

Meet Nicci Klepper

My name is Nicci Klepper And I am 42 years old. I have been a special Olympic athlete since I was 8 years old. I have competed in aquatics, basketball, bocce, bowling, track and field, golf and gymnastics (both artistic and rhythmic). Gymnastics is my favorite sport and I have earned hundreds of medals at local, regional, and state competitions. When I am competing I feel like I can do anything. Special Olympics gives me a place to shine and to meet so many people that are now family.

My journey began with me being born very early (eight weeks preemie) and my body needed seven weeks in neonatal intensive care to be able to support me. During this time the doctors found the atrial wall in my heart had not developed and I would need an open heart surgery to patch it. At seven months old I had my first surgery. The doctors didn't give my parents much hope to survive the surgery but the doctors were willing to try and so were my parents. With lots of prayers, the Lord on my side, I made it!

Through the next 42 years I have conquered many challenges with my health including the implantation of a pacemaker at eight years old, and numerous replacement units. When I was 39 my pacemaker malfunctioned and a whole new batch of challenges were faced which led to surgery number 50 on September 11, 2023. This was my second open heart surgery. Again it was very high risk and again many prayers from everywhere we're needed. God is good! He guided and helped everybody to keep me alive and yes, I am a survivor!

Throughout this journey my special Olympic family has been there for me as well as for my family. For the past 25 years I have met law enforcement officers through the torch run events. These officers are also now my family. Through this last few months many of my officer friends called, texted, sent cards/flowers/gifts And have been so awesome!

I love my special Olympic family and my law enforcement family, they are the best! They are my best friends and always there to support me.