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Hoosier Hero

Hero. A simple noun described as someone of distinguished courage, admired for his or her brave deeds and a true inspiration to others. I am honored to say that my sister fits that description flawlessly. People may think it is strange that I would consider my sister an inspiration or even a hero because most people do not consider their siblings their hero. But my sibling is different. When I say “different”, I mean it. My sister Jodi was born physically and mentally handicapped, and has overcome many obstacles. It is without a doubt that Jodi Kay Hoffman is one of the most courageous and inspiring people to ever live in Indiana, and that is why I am nominating her as a 2009 Hoosier Hero.

Jodi was born on August 25, 1983 in Fort Wayne, Indiana. The doctors told my parents that Jodi would not live through her first night. She had been born with congenital hydrocephalus, which means she had water around her brain. Additionally, she was also born completely blind, had several forms of autism, a double cleft-palate and lip, and numerous physical handicaps. She had been born six weeks premature and weighed only 4 pounds – 5 ounces.

It was on the morning of August 26, 1983 that Jodi made Riley Children’s Hospital history by surviving her first night. That would be the beginning of a long battle for my parents and family, and even a longer and harder battle for my sister. Jodi’s strong determination and will to live when there was no chance of her surviving is incredible. Jodi underwent several

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surgeries, and finally the doctors placed a shunt beside her brain to treat the hydrocephalus, an uncommon neurological disorder that affects about 1 out of every 500 children born.

Jodi first showed me her strength and what miracles she really could perform in 1998. The shunt inside of her head developed an infection around her brain. The shunt was removed, and Jodi would soon go on to have three more surgeries to try to stop the swelling of water and the infection. The doctors finally decided to remove the shunt completely, which left Jodi with only a one percent chance for survival. Somehow though Jodi fought right past the doctors' predictions and once again, my sister made medical history by surviving when the odds were against her.

On Christmas morning, Jodi went into a five-minute seizure, which is extremely rare. After arriving at the hospital, she was pronounced clinically brain dead. The medical professionals said that Jodi would never again be able to function and that her life would depend totally on machines. My parents decided that Christmas afternoon to put an end to theirs and Jodi's fight, so she was unhooked from the life support. She had been put through enough pain and suffering, and it was time for her to be at peace. My parents and family were forced to say their final goodbyes as her body began to shut down.

Jodi is now twenty-five years-old and still serves as an inspiration to all who have been fortunate enough to meet her. Miraculously, on the cold Christmas day in 1998, my sister would prove for one last time that there were bigger and better plans left for her to complete here on

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earth before she would rest at peace. She fought the battle between life and death for over four hours that day before she finally won the battle to live.

Jodi has made medical history time and time again, and to me, she has shown more strength and determination for life than any other person could imagine. Her courageous fights to live and all the suffering she has gone through is more than what I could ever possibly endure. Jodi is an inspiration because she has a life that is a constant battle, yet she keeps fighting and winning the battle every time. Jodi has taught me to live every day to the fullest and to never take life for granted.

Jodi Kay is my hero, not only for fighting when the odds were against her, but for surpassing the disabilities that were said to limit her. It was amazing to witness Jodi graduate from high school. Defying the odds, she was able to overcome all obstacles that she faced throughout her educational career. Graduation from high school for most teens is something they take for granted. Jodi, however, struggled to achieve this goal. When she received her diploma, Jodi motivated me to do my best in school, and made me realize how important it is to set goals throughout my life.

Jodi has affected hundreds of peoples' lives with her inspiring life story. Whether they pass her in a shopping mall, or if they were one of her high school teachers, Jodi has impacted peoples' lives in a way that they will never forget. My sister has changed many doctors' minds about what medicine and faith can do. It is because of my handicapped sister that I plan on attending medical school in hopes of becoming a doctor who will help children and adults whose

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lives are affected by disabilities. Jodi is my personal inspiration to become a doctor who will treat people like her and to help find a way to start preventing these painful handicaps that millions of Americans face.

Jodi Kay Hoffman is one of the truest Hoosier Heroes to ever live in Indiana. The courageous fights she has fought, and the bravery that she has displayed is what I believe makes a true hero. The many lives she has affected and given inspiration to is proof of what only a hero can accomplish. I am blessed to have a disabled sister like Jodi, who has given me more personal inspiration and determination than any other person in my life will ever be able to do. That is why I am honored to nominate my sister, Jodi Kay Hoffman, as a 2009 Hoosier Hero.