

rheumatologist.

"She did a variety of tests and scans to determine that fibromyalgia is what I am experiencing," Heather said. "She provided some guidance, and my primary physician has been able to meet my medical needs since that time."

Heather says she has been blessed so far in that she has been able to treat her symptoms without relying heavily on medications.

"I take some medication, but have been able to avoid pain medicines for the most part, with the exception of occasional ibuprofen on really bad days," she said. "I have had success with both chiropractic care and massage. On a day-to-day basis, my heating pads have been the most helpful tools, particularly one that is shaped sort of like a cape and provides relief to my neck and shoulders. There are days that an ice pack at the base of my head works really well too."

Heather said, because fibromyalgia is so different for each patient, there are no hard and fast remedies to alleviate pain. "Not everyone experiences fibromyalgia in the same way, and not everyone gets relief in the same way. Sometimes people give advice about how to feel better, like diet or certain medications, that worked for a friend. I always remember that everyone means well and just wants to help me, but I would encourage people to remember that most people with fibromyalgia are working with a doctor - or a few doctors - and let the experts give advice," she said.

She does note that she doesn't want people to be afraid she will break when they learn she has fibromyalgia.

"Sometimes people are afraid to touch me because of fibromyalgia," she said. "Please don't be scared! A hearty backslap may not be my favorite, but I still appreciate a gentle hug or touch on the shoulder. To be honest, the human touch is worth it even if it hurts."

There is one recommendation Heather would make to anyone struggling with fibromyalgia - seek support.

"I am so thankful that I have a supportive and loving husband, parents, siblings and family. I have caring and thoughtful friends and an incredible church family," she said. "If a person doesn't have a support system, I recommend finding a support system like a church or support group."

Heather has found that positive thinking goes a long way for her.

"Fibromyalgia is a very physically real disease, but sometimes for me it helps to think my way through it," she said. "For example, when I'm going for a walk with my girls and they want to go further, I could stop because it hurts and I'm tired but I often choose to keep walking or playing because I can remind myself that my body may be feeling pain but it isn't hurting me to keep walking."

Heather is optimistic and chooses to look at life's silver linings.

"I never want someone to feel sorry for me because of my fibromyalgia. One of the best things that fibromyalgia has done for me is helping me to grow in my faith," she said. "I am strong-willed and independent but having fibromyalgia has forced me to lean on my God who is bigger than my circumstances. In my weakness, I see God's strength more easily."

"Also, having fibro has really made my priorities crystal clear. When sometimes I am in too much pain or too exhausted to do everything I want to do, I am able to choose what I need to do more effectively. I do what is most important first so that, if I wear out or have a really bad fibromyalgia day. I don't miss out on what matters. That is a gift."

Heather is the oldest daughter of Yankton residents Micki and Marty Schievelbein.

For more information about fibromyalgia, visit www.fmaware.org.

❖ By Tera Schmidt



Willcockson Eye Associates, P.C.

415 W. 3rd., Yankton, South Dakota

The physicians of Willcockson Eye Associates, P.C. are dedicated to providing the best possible medical and surgical eye care for you and your entire family. In addition to comprehensive eye exams and contact lens fittings, our physicians perform state of the art small-incision cataract and implant surgery. Our physicians are the regional experts in the diagnosis and management of sight threatening conditions such as glaucoma, diabetes, and macular degeneration.

For all your eyewear needs visit the Spectacle Shop next door. They offer an extensive selection of frames from traditional styles to the latest fashion design with frames to meet every family's budget.



The Spectacle Shop, L.L.C.

New patients welcome!

Call 605-665-9638



Paula Hicks, MD



Greg Kouri, OD



Karen Dickes, DO



Aarika Menees, MD