

SIUE softball's 6-year-old recruit set to cheer on the Cougars during first home game

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EDWARDSVILLE - As the Southern Illinois University Edwardsville softball team takes the field for its first home game of the season versus Illinois on Wednesday, March 21, its biggest fan and newest recruit will be there cheering.

In early February, Karlie Maine, a six-year-old from Alhambra, signed a National Letter of Intent with the Cougars, coordinated by Team IMPACT after having battled myriad medical issues.

Since then, she's visited the team at practice and has been working on her own softball skills. View a video of her with the team [here](#).

"I like coming, because I get to meet all my friends, and I get to swing the bat and use my new glove," Karlie said.

"When we found out we were going to have this opportunity to not only get to know Karlie, but also get to know her family, it was a huge deal for our entire team," explained Zoe Schafer, a redshirt sophomore from Noblesville, Ind. "The SIUE Softball program is all about family. We are so excited to have her join us."

Since 2011, Team IMPACT has matched more than 1,300 children facing serious or chronic illnesses with more than 500 colleges and universities in 47 states, reaching more than 35,000 participating student-athletes.

According to her mom, Marsha, Karlie was born premature at 24 weeks. Since then, she has undergone heart surgery, Lasik eye surgery, and battled various lung and leg issues.

"The interaction with the SIUE Softball team has been really good for her," said Marsha, who works in the SIUE Office of Admissions. "When we got the call from Team IMPACT and Shriner's Hospital to see if she would be interested, we thought it would be a good opportunity for her to become a team player and interact with different people. This is her first try at playing ball."

The players affectionately call their new teammate "Karlie Bug," and smiles are shared all around when she comes to visit.

"She brightens all of our days," Schafer said.

"As college students, we're juggling a lot with studying, practice and games," added Alana Cobb-Adams, a freshman from Kapolei, Hawaii. "Karlie makes us forget about everything, and we have so much fun with her!"

"We've extended the invitation for Karlie and her family to be at as many events as she wants, whether it be practices, games or team meals," said SIUE Head Coach Sandy Montgomery. "We expect her to be a fixture around our clubhouse and around our team for the next two years. At that time, she will get to experience 'Senior Day' with her teammates."

If you know a child who may be interested in Team IMPACT, visit www.goteamimpact.org for more information.

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville provides students with a high quality, affordable education that prepares them for successful careers and lives of purpose to shape a changing world. Built on the foundation of a broad-based liberal education, and enhanced by hands-on research and real-world experiences, the academic preparation SIUE students receive equips them to thrive in the global marketplace and make our communities better places to live. Situated on 2,660 acres of beautiful woodland atop the bluffs overlooking the natural beauty of the Mississippi River's rich bottomland and only a short drive from downtown St. Louis, the SIUE campus is home to a diverse student body of nearly 14,000.

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