

WOMEN WHO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Women of the Year

Since "Women Who Make a Difference" was launched in August 1988, FAMILY CIRCLE has profiled more than 50 extraordinary women whose volunteer efforts have revitalized their communities, sparked health research and saved children's lives. Last spring the editors chose 25 finalists for our first annual "Women of the Year" celebration. Eight distinguished judges,* board members of the nonpartisan Points of Light Foundation in Washington, D.C., chose six of the women to be honored at our 60th Anniversary Gala this October. Their inspiring stories show how women are working to change the world.

Health

Karen Forschner

Tolland, Connecticut

Last year Jamie Forschner had just finished kindergarten when his Lyme disease resurfaced with a vengeance. There had been so many emergencies, so many long hours in hospital waiting rooms. Still, the morning Jamie died his parents, Karen and Tom, were stunned. "I have to believe that there was a reason for him to die," says Karen.

She herself had contracted Lyme disease in 1985, the result of a bite by an infected tick. She was pregnant at the time, but her symptoms were not correctly diagnosed until after Jamie was born. Untreated—or incorrectly treated—in the initial stages, Lyme can become crippling, even life-threatening.

Karen suffered severe heart and joint problems as a result. Jamie was left neurologically impaired and chronically ill, although he did make real strides during his young life. His death has made the Forschners more determined than ever to eradicate the disease and help educate the American public about prevention and treatment.

Today, thanks to Karen and the Lyme Disease Foundation (LDF), which she began with Tom's help in 1988, enormous progress has been made on both fronts. LDF has

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organized eight international conferences, produced authoritative information kits for medical professionals, and educational films for children. The hotline has fielded over 250,000 inquiries, and a pregnancy registry helps expectant mothers infected with Lyme.

For the past year LDF has been funding research for two vaccines. "The Government didn't have the money for this research, so we raised it," Karen explains. "A vaccine is still five years away, though."

In addition, since early diagnosis is tricky—and critical—LDF has helped finance the development of a new Lyme test, which is believed to be extremely accurate and may be available by the end of 1993. Says Karen, "This is the first test that will show who is infected and who is cured. It's a critical first step in getting the right treatment." □