

## Hoosier Hero

I chose Ryan White as a Hoosier Hero because he wanted Americans to be aware of AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). Ryan was born on December 6, 1971 in Kokomo, Indiana. When he was three days old, Ryan was diagnosed with Hemophilia A, a hereditary blood coagulation disorder. For Ryan's disorder he was receiving weekly blood transfusions. In 1984, at the age of thirteen Ryan became ill with pneumonia. Doctors discovered that Ryan had AIDS.

Since Ryan was thirteen and diagnosed with AIDS all he wanted to do was be a normal kid and go to school. However Ryan was having a hard time because the students and their parents didn't want him in or around the school. The community was uneducated about AIDS and started rumors. Many parents and staff signed a petition for Ryan not to come to school. Even though the school was using all the required precautions, such as using disposable forks and spoons, using separate bathrooms and not allowed to unroll in gym class. This left Ryan unhappy. The White family decided to move after being treated unfairly. Ryan went to a new school where he was accepted. Ryan White was very brave to begin a new normal life.

As Ryan began his new life, his story touched many people who offered their support. Some of these supporters included John Cougar Melloncamp, Elton John, Michael Jackson, Bobby Knight, Kareen Abdul-Jabbar, President Ronald Reagan and his wife, Nancy and many more. In 1988 Ryan spoke before the President's commission on the HIV epidemic. Here is where Ryan shared his story with in front of hundreds of people. Ryan's goal was to inform communities about AIDS awareness and prejudice.

Ryan White is a hero because he stood up for himself and others like him. Ryan courageously fought his illness, and the ignorance of the community. What I learned from Ryan was even though people different in some ways we're all equal.

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