

# Cowetans invited to Race for Riley

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Three-year-old Riley Peek is energetic and playful despite having a disorder that depletes her cells of energy.

The Palmetto girl, daughter of Waynette and Rodney Peek, was diagnosed with a mitochondrial disease in 2003 just one day after celebrating her second birthday. The metabolic disorder affects Riley's balance and development and causes gastrointestinal problems.

"She's really off-balance," said Riley's mother. Riley attends the Joseph Sams School, a private, special-needs school in Fayetteville. There she receives much-needed therapies.

According to the United Mitochondrial Disease Foundation (UMDF), such disorders cause defects in the mitochondria, "organelles" found in every cell of the body which are responsible for the body's energy production.

Waynette Peek said mitochondria disease affects 1 in 4,000 newborns. The test to diagnose the disorder is an invasive muscle biopsy. "It can go undiagnosed," said Peek.

Seemingly healthy at birth, Riley suffered from what her family thought was acid reflux. She would undergo surgeries to correct the reflux and to place a feeding tube that was ultimately never used.

When Riley continued to miss developmental milestones, she was taken to see a neurologist. Multiple MRIs revealed underdevelopment in a portion of her brain.

Riley now sees a molecular medicine doctor at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta. "He's one of the leading doctors," said Peek.

Physicians are unable to predict Riley's future. Peek said that many children with mitochondrial disease do not live past their teenage years.

The Peeks have organized the Race for Riley, a 5K run/walk to raise funds for the UMDF. Peek



Three-year-old Riley Peek of Palmetto has mitochondrial disease, a disorder that depletes energy from cells. There is no cure for the disease, which can be fatal. The disorder affects her balance and development and causes gastrointestinal problems.

said that 90 percent of the money raised will go toward disease research. "They have to apply," said Peek about potential researchers.

The Race for Riley will be held April 30 on the Palmetto campus of the Georgia Baptist Children's Home, located at 9250 Hutcheson Ferry Rd.

Newnan Utilities and Lindsey's Realtors have joined the effort as sponsors, and Peek is hoping

more Cowetans will become involved.

The event will also include a 1 mile run and tot trot. There will be food, fun and activities for children of all ages.

Pre-registration for the event is \$15 per individual. Registration on event day is \$20. The pre-registration deadline is April 15. Race t-shirts are guaranteed to all who pre-register.

For more information, call Peek

at 770-463-0714 or e-mail to waynette@raceforriley.org. More information can also be obtained on the Web at [www.raceforriley.org](http://www.raceforriley.org).

The United Mitochondrial Disease Foundation ([www.umdf.org](http://www.umdf.org)) is based in Pittsburgh, Penn. The foundation provides support to families affected by mitochondrial disease and funds medical research.