

CSH Support Corner – Parent & Caregiver Blog June 2023



It was the night before Thanksgiving when we received a call that changed our lives. Our daughter Caitlin was crossing the street when she was struck by a drunk driver. We arrived at the hospital a short time later and when we were finally allowed to see her, we were told she would probably not make it through the night.

With the dawn on Thanksgiving Day, we were truly blessed and thankful that Caitlin made it through the night. Later that day, her doctors said that she would survive the accident but have a long recovery period.

Caitlin's road to recovery began a month later at Children's Specialized Hospital. After a month in a coma at a surgical intensive care unit, Children's nurses, therapists and doctors had her dressed, sitting up and in therapy that first day at the hospital. It was the first day since the accident that she looked like our daughter again.

Over the next 8 months that she was an inpatient, Caitlin received occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech therapy, neurological therapy, psychology and recreational therapy. It was so amazing how quickly she progressed. The staff conferred with each other daily on her progress in each area and her goals and treatments were adjusted as needed.

In conjunction with her therapies, I believe the staff interactions and encouragement greatly contributed to her recovery and wellbeing. With regard to the rest of my family, we were always treated with kindness and respect by staff, encouraged to participate in her therapies and personal care and prodded to always ask questions.

We have learned along the way that our lives will not be what we anticipated. We are all living a new normal with Caitlin's permanent disabilities.

Thanks to Children's Specialized Hospital, Caitlin is a typical young adult in many respects. Texting, fighting with 3 siblings, babysitting 5 nieces and nephews, worried about her hair style and looking forward to holidays and vacations. Caitlin also tries to be as independent as possible with her daily chores and personal care, a little slow at times, but she always has a sense of accomplishment.

We as caregivers must remember to let your child do what he or she can do, with encouragement and support. Caitlin wants to be independent even though she knows I would like to do everything for her. She has definitely taught me patience.

My final advice is to always take time for yourself even in the midst of your challenges and responsibilities. Take a few deep breaths, be mindful of your stress and be present in whatever you're doing.

