

ASTHMA STORIES

Kim C., Lawyer and Author Detroit, Michigan

When Kim's 12-year-old son Julious had to be rushed to the emergency room while on a field trip, the doctor told her that the ER was full of children due to a "bad air day". Julious describes his asthma as feeling like "being pushed into a locker." Kim lives in fear of not being with Julious during an attack.

Kim and Julius Sr. have their hands full with three very active boys in Detroit, Michigan. They find Detroit to be a wonderful place to raise a family and Kim particularly enjoys that it is a very culturally oriented city. "There are a lot of misconceptions about Detroit—that people don't care about themselves or their community. But people here are just like anywhere—they want the best for their kids and their families. They've just had to deal with issues that other places haven't had to deal with."

Their eldest son, Julius Jr. was diagnosed with asthma when he was two, though Kim noticed his breathing difficulties as early as 3 months of age. He was first hospitalized at two, where he was administered breathing treatments every three hours for two days. Kim remembers thinking, "Wow, that's not how you want your kid to start his life." She felt helpless seeing him next to a nebulizer that was almost as big as he was, and remembers thinking, "How do you help your kid breathe?"

Julius Sr. says that it wasn't until an episode in third grade that he understood the seriousness of his son's disease. Julius Jr. was on a field trip when his teacher called to say that he was having difficulty breathing and they were taking him to the hospital. When the family arrived at the emergency room, the doctor told them that there were many other children being treated for asthma attacks due to a "bad air day". Since that day, either Kim or her husband participate in all field trips and don't allow sleepovers. They also purchased a nebulizer that can run on batteries or plug into their car.

Both parents recognize the impact of air quality on Julius and others who suffer from asthma. Kim thinks that factors such as cars, factories and other human activities are responsible for the smog that often exacerbates Julius' asthma. Julius Sr. says that if he could speak to a member of congress, he'd ask them to look at the rising asthma numbers and seriously consider the possible causes.

Kim wanted to tell her family story because she feels that although people hear a lot about asthma, they don't really know what it means—how it affects people in their daily lives. "A lot of people hear the statistics but they don't necessarily see the faces behind that."

