

# Story of Hope

## 12-year-old Ryan Woods



### Columbia child diagnosed with painful systemic juvenile rheumatoid arthritis

**D**octors treated Ryan's wrist and ankle pain, fever and rash as a virus. It wasn't until Ryan started falling asleep at the dinner table and his fever and rash weren't responding to medication that doctors and his parents knew something else had to be wrong.

But Ryan's mother, Lori Woods, never fathomed that "something else" meant her then 5-year-old child had Systemic Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis, because she assumed only older adults got arthritis. However, more than 300,000 children in the United States, including 4,000 Missouri children, suffer from juvenile arthritis, according to the Arthritis Foundation.

Juvenile rheumatoid arthritis is an autoimmune disease causing the body's immune system to begin the infection-

fighting process but then not turn off. The process ends up damaging his body rather than protecting it. Systemic means that not only was his body trying to destroy the cartilage in his joints but his body also started attacking his internal organs.

Ryan lost out on precious childhood time of not being able to participate in soccer and baseball and running around with his friends over the course of the first part of his disease.

Shortly after diagnosis, Ryan began an intense medication regimen including Methotrexate, Naproxen, Prednisone and Enbrel. Methotrexate is a cell growth inhibitor many cancer patients are on, Naproxen is a pain reliever and Prednisone and Enbrel were used to reduce swelling.