



Jennifer Miller

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- *Why did you start Team ANA 417?*

I was diagnosed with an acoustic neuroma when I was only 21 years old. Throughout that decade of my life, I spent so much energy trying to heal mentally and physically on my own. I finally took it upon myself to try to reach out to others like me and through that, I found how many people were suffering, just like I was.

I have met so many amazing AN patients and their families and I found that part of my healing process dealt with communication. As I finally started feeling better, I realized how each AN patients story was so different but yet so similar. I started to look into acoustic neuromas more and found there are still so many unknowns with them. 95% of these tumors are non-hereditary but research still hasn't found a specific cause for them.

I worked with someone who was diagnosed with an acoustic neuroma and their outcome from surgery was a lot different than mine and I had some people make snide comments to me like "how come you made yours seem so bad and they seem fine after their surgery?". I also started speaking at a local nursing college and none of the students had seem to have heard of an acoustic neuroma. So from those types of events, I felt more awareness in the local community needed to be done and that is when a lightbulb went off and my purpose was forming right before my own eyes.

I spent years wondering "why me?" I was a changed person the moment I came out of that surgery and I spent so much time feeling displaced and lost as a person. Team ANA 417 has given me purpose and the will to want to fight for all of those suffering from an Acoustic Neuroma diagnosis. I could not be more passionate in wanting to help raise awareness, drive research and raise money for those patients that need proper care but don't have the funds for travel, pre/post op treatments, etc.

- *What do you like to do in your spare time?*

I love being a mommy. I have a beautiful little girl that I just adore and we are patiently awaiting the arrival of our second child this November! When I am not chasing her around, I love to run! Holistic healing was my outlet after my surgery and I have found running to be very therapeutic. Anything really fitness related, I am game to try!

- *What inspires you?*

Having other acoustic neuroma patients and their families thank me for either speaking with them pre/post op and/or hearing that I have helped them in some way. It inspires me to keep pushing forward with my mission.

- *Who is a hero of yours and why?*

My parents and husband. They are the most supportive people in the world and never left my side when things were rocky with my health. I love these people more than words can say.

- *What is something quirky about you?*

I hate uneven numbers lol! I can't leave the radio volume or thermostat on anything uneven.

- *Where are you from originally?*

Joplin, MO

- *More about Jennifer:*

My dream was to be a TV meteorologist. I went to college and studied Broadcast Journalism and Marketing. I was diagnosed with my tumor the semester before graduation. Once I had the surgery and found I had bad facial paralysis, my dreams of anything media related quickly faded. I went on to graduate with a degree in Broadcast Journalism and Marketing. Once I felt healthy enough, I started doing Marketing for a local Urgent Care company. I felt so lost in who I was and what I was supposed to be doing with my life, so about three years after working there, I went back to school and got my Master's in Health Communication. I felt so passionate about proper communication from a patient provider stand point and I also wanted to learn more about better ways to communicate with AN patients and their families. I graduated Summa Cum Laude in the Spring of 2014.

I continued working at the urgent care clinic through graduate school and once I graduated, I took on the position as their Human Resource Manager. I have worked at the same urgent care since I was 15, they have grown with me in life and so focusing on employee relations and company culture is something I love!

In regards to education, I am never opposed to expanding my knowledge, so who knows what is next for me in that area!

- *Ask Jennifer About:*

- Starting your own nonprofit
- Communication Strategies
- Meeting other Acoustic Neuroma patients in SW Missouri
- Volunteer opportunities with Team ANA 417
- Wanting to make a difference in the Acoustic Neuroma world