

# Being Brave

Emily Carlson • Special to New SV Media | Posted: Thursday, October 9, 2014 10:43 am

At the tender age of 21 months, Emilie Ann Beck showed bizarre symptoms, including having frequent thirst and urination. She also experienced irritability and excessive fatigue, unusual for a nearly 2-year-old.

The little girl, who was usually spunky and full of life, could barely move in the pool during a swim lesson. Mother Julie Beck called an advice nurse, listed Emilie's symptoms and was told to send for an ambulance. Upon arriving at Good Samaritan Hospital in Los Gatos, her blood sugar level was tested at a staggering 537 (normal level falls between 100 to 200mg/dL). Emilie was taken by ambulance to Lucile Packard Children's Hospital, which has an experienced endocrinology program.

From that point forward, the Beck family's world drastically changed.

During the four days Emilie was at Lucile Packard at Stanford, Julie and Emilie's dad, CJ, were thrown into a type of bootcamp for parents with children who have Type 1 diabetes. They learned how to give their young daughter insulin injections by administering injections of saline to each other, found out the highs and lows of blood-glucose and learned how to keep Emilie healthy.

Julie recalls giving her husband the first practice injection with the support of medical staff.

"My hand was shaking so much," she said.

Now, at 4 1/2 years old, Emilie and her parents have found a way to live with diabetes.

"Everything's fixable," CJ said. "It's just a matter of learning what to do. It's not the end of the world."

As they continue to adjust to this life change, the Becks have met many supporters who have gone to great lengths to help. Among them were Dr. Rajiv Kumar from Lucile Packard and other medical staff who would call Julie nightly to inquire how Emilie was doing and offer advice on how to handle the obstacles that were presenting themselves.



## Emilie Ann Beck

Emilie Ann Beck, 4, was diagnosed with type one diabetes on Sept. 30, 2011 when she was just nine-months-old. She and her family and friends will be participating in the upcoming Juvenile Diabetes Reasearch Foundation Walk to Cure Diabetes Oct. 18 in Santa Clara.

“Dr. Kumar saw me through the darkest days of diabetes,” Julie said. And he gave her hope when he said he believes there will be a cure for diabetes in Emilie’s lifetime.

Now, the little girl who couldn’t participate in a swim lesson is preparing to walk about a mile in the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation’s fundraising walk at Great America Oct. 18. This will be Emilie’s third year taking part in the fundraising walk.

With that hope, Julie is doing everything in her power to help JDRF—a global organization with a strategic plan to end type 1 diabetes—find that cure. Emilie and her family will participate in the JDRF walk to help raise awareness and funds for “Turning Type 1 into Type None” ([bayarea.jdrf.org](http://bayarea.jdrf.org)). Information on her team, “Team Sweet Emilie Ann,” can be found at [www2.jdrf.org](http://www2.jdrf.org). The team’s goal is to raise \$5,000, while JDRF’s total goal is \$335,812.

“This walk is a celebration of Emilie,” Julie said. “This is the time of year when she was first diagnosed and it celebrates how brave she has to be.”

Julie has been a driving force in creating a safe and healthy environment for Emilie by not only fundraising for JDRF for her future, but by allowing her to go to a local preschool. In order for Emilie to attend, there had to be staff fully qualified to help Emilie if any diabetic problems arise during the school day.

St. John’s Episcopal Preschool in Morgan Hill was up to the challenge.

Mary Wright (whom Julie has dubbed “Saint Mary”) is a diabetes educator and counselor who agreed to run a training session with St. John’s faculty members after school hours. The teachers, in particular a teacher named Miss Jenny, watch how much Emilie eats from her snack and lunch and if all her food isn’t consumed, they will contact her mom and supplement with a juice box or other approved food.

Instead of testing her blood manually, Emilie has a visible sensor on her upper arm called “Dexcom.” It automatically relays her blood sugar numbers to a website called “Night Scout” so Emilie’s parents can always see how her numbers are while she’s at school or at a playdate. Also, instead of administering insulin injections four times a day, Emilie has a pump that is changed once every three days.

Because Emilie wears her sensor on her arm, it has opened up lines of communication between her and other diabetics to show her she is not alone. According to [jdrf.org](http://jdrf.org), more than 15,000 children and 15,000 adults are diagnosed with type 1 diabetes annually in the United States.

While taking Emilie’s older sister, Katie, to a summer camp put on by the YMCA, a camp counselor noticed Emilie’s Dexcom sensor on her arm.

“You have diabetes!” counselor April Yuck said, crouching down to Emilie. “So do I!”

Meeting April gave Julie insight into what her daughter could be like as a young adult and the limitless potential she has. She could be a camp counselor—or anything her heart desires.

“I want to be a diabetes doctor (when I grow up),” Emilie said.