

Katie Hocking

Type of Arthritis: Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis (JRA)

Age of Diagnosis: 3 Current Age: 19



Katie's symptoms started when she was just 2 years old. "It was as if pieces of glass were entering my body, and my whole body was on fire," Katie says. She endured multiple blood tests and MRIs, but the doctors couldn't figure out what was wrong with her and they sent her home. After a year of additional tests, she was finally referred to a rheumatologist who diagnosed her with Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis. Katie feels the effects of arthritis when the weather changes, and in the morning her hands are often stiff and swollen.

Fortunately, Katie's arthritis did not stop her from being an athlete as she was growing up. She played softball from age 6 to 16. Playing a sport involves a lot of repetitive motions, but Katie was able to go from little league, to travel, and she even played in high school. Katie says, "I won't lie, some days were harder than others and I definitely felt it after some practices/games. But I didn't let the fact that I have arthritis stop me from being an athlete. I also didn't let flare ups stop me from being me and going along with my day. I still would attend school, and go out after school. I learned how to embrace my arthritis so instead of limiting what I could, I learned to channel the pain and live my life."

In her free time, Katie likes to draw, paint, and play guitar. She also loves spending time with friends. She is involved with several extracurricular activities, including volunteering with the American Cancer society, serving as the community engagement coordinator for her campus chapter of Alpha Omicron Pi, and she has her lifetime membership to Girl Scouts.

Katie is proud to be this year's teen honoree so that she can show kids that younger people do have arthritis, and can have a very successful and active life. She also doesn't want other kids to feel alone and isolated as she did when she was younger. For the future, Katie plans on finishing college, attending medical school, and becoming an orthopedic surgeon.

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