



### **Gabrielle Ford: A Voice for the Bullied**

Gabrielle Ford never dreamed that a long-eared coonhound could change her life. But that's just what happened when she cared for her ailing pet Izzy and found the voice to help others in need as a nationally-known motivational speaker. Today Gabe's incredible story has drawn media attention from *The Today Show*, *Cosmopolitan Magazine* and *Animal Planet*, among others. Her 2009 autobiography *Still Dancing* shares even more of the inspirational details from her life as a way to encourage others that anything is possible.

As a child, Gabrielle loved dance and dreamed of becoming a prima ballerina. That dream was shattered by a rare genetic neuromuscular disease, Friedreich's Ataxia, that would eventually place her in a wheelchair. Gabe not only struggled with the devastation of the illness, but also endured constant and cruel bullying from classmates. The constant torment took her on a path of depression and isolation.

That all changed when Izzy, a long-eared coonhound pup, entered Gabe's life. Izzy became Gabe's best friend and constant companion. When this special friend mysteriously developed a condition mirroring Gabe's, Gabe re-entered the world to get Izzy the best treatment available.

Speaking out for the voiceless Izzy gave her the courage to speak out for another voiceless group: the thousands of children bullied in American schools every day. Through countless personal trials, Gabe found her way back to the stage as an outspoken advocate against school bullying. In addition to her countless school visits, she has also been a keynote speaker at various conferences and conventions. Her dedication even earned her the 2011 Communications & Leadership Award from Toastmasters International as well as the Community Hero Award in 2008 from the Fenton Regional Chamber of Commerce.

**Where her story has appeared:** *Animal Planet's A Pet Story*, *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, *The Today Show*, *Guideposts Magazine*, *MDA's Quest Magazine*

#### **Selected appearances:**

- Michigan Reading Association's Annual Convention, Grand Rapids, Michigan, March 2011
- Michigan US Senate Judiciary Hearing Committee
- 2011 Michigan Civil Rights Anti-Bullying Forum
- International Reading Association's Annual Convention, Phoenix, Arizona, 2009
- National Ataxia Foundation Association (NAFA) 2006

#### **Upcoming engagements:**

**2012 Delta Kappa Gamma** International Society State of Oregon Convention

**To contact Gabe:** Gabe resides in Fenton Michigan with her family, canine friends Lindsey Bell and Dominic and feline friends Sweetie and Bob. For more information on Gabe, to book an appearance, or to purchase her book, please visit [www.gabeandizzy.com](http://www.gabeandizzy.com)