

Walker

...from Page 1A

in another cast and several months spent in a wheelchair, during which time she stayed home from school as she recuperated.

Now, Olivia is 13 years old, and she is enjoying her time as a middle school student.

She does experience mild arthritis in her leg and has trouble running for distance, though she doesn't let that get her down. Her calf muscle is smaller on the one side, but for the most part, people don't know anything about her clubfoot unless they see the scars.

Olivia still visits Dr. Schrader for checkups, and she surprised him earlier this year with her announcement that she would be participating in the 4-H District Project Achievement competition in the area of clubfoot.

"It hasn't been a handicap," said Dr. Schrader, admiring his young patient. "She rolls with it and recovers well, and it is what it is. She doesn't let it stop her, and she's actually a promoter of clubfoot in teaching and talking about it, which is awesome."

At the 4-H competition, Olivia placed second out of more than 40 kids, which served as yet another example of her tremendous talent and drive to succeed.

"My biggest takeaway that I did not know was that the U.S. is one of the only countries that can actually help cure clubfoot," said Walker, discussing her project. "And there's so many organizations that help people all around the world, like in Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Cuba and all these other places that can't



Olivia Walker as a baby.

afford it.

"They take donations and send it to them, and I've been looking it up and seeing the

progress of all the countries, and it's really cool to see so many people donating money to help other people."

Olivia showed particular courage during the speech portion of her project, in which she spoke at length about a personal condition she has had to overcome.

"After doing my presentation, I've been more brave to talk about it to other people," said Olivia. "Before, I was kind of embarrassed



Just a few of the casts and braces Olivia had to wear from birth to age 5 to help correct her clubfoot.

that people would make fun of me for having something so uncommon.

"I'm the only one out of all my friends that's had this, and it's really rare. I feel like it definitely has made me stronger to talk about it."

And for anyone who may be experiencing similar hardships to the ones that she has overcome in life, Olivia has an important message.

"Just be patient, and don't

let other people hurt you and bully you about these things, because you can't help it," said Olivia. "It's not something that you can choose and decide to have."

"At school, I can go up the stairs and walk around and play outside and do sports. I'm the same as everybody else - I'm not different in any way. I'm just a regular human being."

Georgia Sen. Steve Gooch appointed as Chair of Senate Study Committee

ATLANTA Sen. Steve Gooch (R - Dahlonoga) has been appointed by Lt. Governor Casey Cagle to serve as Chair of the Senate Study Committee on Evaluating the School Year Calendar of Georgia Public Schools.

"As we celebrate Labor Day each year as the unofficial end of summer, most of our public schools have been back in full swing for nearly a month," said Sen. Gooch. "Additionally, August is typically the hottest time of year when energy bills reach their peak and student athletes' safety is a big concern. I believe that for these reasons and others, it is a good time to take a look at how we compare to other states who still utilize a more traditional school calendar with their start dates after Labor Day. We look forward to hearing from all key stakeholders on how this shift would impact our public schools, students, parents and the tourism industry. Our goal is to determine if a later start date is feasible and if it would provide additional opportunities for families to take a vacation together while increasing the availability of summer workers for our booming travel and hospitality industries. We will review these possibilities while also ensuring that there will be no disruption to the education of our children."

"Senator Gooch's leadership has helped guide North Georgia - and our entire state - to achieve record job growth and economic prosperity. I'm confident this study committee will diligently evaluate how local districts across our state can best align each system's school calendar with their community's unique needs, while ensuring that every student has access to a world-class education," said Lt. Governor Cagle.

"The Georgia Travel Association (GATA) commends Senator Steve Gooch and the leadership of the State Senate for taking steps to fully examine Georgia's school start date and its impact on the state's tourism industry by establishing their Study Committee on Evaluating the School Year Calendar of Georgia Public Schools," said Kelsey Moore, Executive Director of the Georgia Travel Association. "GATA supports the establishment of sensible guidelines to create a more uniform school start date that benefits parents, students, and the many locally-owned businesses that depend on the tourism industry to help drive Georgia's economy. These summer experiences, internships and job opportunities are critical components in the state's efforts around workforce development. We look forward



Sen. Steve Gooch (R-Dahlonoga)

to working with this committee to take a comprehensive look at an issue that has a significant impact on our students, families and communities."

The Senate Study Committee on Evaluating the School Year Calendar of Georgia Public Schools was created by the passage of Senate Resolution 1068 during the 2018 Legislative Session. As stated in the resolution, 11 members will serve on the committee including the chairman of the Senate Economic Development and Tourism, Education and Youth and Appropriations Committees. The committee will review the effect of varied school start dates on the travel and hospitality industries. The committee must report its findings on or before December 1, 2018. *NSep5Z19ICA*