

# ARTHRITIS



## The Kids on the Block Program on **ARTHRITIS**

Featuring: Jennifer Hauser, Leslie Rosenbaum and Pete Whetstone

When Leslie Rosenbaum was five years old she was diagnosed as having Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis, or JRA, as Leslie calls it. Leslie explains to her classmates and friends that there are over 100 different kinds of arthritis. Because Leslie's is "polyarticular" JRA, many of her joints, such as her knees, wrists, fingers and jaw, become swollen and stiff. Sometimes she is in a lot of pain, too. Developed in conjunction with the Arthritis Foundation and with numerous children who have JRA, the package consists of large hand-crafted puppets, four scripts, props and follow-up activities and resources to form a comprehensive curriculum on the topic. The program features puppet character LESLIE ROSENBAUM, a ten year old girl who has many of the same experiences as her peers as a result of the adaptations made to accommodate her difference, and PETE WHETSTONE, a 70 year old man who has osteoarthritis and who is a teacher's aid at Leslie's school. Script material covers specific issues such as the difference between JRA and osteoarthritis, the manifestations of the disease, Leslie's sports and other activities that offer her unique ways to get the exercise she needs, myths and misconceptions about arthritis and Leslie's relationship with her family and friends.

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A TROUPE OF EDUCATIONAL PUPPETS

# Script Summaries

## It's a Miracle!

Leslie has "wheeled" four blocks from her house to hold a yard sale with her cousin at her cousin's house. Because she has arthritis which flares up occasionally causing her a lot of pain and stiffness, Leslie sometimes uses a wheelchair when traveling distances that would be too far for her to walk. When Leslie gets up to retrieve a flute for Jennifer, Jen is mystified and amazed to see that Leslie is able to walk. At this point Leslie explains about arthritis and helps Jennifer understand more about the condition and more about her soon-to-be best friend. **(Leslie, Jennifer)**

## Teacher's Aide

When Pete meets Leslie she is about to enter the kindergarten class to help out some of the children with a special activity. Pete explains that he's a teacher's aide in several of the classes, including kindergarten, and is surprised to find that Leslie's work with the younger children is a way of providing exercise for her arthritis. Pete also explains that he has arthritis and is surprised to find that his and Leslie's arthritis are not the same. Together they share and discuss what helps them get their jobs done when their joints are painful. **(Leslie, Pete)**

## The Puppet Show

Jennifer and Leslie are having a hard time thinking of a project for their language arts class. But when Leslie mentions that she uses puppets in therapy, the two girls decide to use puppets for their project. Leslie insists on having Jennifer play "Wendy," the puppet character who has arthritis, so she can "understand better about having arthritis." Together, they stage a show dramatizing some of the misconceptions people have about arthritis. **(Leslie, Jennifer)**

## Study Buddies

When Leslie has to stay home because her arthritis hurts too much, the teacher assigns Jennifer to be her "Study Buddy." The Buddy's job is to call up Leslie, give her assignments, and keep her abreast of the class's activities. The next day, however, Jennifer decides to ask about what she feels to be Leslie's unfair advantages. Pete Whetstone, the teacher's aide, explains how arthritis makes those "advantages" necessary, and also show Jennifer how her role as Study Buddy can help Leslie when she has to miss school. **(Leslie, Jennifer, Pete)**

**NOTE: After each script, the children in the audience are given the opportunity to ask their own questions directly to the puppet characters.**

**The Kids on the Block**, created in 1977, features life size puppets who use the magic of live puppet theatre to teach children and adults about disabilities, medical and educational differences, and social concerns. Through the hard work and dedication of many community based groups, **The Kids on the Block** puppets are able to touch the lives of people all over the world.