

By Danielle Ray

Every day after school 12-year-old Jack Lally would return to his Lancaster home, have a snack, and then head out on his bike to his friend's house ¼ mile away. He was on his way home after that standard visit one bright fall day this past October when the unthinkable happened – he was struck by a hit-and-run driver. Luckily neighbors and witnesses rushed to Jack's aid, and he was brought to UMASS Hospital in Worcester where they put him into a medically induced coma for 24 hours while they evaluated his injuries.

His mother Jade was at home with Jack's three siblings (Madison, 17; Kenny, 10; and Lexi Mae, almost 3) that fateful day and had begun to worry when Jack did not show up shortly after 6pm, his regular time return home. She called around to Jack's friends to check on his whereabouts before finally got on a bike herself to ride Jack's route – she came upon the accident scene and identified Jack's bike.

"Unfortunately, I was at work in Boston," said his chef father Patrick, who left the restaurant immediately upon hearing about the accident. "It was kind of scary, but I heard he had given a partial plate on the white Jeep that hit him. Jade told me he was stable, but had been intubated for safety. It wasn't until I got to the hospital that I realized the severity of it."

Jack had serious head trauma in addition to breaking his collarbone and hip. He had reconstructive hip surgery and his head trauma left him with short term memory loss and has affected his cognitive skills.

He spent four days in the hospital before being transferred to Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital in Boston, where they estimated it would take up to 6 weeks of therapy – he was able to complete the in-hospital therapy regime in four weeks; he was discharged and went home the first week of November, in time to spend Thanksgiving with his family.

"When he first got to rehab he was still in rough shape, but he was 100% breathing on his own," said Patrick. "The first couple nights were tough, but then it began to calm down. Every day he is doing a little better.

It's hard because sometimes we forget about his injuries, but then he gets tired. I can't say enough about him - he is an amazing little boy and has persevered and is getting better quickly."

Jack still has to go to several therapy appointments every week in Northborough, which he is responding well to; and it is estimated that the cost of his treatment overall will total just shy of \$1 million.

"We keep paying the co-pays, and hope that the woman's [who hit him] insurance will kick in and cover more," Patrick said. "We just have to keep going and whatever happens, happens."

Greg Hill's son is Jack's age, and attends school a couple towns over. When Greg heard through a mutual friend of Jack's accident, he knew immediately that he wanted to offer financial assistance to the Lally family.

The Greg Hill Foundation was able to donate \$14,155 towards Jack's medical bills and continuing care.

In addition to the donation from the Greg Hill Foundation, friends, neighbors and even strangers sprang into action in the weeks following the accident and gas and other gift cards as well as cash donations have poured in.

“It was a God send what the Greg Hill Foundation and our friends and family have done,” Patrick said. “There is no financial stress or burden, and we can concentrate on Jack.”

A man that Jade went to high school with put in a smooth driveway and walkway at their home so Jack wouldn't trip and risk re-injury. People in the area who don't even know the Lally family personally have made donations ranging from \$5 to \$500.

“He jokes that he is the celebrity in this town,” Patrick said of all the attention Jack has garnered since the accident. “It has made him feel special in a way that has helped with his rehabilitation. We want to move forward.”

Jack still has a wheelchair, mostly for safety, and his family was under the impression he would need a wheelchair ramp at their home for the first three months after he got out of Spaulding - but he has been able to use the stairs with crutches after his collarbone healed.

“Since being home he is walking with one crutch, and can stand up on his own and balance,” Patrick said proudly. “Physically he is doing well, [but] things we take for granted take a toll on him and he gets tired quick. Yet his tolerance is getting better; he has friends over for three hours at a time now.”

Jack's school is going to start tutoring him at his home after the holiday break, and they are all hoping he will be able to return to school – most likely half days at first – sometime in February.

The woman who hit Jack was arrested at her home after a neighbor gave the police her license plate number; she was found to be under the influence of alcohol. She had her 5-year-old son in the car at the time of the accident, and he is now in state custody.

Her arraignment was set for December 11, and if found guilty of the charges against her she could spend 3-5 years in prison.

“After this happened, it changed me in a way,” said Patrick. “This is all very enlightening. At this point I am not out for vengeance, I am just out for justice - I don't have room in my heart for vengeance anymore. If she is found guilty I hope justice will be served.”

The accident, Patrick said, turned their family dynamic “upside down” – every routine they had with their young children was demolished, but they are slowly rebuilding and moving past that terrible day. And the help from friends and family, as well as the Greg Hill Foundation, has made the process that much more bearable.

“The fact that they help people in the kinds of situations is amazing,” Patrick said of the Foundation. “There are big charities that help in a big scale, but to know what there is someone out there for the little people is invaluable.

For me, it's wonderful to see how the community reacts and how the good people of the world far outweigh the lady who made a bad judgment call. For that one person who did something stupid, we

have had everybody rally around us and be so generous. Without Greg Hill it would have been so much harder and stressful. It has given us the ability to concentrate on and enjoy the good things.”