

My Hero

By Grace Wallingford

Type One Diabetes is a Chronic condition where the pancreas produces little to no insulin. It typically starts when you are younger. Some people mistake it for Type Two Diabetes, which is more common in adults. Type 2 can be cured, but my sister cannot. One in three hundred children develop diabetes before the age of 20, and she was one of them.

Savannah Wallingford was diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes on November 11, 2015. “I was 7 years old, I still remember that day so clearly,” Savannah explained. Savannah's mother, Stephanie Wallingford is in the medical field and saw some symptoms in Savannah early on. “She was drinking a lot of water, looked very pale and lost a lot of weight,” Stephanie expressed. Stephanie took her to her pediatrician, and he did tests and found out she has Type 1 Diabetes. Everyone in the room that day was emotional: adults were crying, children were confused, but at the end of the day we all knew it was serious and going to be a journey for the whole family.

Savannah's journey with diabetes has been full of heartache, and also love from the people around her, “It has affected me both physically and mentally.” Savannah explained that physically she had to give herself insulin every time she ate carbs and it took a toll on her body having to give herself shots and pokes to keep her body alive everyday. Mentally it is hard because she has to deal with the fact that there is no cure, and she will most likely have to live with this burden for the rest of her life. She has tried to overcome that with other hobbies to keep busy, but the work and stress of having diabetes has gotten in the way. She used to have to do a lot more work when she first got diabetes, but with technology advancing she went from giving herself shots every time she ate carbs to now having a pump that gives her insulin that she

changes every three days. She used to also have to prick her finger to check her blood sugar all the time, but now she has a sensor that checks it for her that she has to change every 7 days.

“Since I first got diagnosed, my family has been trying to cheer me up on the anniversary of becoming diabetic, they call it my diaversary and we would have a party or we would go to Build-a-Bear, anything I liked to try and cheer me up,” Savannah explained.

Savannah explained to me that, yes it does affect her daily life, but she has gotten used to it. “It used to be a real struggle to keep up with my carbs, change my pump and learn how to do it all, but now so many years later it has become a routine for me,” Savannah explained. It has affected her family's daily life as well. Our father has to make calls to get her more supplies to make sure she never runs out, our mother has to be careful about what she buys to make sure it isn't high in sugar or carbs, her siblings need to make sure we don't roughhouse too much or we could rip out her pump or sensor. We have all learned to listen at night for that beep that means she is going low in her sleep and what to do to help her.

Savannah in the future wants to become an endocrinologist, which is a doctor that specializes in diabetes and the pancreas. She is doing that to help children like her find peace with their condition, and hopefully find a cure one day. Savannah is special to me and many others because she shows bravery everyday and doesn't let anyone get in her way. I admire her determination, and I want everyone to know how special of a person she is.