

## Chiari Athlete Changes Sports, Continues To Excel

**March 31st, 2009** - My name is Sarah Cummings. I am currently a sophomore at Princeton University. In August 2003, just prior to my freshman year of high school, I had surgery at The Children's Hospital of Orange County to correct a Type I Chiari Malformation. All my life prior to the surgery I had been a competitive figure skater. It was in fact thanks to skating that I discovered that I had a Type I Chiari Malformation. In learning and attempting to master new skills I would fall on the ice repeatedly, and in early 2003 I began to feel a sharp stabbing pain in my back every time I fell. After visiting numerous doctors and physical therapists in an attempt to diagnose the cause of my pain I finally had an MRI, which revealed that I had a Chiari Malformation. My surgery followed shortly thereafter and my road to recovery began. Having taken a significant amount of time off from ice-skating as a result of the surgery, I was far behind my peers when I returned to the competitive world. I continued to skate and compete with moderate success but things weren't the same. Fate intervened on Halloween 2004 when I decided on whim to enter a 5k race with my sister. I ended up placing second in the race, catching the eye of the high school track coach. My running career soon began and skating fell to the back burner. 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. My time at Princeton thus far has been better than I ever could have imagined. I am enjoying all Princeton has to offer both academically and athletically. I have decided to major in Economics and have had much success with track, winning the Ivy League Championships in the 5k two years in a row. I feel I have been so lucky and I want more than anything to give back to the Chiari community.

-- Sarah

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