



Andrew's Story

In January of 2008, Andrew Greenbaum was quickly preparing to finish his senior year at North Hunterdon High School and leave for college. A week after his 18th birthday he went on a skiing trip to Sugarbush, Vermont with his friend's family that he would not return from with function of his lower extremities. On Sunday, after two days of skiing, Andrew collided with a tree that left him nearly dead. He suffered a head injury, broken ribs, and a Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) at the Thoracic-7 level. Luckily the head injury only left an indentation and did not affect any brain function. It became apparent, though, from the first day that he was completely paralyzed from the T7 vertebra down. Andrew was airlifted to Burlington, Vermont's Fletcher Allen Hospital. There he received several surgeries including a spinal-fusion to reconstruct his crushed T7 vertebra and titanium rod implants to keep his spine straight through recovery. After spending a week in the ICU he was moved to regular hospital care until the beginning of February when he was flown down to Morristown, NJ.

Upon returning to his home-state of New Jersey, Andrew was immediately admitted to the Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation in West Orange. Over the following three months Andrew went through the physical and emotional pain of an SCI and slowly learned how to get adjusted to his new life. Through rigorous physical and occupational therapy he was slowly taught how to live a normal life as best he could without the use of his legs and control of his bowel/bladder function. Due to his need for many types of intravenous drug treatments, Andrew had a pick-line implanted in his chest

which unbeknownst to anyone became infected. The infection caused Andrew to sweat profusely for almost two weeks making it near impossible to find any comfort or rest. This went on until an Infectious Disease Specialist decided to pull the line which seemed to almost immediately relieve Andrew's symptoms. While at Kessler he also had an emergency hospital trip for Cystitis and another for an unknown abdominal pain which was eventually found through multiple tests to be severe neuropathic pain associated with the nerve damage he sustained in the crash. Andrew was tutored during his stay at Kessler and returned home with his mother in April to a new rented house with modifications for wheelchair accessibility.

Luckily, Andrew had acquired enough credit at NHHS prior to his accident that he was able to graduate. It has taken most of this year, but he is now optimistic and ambitious regarding the future of his new life. He is currently gaining college credit by taking online courses. Andrew is also taking driver re-certification classes so he will soon be license to operate a motor-vehicle with the assistance of adaptive hand-controls for braking and accelerating. He has been applied and been accepted to many schools. Andrew is a vibrant and friendly young adult with a self-proclaimed new "lease on life". He finds the bright side of his situation as a gift, separating him from the average and giving him the chance to be heard. He wants to study to become a psychologist and writer as he hopes to be able to help people from his experiences. Andrew has proven this year that all good things take time as he approaches the one year anniversary of his accident with optimism, confidence, independence that once seemed impossible to regain.

