

On February 12, 2010, Keetra Thompson woke up to the unthinkable. The entire left side of her body was paralyzed. Fortunately, she was still able to speak. She called her parents, who immediately took her to the ER.

“My mom is a RN so that was reassuring,” Thompson said. “I’m grateful for my family and their quick response.”

Once she was examined, doctors determined she’d had a stroke.

“In my mind I was too young,” said Thompson, who was 33 years old at the time. “How could this be?”

Thompson spent three months in in-patient therapy relearning the basics of day-to-day living. During that time she found support in educational material provided by the American Heart Association,

“At the time my son was two years old, so we were both learning how to walk at the same time,” she said.

This year marks Thompson’s 10th anniversary as a stroke survivor, and she and her family are planning a year-long celebration of the milestone, including participating in the St. Louis Heart Walk. Thompson and family members have walked in the event every year since 2011.

“I am currently organizing my largest team ever to walk with me at the St. Louis Heart Walk,” she said. “Family, friends, church family, neighbors, Facebook friends and coworkers. I am excited!”

Their team name? Stroke of Genius.

Thompson likes to say that now she’s “living life on purpose with purpose,” and she wants others to learn from her experience and understand that there’s no age limit for having a stroke.

“Now I am able to live a full and productive life. Every person I meet, I tell my story of survival.”