

# A Second Chance

**Jersey Shore University Medical Center** *Surgical excellence and sheer determination helped Adam Johnson walk again.*

IN OCTOBER 2012, ADAM JOHNSON, THEN 17-years-old, was involved in a horrible car accident. When paramedics came, the Howell Township resident needed to be cut from the car. He was rushed to the Trauma Center at Jersey Shore University Medical Center with a broken back and severed spinal cord.

**Michael Lospinuso, M.D.**, chief of spinal surgery at Jersey Shore, was called to treat Adam. Before surgery, Dr. Lospinuso prepared Adam's family for possible outcomes.

"We knew there was a good chance that Adam would be a paraplegic," says Adam's father, Kyle. "But we tried to focus on one step at a time. We just had to trust that things would work out. Our faith carried us through."

## Surgical Expertise

Dr. Lospinuso used two rods and 11 screws to reconstruct Adam's spine. He and his team then began the complex task of repairing Adam's spinal cord.

"The top part of Adam's spine was completely separated from the bottom. When one of his vertebrae broke, sharp shards of the bone severed the spinal cord like a knife, causing spinal fluid to leak," Dr. Lospinuso says. "Working under a microscope, we used fine hairlike sutures to reattach and repair the spinal cord."

The meticulous process of reattaching the spinal cord took more than six hours. "My team has high standards and follows very strict protocols. We strive for nothing short of perfection," says Dr. Lospinuso, who has more than 25 years of experience in complicated spinal surgery. "We weren't thinking about possible outcomes; we were focused on our task."

## Determination to Recover

No one knew how Adam would recover following surgery. His parents decided not to tell him about his grave prognosis. "We didn't want to take away his hope," says Adam's mother, Teri.

Determined to get back to normal, Adam threw himself into his recovery. To everyone's amazement, he took his first step in Jersey Shore's Intensive Care Unit just one week after surgery.

After 10 days at the Medical Center, Adam continued his rehabilitation. With unrelenting work, he progressed. Just six weeks after surgery, Adam returned to finish his last year of high school using a walker. And before the year was out, he was walking completely unassisted.

## A New Life

Today, two years after his spinal injury, no one would suspect Adam had ever been in an accident. He works out seven days a week and recently went snowboarding with friends. But he hasn't forgotten his struggles. Adam volunteers to speak to groups of teens about safe driving. And he is currently in college studying to become a physical therapist.

"I know what it's like to struggle through therapy. Not many people can say they've been there and understand. I can," Adam says. "I want to give back in some way."



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Nineteen-year-old Adam Johnson is a freshman at Brookdale Community College. He is studying biology with the hopes of becoming a physical therapist.

## Experts in Spine Care



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