

## San Anselmo teen will travel to Washington D.C. to lobby for diabetes research

Posted:

marinij.com

Fifteen-year-old Hannah Gammon of San Anselmo has no complaints about living with diabetes.

"Nothing is really hard about it because I don't really know any different," said Gammon, who was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes when she was 2 years old.

Type 1 diabetes occurs when the pancreas stops, or virtually stops, producing insulin altogether. It is more severe than type 2, which occurs when the pancreas starts producing insulin that is less efficient.

Gammon is one of 150 diabetic children — ages 4 to 17 — who will travel to Washington D.C. from July 8-10 to participate in the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation's biennial Children's Congress.

During the Congress, the children will meet with members of Congress to impress the need for continued funding for type 1 diabetes research. The event will be led by the actress Mary Tyler Moore, the foundation's international chairwoman.

Gammon's mother, Jennifer, said prior to the diagnosis, she noticed that her baby girl appeared pale, weak and lethargic.

"She was just constantly drinking milk and water to the point where we would constantly refill her glass," her mother said. "Being so young, she couldn't vocalize that she wasn't feeling well. Her body was slowly breaking down."

Finally when Hannah's parents took her to the doctor for treatment of a recurring ear infection, a blood test showed high levels of sugar, indicating that she was diabetic. Her mother said most children diagnosed with type 1 diabetes are five or six years older, "so to diagnose it at age 2 was definitely unusual."

When Hannah was 7 she was outfitted with an insulin pump, a small, battery-powered device that delivers insulin into the body 24 hours a day according to a preset program.

"Before she went on the pump, every time she ate something we'd have to pull out the syringe and give her an injection. I think it got to the point where it was seven times a day," her mother said.

Still, Hannah must use a monitor to check her glucose levels throughout the day and make adjustments to the pump to ensure she is getting just the right amount of insulin. To do that she has to calculate the amount of carbohydrates in the food she eats.

"From age 7, she has regulated it on her own," Gammon said. "She checks her own blood sugar; she can calculate the carbs she's about to eat; and she inputs those numbers into the pump. So she is self-sufficient."

And having diabetes hasn't prevented Hannah from doing the things she wants to do. During her freshman year at the Bay School of San Francisco, she was part of the swim team. Swimming is good for helping to control her diabetes; but if her blood sugar drops too low due to the exercise she may have to

pop a glucose tablet when she gets out of the pool.

Hannah was selected to participate in the congress after applying by writing an essay about her life with diabetes.

"I'm looking forward to meeting a bunch of kids who also have diabetes," she said. "I just want to meet a bunch of girls my age and have fun."

Contact Richard Halstead via e-mail at [rhalstead@marinij.com](mailto:rhalstead@marinij.com)