

‘She’s quite a miracle’: Paralyzed Carmel girl shows signs of recovery

BY NOK-NOI RICKER
OF THE BDN STAFF

In the days after a 3-year-old girl named Natalia was injured by a gunshot at her parents’ residence in Bangor, doctors told her loved ones that she was paralyzed from the neck down.

The injury occurred when she grabbed a loaded gun that was left within reach while she was home with her father and siblings on Oct. 30, 2013, and it went off, the bullet striking the left side of her neck, her grandparents say. No charges were ever filed.

The little girl with blond hair and bright blue eyes has since surprised the medical experts with her progress. Within six months she was moving her right arm enough to feed herself and was talking, just a little, in whispers. A year later, Talia, as she is nicknamed, had started to move her legs.

As any proud grandmother would do, Joline Scovil posted a video of Talia kicking a ball in May 2015 on her Facebook page.

“It was certainly a miracle,” Scovil said last week, standing in her kitchen cooking a chicken pot pie from Dysart’s, with her husband, Wayne, beside her. “They told us she would be paralyzed from

the neck down.” The little girl, who is now 5 and a kindergarten student, was seated in her grandfather’s lap when she kicked her right leg out pretty confidently last week, giving a demonstration, and she was able to lift and bend her left leg, but it was clearly more of a struggle.

“It gave us hope” she would walk again, said Wayne Scovil, who gave up his job to be a stay-at-home dad for his granddaughter. “She’s quite a miracle. She’s doing very well in school. She tries to do a lot of stuff herself. She’s very determined and strong-willed.”

“And she’s always happy.” Typical of most 5-year-olds, Talia likes foods like macaroni and cheese and ice cream.

“She eats whatever she wants,” Wayne Scovil said.

While she has been recovering from her injury, the Scovils have been going through the arduous process of adopting Talia and her two older siblings, Peyton, 8, and Jayden, 7. During the two-year process, the Scovils were not allowed to talk publicly about the children or give updates about Talia’s progress.

“We want people to know how well she’s doing,” Joline Scovil said, now that

the process is complete. Talia still requires daily medications and has a tracheostomy tube so she can be attached to a ventilation machine that helps her breathe at night. She’s doing so well that the trach tube, which is located at the base of her neck and has to be cleared occasionally, may be removed sometime soon, the Scovils said.

She gets around in three wheelchairs -- one with a tray for eating and doing art, another that can be folded to go into a vehicle, and a specialized motorized pink one that supports her back, neck and head that “she drives right up on the school bus, which is handicap accessible,” Wayne Scovil said proudly.

Talia has home nursing care to ensure someone is with her around the clock, and the Carmel couple are researching a handicap accessible van, so that she doesn’t have to get out of her wheelchair when going for rides. They are also considering sending her to an intense rehabilitation hospital in Massachusetts to help strengthen her arms and legs.

“They tell us that someone older wouldn’t be where she is today,” Joline Scovil said, referring to



BDN PHOTO BY ASHLEY CONTI

Peyton Scovil (right), 8, gives her sister, Natalia Scovil, 5, a hug after coming home in mid-December in Carmel. Natalia was left paralyzed by a gunshot on Oct. 30, 2013, in Bangor when she was 3 years old. She has slowly begun to regain mobility in her appendages. Natalia and her two siblings were adopted by her grandparents, Wayne and Joline, and became Scovils on Nov. 10

Talia’s medical team. “They tell us not to expect much more than what you see, but I think she amazes them every time she sees them.”

Minutes after the couple officially adopted their three grandchildren on Nov. 10, Joline Scovil posted on her Facebook page: “It’s official they are SCOVILS.”

Even though their parental rights have been severed, the children’s

parents, Danielle and Brandon Ogden, will be allowed to remain part of the children’s lives, according to the Scovils. They visited Christmas morning and were a part of the Scovils’ annual holiday gathering with their four children and eight grandchildren, Joline Scovil said, adding that Danielle is her daughter.

“Even though we adopted them, they still call us Mimi and Pappa,” Wayne Scovil

said. The adoption is the start of a new chapter in the Scovils’ lives, and the foundation is love.

Just before dinner, Talia, who is now quite the talker, although in low tones, decided to break into song, singing “Jingle Bells” and joined by her Mimi and nurse.

“This is just the beginning,” Joline Scovil said. “Sometimes bad things turn into something good.”

Caregiver respite funds available from Spectrum Generations

Spectrum Generations announced recently that the Caregiver Respite Program has funds available. Although there are many rewards in caring for a friend or family member with dementia, family caregivers can become stressed and exhausted over time. Respite, the opportunity to take a break, is vital to caregiver well-being.

The Caregiver Respite Program supports family caregivers by helping to

cover the cost for someone else to provide care for the person with dementia. This may take place in the home, at an adult day-care program or overnight in a facility (on a limited basis). The care may be provided by a family member, friend, neighbor, someone from a homecare agency or an adult day program. The respite program allows caregivers the opportunity to take some time for themselves to re-energize, do something fun or get necessary errands done.

The program can reimburse up to \$3,040 a year (80 percent of a total annual

cap of \$3800) of what it costs to have someone come into the home a few hours a week, or several hours of adult day care per week. It can also help with the cost of up to two full weeks of overnight continual care in an assisted living or nursing facility. Furthermore, up to \$2,000 (lifetime) may be used to help cover the cost of home modifications needed to promote independent living.

In order to qualify for the Caregiver Respite Program, there must be a written diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease, dementia or related memory disorder

from a physician, liquid assets cannot exceed \$50,000 for one person or \$75,000 for a couple, and there must not be any assistance from any other state subsidized programs.

For information or to apply, contact the Family Caregiver Program at Spectrum Generations at 800-639-1553.

Hollywood Casino to hold breast cancer fundraiser

Hollywood Casino Hotel & Raceway is holding a fundraising effort in Janu-

ary to benefit the United Way. On Friday, Jan. 8 and 22, the casino will offer patrons the opportunity to donate \$5 to benefit United Way, and in doing so, the patron will receive \$10 in free slot play.

Hollywood Casino has used this approach to fundraising in the past, having a Give \$5 and Get \$10 day in October during Breast Cancer Awareness Month. This year, the one-day donation totaled \$1,890 to benefit the Susan G. Komen Maine affiliate.

“We have done this type of a fundraiser in the past, although it’s always been a

one-time deal,” said Jose Flores, General Manager of Hollywood Casino Hotel & Raceway. “Our hope is that the more people hear about it, the more willing they will be to kick in. By doing it for a couple of days in January with plenty of advance notice, our hope is that people mark their calendar, give to a great cause, and use the \$10 they receive in return to have some fun. It’s an easy way for people to join us in helping some very worthwhile causes in this area.”

Details are available at www.hollywoodcasinobangor.com.



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