



## Sarah Cummings

Sarah hopes that sharing her story will inspire others to not give up on their dreams after having decompression surgery. Currently, she is looking to take part in the Conquer Chiari: Walk Across America this September—either in New Jersey or Pennsylvania—and would love to organize a walk site in Manhattan in the near future.

For more information on Sarah's running career, please visit her blog [sarahrunsthecity.wordpress.com/](http://sarahrunsthecity.wordpress.com/)

## Embracing New Directions With Chiari

**May, 2014** - Sarah Cummings, an accomplished Economics graduate from Princeton University and talented marathon runner, has found strength in living life as a Chiari warrior since her diagnosis early in 2003. To this day, she remembers just how much her life has changed and the new passions she has embraced along the way.

"Prior to having decompression surgery, I had been a competitive figure skater. It was, in fact, thanks to skating that I discovered that I had a Type-1 Chiari malformation," Sarah shared.

While she was trying to learn new techniques on the ice, she fell down many times and eventually found that she felt an intense stabbing pain in her back whenever she did not land properly. After countless doctors' visits and physical therapy appointments without effective progress, an MRI was ordered and it revealed a Chiari 1 malformation.

Sarah underwent surgery in August of 2003 at The Children's Hospital of Orange County (CHOC). During her recovery, she had to postpone ice skating and in doing so, found she was far behind everyone else in her division. She returned to the ice and competed with moderate success, but she found it was not as enjoyable to her anymore.

"I know that I was extremely lucky with the early diagnosis and the outcome of the surgery thanks to Dr. Muhonen and Dr. Loudon at CHOC, but I truly believe that the life changing nature of Chiari can open your eyes to other opportunities and life paths if you let it. You just need to believe!" claimed Sarah.

Fate then intervened the following year on Halloween— Sarah and her sister ran a 5k together and to Sarah's surprise, she placed second. After the race, the track coach from her high school (Corona del Mar) approached her and Sarah's exciting passion for running soon began.

"Winning the Division III California State Cross-Country Individual title my senior year in addition to being named class Valedictorian helped me to get recruited to run Cross-Country and Track and Field for Princeton University," Sarah commented.

While at Princeton University, she enjoyed everything that the institution had to offer both academically and athletically. At the Princeton Elite Meet (2009), she ran the 1500 in 4:30.75. In 2010, she ran the 10,000 at Mt. Sac in 33:55. (To view more personal records in Track and on the Road, please visit Sarah's blog (left sidebar). She graduated magna cum laude from Princeton as a 4x Ivy League Champion and was also given the Otto von Kienbusch award which is given to the top female athlete at the university.

After leaving Princeton, she decided to move to New York City to work at Goldman Sachs as a Financial Analyst and then picked up where she left off with her running career with the help of Terry Shea, her coach, and the support of the New York Athletic Club, Brooks Running, PowerBar, and Urban Wellness Clinic.

In one of her blog entries titled "A Look Back at 2013," Sarah writes, "I'm so deeply indebted to Terry and would be nothing without him! With his guidance, I strung together a number of purposeful 100mi + weeks leading up [to] the Twin Cities Marathon. I didn't surpass my 2012 mileage total (3,891) by a large margin, but the miles I ran were of much better quality."

In October of 2013, Sarah also finished 10th at the USA Marathon Championships with a time of 2:39.28 which gave her the "B" standard for the 2016 Olympic Marathon Trials. This year, on April 21st, she completed the 2014 Boston Marathon as the 22nd woman overall and 7th American with a time of 2:34.57, good for the "A" standard for the Olympic Trials. Upon improving her personal bests, she plans on running in the 2016 Olympic Trials held simultaneously with the LA Marathon in February of 2016.

**Ed. Note:** *The opinions expressed above are solely those of the author. They do not represent the opinions of the editor, publisher, or this publication. Ms. Eubanks is not a medical doctor and does not give medical advice. Anyone with a medical concern is strongly encouraged to seek professional medical care.*

## Jennifer Eubanks



Chiari Community Columnist

Ms. Eubanks is a professional writing and researching scholar from Purdue University Northwest. After being diagnosed with a Chiari I Malformation in 2011, she quickly decided that being conquered was not an option—she was committed to fight and pursue a budding love of healthcare/medical writing. Spreading awareness and hope to others battling Chiari is her largest motivator alongside educating others who have not heard

about the condition. Reporting for Ideas in Motion Media and tutoring at the Writing Center (Purdue University North Central) has been immensely beneficial to her success as well as all the remarkable individuals who helped her become the composer and analyst she is today.

[Home](#) | [About Us](#) | [Email](#) | [Donate](#) | [Get Involved](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)

---

**Disclaimer:** This publication is intended for informational purposes only and may or may not apply to you. The editor and publisher are not doctors and are not engaged in providing medical advice. Always consult a qualified professional for medical care. This publication does not endorse any doctors, procedures, or products.

© 2003-2020 C&S Patient Education Foundation