



MEET FRANCIS

2020 Outrun Lupus 5K Honoree



Francis was a very active, kind and charming young boy when he was diagnosed with systemic lupus erythematosus on June 19, 2017 at the age of eleven, after a year of face rashes and unusual high fevers. His parents didn't know the butterfly rashes on his cheeks were early indications of Lupus, and thought it was some forms of allergy until he

developed frequent fevers and fatigue. When his parents took him to Stanford Children's Rheumatology and Dermatology Clinic, the doctors suspected an autoimmune disease, and immediately ordered blood tests to diagnose. Within a few days, it was confirmed that Francis had Lupus. His family was devastated to learn the news and were in a state of denial for a long time because they had no idea what an autoimmune disease was prior to the diagnosis, and how it could happen to one of their sweetest members and when there was no family history of this illness.

The following months were the most difficult part of Francis and his family's life. He had to take laboratory tests regularly, often with a large amount of blood, for doctors to monitor side effects from his treatment. He had to take a very high dose of steroid amongst other medications to immediately control the flares, which resulted in significant water weight gain. When he left the previous school year right before diagnosis, he was a normal boy, active, friendly, confident and only wearing shorts. Within a few short months, everything changed. The first day back to new school year, no one seemed to recognize him physically with long pants, long-sleeve shirts, a brim hat and a completely different person. Francis had difficulty regaining confidence and barely talked to anyone. He felt lonely and isolated. He couldn't participate in Physical Education, so his mom came to school to keep him company. They sat on the bench looking at his classmates practicing out on the yard. Many times he said "I wish I could be out there playing." He loved basketball and used to be one of the top players in his team, but he couldn't run fast enough anymore due to his fatigue. He loved playing water polo, but he couldn't play anymore because the UV lights would cause flare ups. The world full of opportunities suddenly became very limited for Francis because he could no longer do or wear the things he liked.

Francis fought hard as a Lupus warrior to overcome these challenges. His mom's tears couldn't stop for several months, but Francis was very optimistic and often comforted her by telling her "it's okay, I'll be fine." He never complained of his pains while he was suffering and feeling uneasy, and most of all, to worry his parents. He then became accustomed to the new "normal" such as sun blocks, uv-protected clothes, laboratory tests every couple months. As he transitioned into a teenager, not only did he have to deal with Lupus's challenges, he also dealt with hormone changes which complicated the treatment. During the difficult times of his illness, he and his family sought community support from the Lupus Foundation of Northern California. He was welcomed into the community with open arms and hearts. He found that he was not alone in this fight. With the outpouring love and support from family, friends, and community, Francis gradually regained confidence and started socializing and engaging again. He decided not to let

Lupus take him down on the path of loneliness and isolation, but up on the path of collaboration and happiness. Since he couldn't play the sports he loved, he extended his gift of music as a way to find joys and overcome obstacles.



Francis and his family became more engaged with the wonderful and supportive Lupus community. They have volunteered at the Outrun Lupus 5K since 2018. Francis and his sister have also volunteered to help with office support at Lupus Foundation during summers or school breaks. With the encouragement from his parents, Francis determined to help other youths and their families who have been experiencing similar life-changing events like the diagnosis of Lupus. He worked with his parents and community to create the Lupus Youth Support Group, which meets on second Saturday every month since October 2019 to share information

about the Lupus experience, diagnosis, treatment and to support each other during the difficult time.

Knowing life ahead would not be normal like the other kids, Francis strongly believes one day there will be a cure for Lupus just as there is always a light at the end of the tunnel. He counts on everyone who would join him in this Outrun Lupus Virtual 5K and make a difference. Francis is forever grateful for the love, support, and prayers from his family, friends and community.

We at the Lupus Foundation of Northern California honor Francis and his commitment to improving the lives of fellow youth with Lupus and are pleased to announce Francis is the honoree at our 26th Annual Outrun Lupus 5K—for his inspiration, courage, and persistence—we applaud Francis!