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## Fundraiser set up to fulfill dream of Pine-Richland 3rd grader who suffered near-fatal injury



TONY LARUSSA | Thursday, May 12, 2022 5:01 p.m.



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A GoFundMe page has been set up to help fulfill Pine-Richland 3rd-grader Josie Kovacic's dream to go to Disney World. The girl is slowly recovering from a near-fatal spinal cord injury she suffered in February when a snowboarder lost control and crashed into her while she was skiing with her family.

Doctors say it will be a while before Pine-Richland third-grader Josie Kovacic is able to do the things she did before suffering a traumatic spinal injury in late February while on a ski slope.

But when the Wexford Elementary School pupil is ready, friends and family are hoping to make one of her dreams come true by sending her on a trip to Disney World.

To help make that dream a reality, family friend Melanie Lama has organized a GoFundMe page to help cover the expenses.

Josie's mother, Traci Kovacic, said her daughter has made significant progress recovering from the injuries she suffered when a snowboarder lost control and crashed into her.

"The first night the doctors sat us down to discuss how critical her injury was," Kovacic wrote in a March 29 social media post. "It was explained to us that this is the worst injury that could have happened and most do not make it to the hospital alive."

Josie was thrown 20 feet in the air and landed face down in the snow, her mother said.

She exhibited no signs of life until first responders performed CPR to get her heart started. She was transported by medical helicopter to a hospital for treatment.

Doctors said the accident detached Josie's neck by 2 inches, where the skull attaches to the spine, requiring a 6-hour surgery to fuse her head, neck and spine together.

Since the surgery Josie, has had a number of setbacks, her mother said, but she also has shown signs of progress.

One of the first signs of hope was a MRI indicating that even though her heart stopped beating, she likely did not suffer permanent brain damage.

"Since her accident, Josie has amazed the doctors," Kovacic said. "One month ago she had no heartbeat. Three weeks ago her future was very uncertain and two weeks ago, she couldn't move."

But things are changing.

"This past week she has started typing sentences, playing games on her iPad, she put weight on her legs, and even took a few assisted steps to sit in a wheelchair,' Kovacic said. "She still can't talk, but we have learned how to communicate until she can speak again.

"We are so incredibly lucky. Josie has a long road to a hopeful full recovery," she said. "But I can't believe how lucky we are that she not only survived this, but has made so much progress in a short time."

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