis and referred Kaylin to an orthopedic surgeon. Thereafter, he referred us to a rheumatologist.

Kaylin's first rheumatology appointment was in late 2020 but at that time, the doctor indicated that she was negative for rheumatoid arthritis. By the next visit in February 2021, one of Kaylin's fingers had become severely bent, to the point that she was unable to straighten the finger. It caused her frequent pain. We were told that Kaylin may need to start therapy again, but she was still negative for RA.

It wasn't until May 2021 that Kaylin received a diagnosis of Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis. With the diagnosis, the family could begin to look at treatment options. At that time, Kaylin started Methotrexate, and in August 2021, Humira. Kaylin was getting the care she needed from a Pediatric Rheumatologist, Endocrinologist and Ophthalmologist.

In August 2022, Kaylin started Kindergarten with almost no pain in her wrist, hand, ankles, knees, or her finger. In fact, the past year on medication (coupled with therapy and a lot of fine motor exercises at home) helped her finger almost completely straighten back out!

She can run and play with her peers, take walks and go to the zoo without needing a stroller because her legs hurt. This year, she even attended a gymnastics class without too much pain (and hopes to take more classes in the future!)

Our family thinks that it's so important to support the Arthritis Foundation because when Kaylin first received her diagnosis, she received a JA Power Pack from the Arthritis Foundation. The pack came with a Champion Bear that had a heating pad inside, as well as a book for her and a book for us (as a family) to better understand her arthritis. All of this has been very helpful as we navigate this new path. We are excited to attend the Jingle Bell Run this year and share our story, and we're hopeful that our story will encourage other families who either haven't found their diagnosis yet, or whose treatment plan is still a work in progress.

Kaylin will turn 6 years old right before the 2022 Jingle Bell Run!