

JESSICA WHETSTINE A STORY OF HER RECOVERY

By Jill Hall

Dear Memorial High School Alumni,

I am writing this letter on behalf of Jessica Whetstine's family. Jessica is a 21-year-old Evansville native who graduated in 2009 from Memorial High School, where she played softball and ran cross-country for the Memorial Tigers. She also supported Memorial's wrestling team by participating as a member of WOW (Women of Wrestling).

On May 26, 2012, Jessica and her boyfriend, Tyler Norrenbrock, also a Memorial graduate, were involved in a serious motorcycle accident. Although both were wearing helmets, Jessica suffered what police at the scene called a life-threatening head injury. Jessica remained in critical condition at St. Mary's Medical Hospital for a number of weeks before they moved her to St. Mary's Rehabilitation Center.

As of now, she is continuing rehabilitation at Frazier Rehab Institute in Louisville, Ky. The staff works on nothing but neuro rehabilitation, which gives them an edge when dealing with patients like Jessica.

She visits Frazier on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. Her day starts at 8:45 a.m. and ends at 3:15 p.m. She has six classes with a lunch break in the middle.

Below is a recent update from Jessie's Dad, Chris Whetstine:

"Jess still tires very easily, which has seemed odd to me until yesterday when Dr. Amy at Frazier explained it to me this way: Dr. Amy said that because Jessie is in excellent physical condition, her body is very strong and right now her brain is in overdrive trying to figure out what is going on and trying to find new ways to solve things. She said that her brain is exhausting her body by using all of its strength to heal the brain. She said that the fatigue will lessen in time as Jess continues to heal.

Jessie seems to have all the same likes and dislikes that she ever had. Her wit and humor are the same now as they were before the accident. Her intellect is as strong as ever. As her memory slowly improves, it is very clear that Jessica Whetstine is Jessica Whetstine. I know that in time we can look forward to answering our cell phones and hearing her say that oh so familiar, "Hey, it's Jessie."

Her main issues are still balance, left side neglect, and memory.

Jessie's balance has improved to the point where

we no longer need to follow 14 inches behind her, always on the ready. Now, for the most part, she just becomes a little wobbly when standing from a seated position, stepping backward, and of course, stairways still remain a concern.

Her left side muscles still are sluggish. What started as 90 percent paralysis has been reduced to what we call "left neglect." When she calls upon her muscles to work, Jess can move all of them as well as most of us. It's the subconscious movements of her left side that fall behind. I'd say that her left side is functioning at about 80 percent efficiency."

According to Chris, Jessie's memory is much better than when she left the hospital; it is a little better than it was last week and it gets better every day. At first she could only remember new things for a few seconds (literally). Now she remembers most new things for most of the day and even overnight. Chris compares watching Jessie's memory to watching a tree grow. He says it is a really slow process.

They say Jess will never remember the accident and may not remember several months before or after. However, he says that they have been told that her memory will continue to improve over time and most of her memories will return. They say that memory is generally the last and slowest part of the recovery process.

You can follow Jessie's progress and sign up for email updates at <http://www.caringbridge.org/visit/jessicawhetstine>.

