

# HOOP

*Dreams*

BLINDNESS DOESN'T Dampen JULIA  
PATE-WINSTEAD'S PASSION FOR  
EXERCISING HER BODY AND HER CREATIVITY.

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**V**enture to Torrance's Wilson Park on farmers market day, and you'll find more than vendors selling seasonal produce, baked goods and prepared foods. You'll also encounter joggers and skateboarders, and you'll likely see a slim, blond woman hula-hooping. As the hoop gyrates, she spins, slows and quickens the rotations, and twirls the hoop over her head.

"It's like having a funnel on top of my head pulling the stress out of my body," says Julia Pate-Winstead, aka The Happy Hooper. "Hooping is low-impact and works the whole body. It's therapy for me."

Julia always brings an extra hoop or two, encouraging passersby to give one a twirl. "I tell people: Keep your head up, close your eyes and feel it."

The 56-year-old Torrance resident discovered hooping about five years ago, after receiving a hula hoop as a birthday gift. She had recently put on about 30 pounds—not healthy for anyone but especially for someone with diabetes. The hooping helped her shed the extra weight in just nine months.

In addition to hooping, Julia now works out at least twice a week at her local 24 Hour Fitness, completing a routine that includes 15 minutes on the treadmill followed by a circuit of machines. "Julia has come to my yoga classes in the past," says group exercise instructor Brenda Swanney. "She's an incredible human being, and she looks fabulous. She's one of the most productive people I know, and she really embodies the idea of being the best you can be."

Julia was only 18 months old when her father discovered her one morning unconscious in a pool of urine. She was rushed to the hospital and diagnosed with type 1 (childhood) diabetes. Doctors told her parents that Julia would likely live only until around age 40.





## JULIA'S YEAR IN HEALTH

### DAILY ITINERARY

Wake up; check blood sugar; have coffee. Take dog for 1-mile walk. Test blood, take insulin shot, eat breakfast. Work out at the gym. Run errands or return home. Test blood, take insulin shot, eat lunch. Take dog for walk. Do crafting. Test blood, take insulin shot and eat dinner. More crafting or television or listening to a book. Test blood, take insulin shot and have evening snack. Bedtime

### DIET

**Breakfast:** Oatmeal with chia seeds, raw flax seed, coconut oil, peanut butter, almond milk and a pinch of salt

**Lunch:** Frozen grilled chicken sandwich (from Costco) with a slice of cheese and hot chili peppers

**Dinner:** Salad with nuts, flaxseed, and oil and vinegar dressing; extra lean turkey pastrami

**Bedtime snack:** Dollop of low-fat cottage cheese and a small handful of peanuts

**Beverage:** About 50 ounces of water per day, and one SmartWater, for the sodium

### WORKOUT ROUTINE

1-mile morning walk with dog; at the gym, 15 minutes on the treadmill or 30 minutes of hooping followed by machine circuit abdominals, leg curls, triceps, leg extension, lateral pull, inner thigh and outer thigh

### PREFERRED FOOTWEAR

For hooping: barefoot; for walking: ASICS Gels with Dr. Scholl's inserts

### STAYING FIT

For hooping: at home, at the gym and at Wilson Park; for working out: 24 Hour Fitness on PCH and Crenshaw

### FREE TIME

Walking, hula hooping and crafting

### FITNESS ROUTINE SHE ISN'T GOOD AT

Jumping rope: "I look awkward and have no rhythm."

### FITNESS ACTIVITY SHE HASN'T TRIED

"I'd like to find somewhere hilly to walk, maybe Palos Verdes."

### GUILTY PLEASURE

Carl's Jr. El Diablo burger (with jalapeno poppers, pepper-jack cheese, fiery habanero sauce, bacon strips and sliced jalapenos): "I allow myself two of these per year."





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Medical advances and Julia’s healthy habits proved those doctors wrong. In fact, she has avoided many of the normal complications of diabetes thanks to staying physically active, keeping a disciplined diet and closely monitoring her blood sugar.

She received the Lilly Diabetes Journey Award from pharmaceutical firm Eli Lilly and Company in recognition of successfully managing her type 1 diabetes with insulin for 50 years. “I want to still be hooping at 70 and get the award for 70 years,” she says.

Unfortunately Julia could not avoid the loss of vision. Her sight began deteriorating when she was in her early 20s due to diabetic retinopathy—nerve damage to the retina. Her doctor worked hard to slow the vision loss—Julia has undergone 43 eye surgeries—but three years ago the last bit of light sensitivity vanished, and she became totally blind.

Because of her limited vision, Julia has depended on guide dogs for more than three decades. She takes her current dog, a Labrador retriever, for a mile-walk each morning and

often walks a second mile in the afternoon. “Walking with a dog is amazing for my mind,” she says, noting that it gives her the freedom to daydream because she can trust the dog to navigate safely.

When walking becomes impractical, Julia says, transportation gets cumbersome—and expensive. But that’s the only complaint she shares. “I embrace being blind. Every day is a challenge, and every day I wake up grateful that I woke up.”

In addition to her hooping, Julia has a passion for crafting. She makes jewelry, sews quilts, crochets afghans and creates decorative wall hangings using artificial flowers. “I like to do something different and come up with my own designs,” she says.

She also makes hula hoops. Julia sells the items she makes to supplement her limited income. But it’s the creative process that gives her pleasure. “Going blind has been a gift,” she says. “There’s so much in me that’s come out that I didn’t know was there, like my crafts. It’s been an amazing journey.” ■