

Victoria Karl

Victoria Karl has a family history of heart issues. Her paternal grandmother had double bypass surgery, and one of her aunt had stents in her heart, but this didn't make her 2017 diagnosis of hypertrophic obstructive cardiomyopathy any easier to accept.

"It struck my family and I so hard," Karl said. "I was told I had to halt activity and drop any sports I participated in and was given a prescription for beta blockers I would take all the time."

Karl, who was 15 and a high school sophomore at the time, went through an especially hard time being sidelined from her favorite activity, color guard, and as the school year progressed the pain got steadily worse until she could barely walk to her classes.

"I suffered through pain and weakness from my heart and the emotional pain of having to be so different from my friends," she said.

After a lengthy battery of tests, Karl eventually went in for an MRI, which led to a cardiac catheterization and shortly afterward she underwent a septal myectomy. The surgery was a success and almost a year later Karl is working on building her strength back up to return to color guard and preparing to graduate in May 2020.

After her diagnosis, Karl spent hours learning all about the disease and researching others who have it. After helping a patient and their family who were going through an ordeal similar to her own Karl has determined to focus on the positive aspects of her experience instead of the pain and share her story to others who are going through the same thing to help make their road to recovery easier.

"The disease has completely changed what I want to do in life," she said. "I always tell new friends about it and I love explaining myself, showing my scar and helping others learn about it."