Joe Stone sat at the start line of the 2017 Gaylord Gauntlet 5k grinning with anticipation as he rubbed his gloved hands over the heavy-duty wheels of his all-terrain wheelchair. He was the first person with quadriplegia to participate in the Gauntlet and years of determination and training had prepared him for this moment.

Meanwhile, 13 teammates from the Gaylord Sports Association clustered around him, providing a force field of support. This team, made up of volunteers and Gaylord physical and recreation therapists, was going to help Joe negotiate the Gauntlet's 22 obstacles that included walls, ropes, logs, water, mud, and fire. The starting gun fired, and Joe bent forward to maximize the push while turning the wheels. They were off!

**Life’s Challenges**

The Gauntlet was demanding but it wasn’t the biggest challenge Joe had faced in his forty-one years on earth. A car accident on April 28, 2012, had resulted in an incomplete C6-C7 spinal cord injury, paralyzing Joe from the chest down. It happened when the then 35-year-old single father of two was driving on a Florida interstate. His daughter, Heaven, age 7, was asleep next to him.

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Dear Friends,

As you know, the stories in Contributions are only the tip of the iceberg. On average we treat 7,500 patients a year (1,500 inpatients and 6,000 outpatients).

For many of our patients, their time at Gaylord is a waymark in their lives, a time when life pivots from “what life was” toward “what life will be.”

In this edition of Contributions, each of our patient stories reflects how dynamic life can be after treatment at Gaylord. Tarini is working toward her MBA after a terrible accident resulted in a traumatic brain injury, Dan is traveling and giving back to others after recovering from surgery that initially caused paralysis, Joe is inspiring others to reach their goals and returning to college after a spinal cord injury, and Phil is pushing against the odds with a stem cell transplant to overcome a rare cancer.

In the face of personal adversity, each of these individuals has forged ahead to meet old and new goals while quietly living lives that inspire and encourage others.

Thank you for your faithful gifts that allow us to help each of our remarkable patients meet the goals that are most important to them. Your support pays enormous dividends in the lives of our patients and their families.

With deep appreciation,

Tara Knapp, VP of Development, Marketing, and Public Relations
tknapp@gaylord.org
(203) 284-2838

“You haven’t come this far to only come this far.” Anonymous
SUCCESS ON FOUR WHEELS:

Redefining Life After a Traumatic Brain Injury

“\textit{I am now in the process of ensuring that [my] changed life wasn’t changed for the worse. After all, we are the architects of our own fate, as untrue as that may seem at times.}” Tarini Mohan

In 2010, Tarini was an energetic 23-year-old native of New Delhi, India. After graduating from Wellesley College, she worked for two years on Wall Street. Now, she was working for a year with a non-profit agency, BRAC, in Uganda, finding ways to increase the income of smallholder farmers. After that, she planned to return to the United States to pursue an MBA.

Boda Boda Warnings

Based in Kampala, Tarini was cautioned not to ride the motor scooters, called boda bodas, which are motorcycle taxis, without wearing a helmet. She had planned to purchase her helmet “tomorrow.” But six weeks into her stay, Tarini and a male friend took a boda boda from a party to meet friends at a bar. Tarini was sandwiched between the driver and her friend when they were rammed from behind by another vehicle. Only the driver, who got away with minor scratches, was wearing a helmet. Who and what hit them remains unknown, but Tarini’s friend was killed, and she was taken to a hospital in Kampala in a coma with a traumatic brain injury and multiple broken bones.

Three months later she awoke from the coma in a hospital in India thinking that she was still in New York and living in her apartment. With no memory of what had happened, Tarini was told by her family that she had been in critical condition in Uganda for a month after the accident and they had then flown her to India.

Every traumatic brain injury is different, and recovery can last a lifetime. For Tarini, her right side was affected, causing spasticity and forcing her to learn how to do everything with her left hand. Her balance is affected, and she has constant chronic pain in her right leg. Fortunately, she is mentally as sharp as ever, but the injury influenced the speed at which she processes new information, and her speech was initially impaired.

Taking Charge of Life

About a year after regaining consciousness, Tarini applied to the Yale School of Management (SOM) out of a desire to get her life back on track. “I was sick and tired of leading a life of only therapy. I’d thought that ‘oh, next year, I’ll be back to normal,’ not knowing that I would have to construct a new definition of ‘normal’ or better yet, wipe that concept away completely,” she explained. “Little did I know that I would need five long years of physical, occupational, and speech therapy.”

After being accepted at Yale, Tarini realized that her rehabilitation schedule would make it difficult to manage the pace of graduate school. “Yale told me not to worry, that I should do my best to get better and then enroll whenever I felt ready,” she said.

\textit{Continued on page 8}
BATTLING A RARE CANCER:

A Place of “So Many Successes”

“Very few living patients have received treatment for this disease. That meant no known prognosis, no proven treatment protocol. I was living on a wing and a prayer.” Phil Lendroth

It started last September as a small cough, the kind one might expect from a mild cold. But as the days turned into months, the cough grew so severe that Phil Lendroth feared he might break a rib.

His primary care physician at the time advised him not to worry; a cough was likely no big deal. But when walking and climbing stairs suddenly became a monumental challenge, Phil knew something was very wrong. In mid-December, the 70-year-old was admitted to Yale New Haven Hospital where he was diagnosed and treated for a pulmonary embolism. His medical team cautioned that Phil was not out of the woods, believing that an undetermined illness was likely at the root of his symptoms.

Needle in the Haystack

Test upon test proved inconclusive for a month until a group of doctors found the proverbial needle in the haystack: Phil had a form of lymphoma so rare and aggressive that most of the few known cases in the United States were diagnosed post-mortem.

“Very few living patients have received treatment for this disease. That meant no known prognosis, no proven treatment protocol,” Phil recounted solemnly. “I was living on a wing and a prayer.”

At the end of January, Phil was transferred to Gaylord Hospital to begin the long process of recuperation and rehabilitation between outpatient chemotherapy sessions at Yale. “Being in bed for more than a month really took a toll. I couldn’t sit up or move my legs or feet at all,” Phil recalled.

Phil was scheduled to begin therapy the next morning, but instead was rushed back to Yale New Haven Hospital. Biopsy sites in his stomach and thigh had become infected with MRSA — an antibiotic-resistant staph infection — and he was septic. “I was out of it for a week. There were three or four times that I wasn’t expected to make it, but I guess I’m stubborn,” he joked.

When he returned to Gaylord, Phil was frailer than ever, having lost nearly a third of his body weight. His physical therapists worked his extremities as he lay in bed, manually lifting them up and down. As Phil grew stronger, his “wonderful” physical therapist, Erica, and “super” occupational therapist, Heidi, helped him to sit in a wheelchair and eventually get him into a standing position. He fondly remembers the day the two encouraged him to try a few steps on the parallel bars.

“I took one step and then walked all the way down. I looked up at Heidi and Erica, and they had tears in their eyes. I realized the moment was just as emotional for them as it was for me! The next day I walked 50 feet with a walker. They said, ‘usually we have to encourage our patients to move, but we need to slow you down!’”

Support and Encouragement

During his two-and-a-half-month Gaylord stay, Phil found much to be thankful for, including time spent petting Galya, the hospital’s working facility dog; the genuine support and encouragement from Gaylord staff; and the kindness of a particular CNA named Maria. The
two often discussed Germany, Maria’s country of origin and the place where Phil was stationed in the military. “One day she came in my room, wheeled me to the library, and parked me in front of a computer to show me the regions that she lived in and traveled. It was a fun distraction!”

Another time, Maria took Phil to visit the hospital’s medical floor where he had previously spent four days “in really bad shape.” “She had me stand at the nurses’ desk and asked if anyone recognized me. When she said my name, everyone gasped. Maria was teary-eyed herself. She was so proud to show my progress!” he said.

**Battling Back**

Phil’s stay at Gaylord was not without additional bumps along the way. He was twice more admitted to Yale New Haven Hospital, once for a kidney stone and another to receive in-patient chemo. Yet, 117 days after he was first wheeled into the ER, Phil proudly walked out of Gaylord on his own two feet after lavishing gifts of food (including hundreds of chicken wings) and other tokens on the staff he appreciated so much.

Phil is currently preparing to undergo the next phase of his treatment: a stem cell transplant in the hopes of completely eradicating cancer from his body. It’s a step he believes is only possible through the complex medical care and extraordinary rehabilitation he received at Gaylord Hospital. “It’s a place of so many successes!” Phil said.

**Copper Beech Society Tree Installed**

Members of our Copper Beech Society are donors who have given $100,000 or more over a lifetime. To thank and honor these generous donors, we created the “Copper Beech Tree,” which is crafted of wood and installed in the lobby of Milne Pavilion. Each leaf bears the name of a Copper Beech Society member and new members will be added when the milestone is reached.

**The Society’s 2017 inductees are:**

- An Anonymous Friend
- Aetna, Inc.
- ConnectiCare
- Mr. and Mrs. James J. Cullen
- Faxon Law
- Todd and Sally Fonner
- Elizabeth Birney Gagliardi Fund
- NewAlliance Foundation
- PMA Management Corp. of New England
- The Werth Family Foundation

**Phil Lendroth with Erica Cadavid, PT.**

Phil Lendroth with his Lyman 1 nursing team. Left to right:

- Edna Vasquez, CNA, Khaleda Begum, RN, Maria Holmes, CNA, Amanda Sweat, CNA, Tiffany Russo, MT, Senada Duracak, RN, unit manager, Liza Gimongala, RN.
Life is What You Make It

“You can stew in a pity party and become a victim of life’s tragedies and struggles. Or you can reach out to others and find meaning and purpose.” Dan Riccio

If the position of “Patient Guide” existed at Gaylord, then Dan Riccio would fit the bill. Dan arrived at Gaylord convinced that attitude was essential to recovery. “You can stew in a pity party and become a victim of life’s tragedies and struggles,” he said. “Or you can reach out to others and find meaning and purpose.”

Blessed with a reservoir of positivity, Dan is also a master observer of people, a skill honed during forty years of teaching special education. Between his inpatient and, later, outpatient therapy sessions he made it a point to engage other patients. After all, who knows better than another patient how frightening it is to have a serious illness or injury?

Worth the Effort
Dan often zeroed in on patients who seemed depressed or disengaged. Using warmth and humor, he would try to get them to smile or involve them in a conversation. It was worth the effort even if they didn’t respond. “You have to be involved,” he explained. “Some people can’t do it, but you can still put it out there. We’re not in this alone!”

Knowing that it was also important to keep himself encouraged, Dan employed a little creativity during his two-month stay. This included mastering mind a peanut butter smuggling ring to support his graham cracker and peanut butter habit, watching late night movies with his grandson, Matthias*, and creating a list of everyone who cared for him at Gaylord so he could thank them. He jokingly proclaimed himself the “Mayor of Occupational Therapy,” and then appointed an “assistant” to take over after he left.

Much of Dan’s wisdom is a result of dealing with his own pain. Before arriving at Gaylord, the 68-year-old’s health had hit a rough patch. After falling several times at home, Dan thought that the debilitating back pain was from either a disc problem or the side effect of a medication. Then, his neurologist discovered a large spinal tumor that required immediate surgery. On June 28, 2016, the benign tumor was removed during a 7-hour surgery. But when Dan woke up, he had complete right-side paralysis.

You’ll Work Hard!
Several days later, he was offered the option of going to Gaylord or a facility closer to home. “My doctor said, ‘If you go Gaylord, they’re going to work you and work you hard,’” Dan explained. Matthias encouraged Dan to go to Gaylord because he had seen how well people recovered there as part of his job driving patients to and from appointments. “I wanted to get better,” Dan said. “I told them I’d do it!”

One of the first issues addressed was Dan’s pain. It hadn’t been well controlled prior to arriving at Gaylord. “We rated the pain and they moved me around,” he said. “I’m a big guy, but they were so good at pain management that I knew I was in the right hands. From that moment on my stay was sheer perfection.”

Dan worked very hard during therapy. When he had a small cardiac event during one session, he was grateful that Gaylord offered a hospital level of care. “Dr. Rosenblum was beside my bed calling my cardiologist,” he said. “It was too much too soon and they needed to monitor me. Knowing that you’re getting the right care takes a lot of stress off the body.”

Paying It Forward
Deeply appreciative of the staff, Dan said that everyone who came into his room, from the dietician to the person who restocked the supplies, asked how he was doing. “They all spent time talking to me. Each one treated me as a person, not just as a body needing care,” he said. “Many of the staff had their own health challenges and, yet, here they were taking care of me, paying it forward in a way.”

*Not his real name

Dan Riccio regularly purchases stars in the “Recognize a Star” program as a way to show appreciation for our staff. To date, he has purchased 51 stars for employees and a pool tile as a tribute to his family. “The staff is pure magic,” Dan said.
THE POWER OF MONTHLY GIVING:

“Make it Possible”

When you become a monthly donor to Gaylord, you automatically become a member of our “Make it Possible” Club. This club is a team of committed donors that wants to support Gaylord’s patients throughout the year by making automatic monthly donations.

Your monthly gifts make a difference for patients

The Many Benefits of Monthly Giving

➤ **It is automatic**
You don’t have to think to write a check. Your monthly giving is recurring, and you have full control over any changes to your gift at any time.

➤ **It is protected**
Using your credit card is a secure way to give and is automatically billed monthly.

➤ **Allows for budgeting and spreading out your giving**
Sometimes when you are inspired to give, you don’t have the funds. Spreading the payment over 12 months makes it easier to fit it into your budget. For example, a gift of $20/month is $240 in a year.

➤ **Generates points, airline miles, or cash back via your credit card**
Putting recurring monthly expenses on a credit card is an excellent way to generate the perks of cash back or airline miles, depending on what your credit card offers.

➤ **Fewer asks and more updates**
As a monthly “Make it Possible” donor there are fewer donation requests, which reduces our mailing costs and allows us more time to update you about the impact of your gift.

➤ **Makes a significant impact**
Your monthly gift enables you to give more than you thought you could. For instance, a $50/month gift over three years adds up to $1,800 in support of patient care.

➤ **Provides ongoing support**
Monthly gifts create ongoing, consistent support that enhances the services our patients receive on a regular basis and helps our clinicians provide new equipment and therapies that improve our patients’ recovery.

➤ **Allows you to be part of group of like-minded donors**
By making a monthly gift, you are joining forces with other like-minded donors who help provide ongoing care and resources to sustain patients who are often facing a devastating illness or injury. Like bricks supporting a building, each donor is critical to ensuring a robust and lasting foundation of care.

Download our Monthly Giving form: https://www.gaylord.org/support-gaylord
Success on Four Wheels, continued from page 3

Each autumn Tarini’s father taught at Yale’s Jackson Institute of Global Affairs with the Mohan family living in New Haven for the semester. This arrangement allowed Tarini to begin outpatient physical, occupational, and speech therapy at Gaylord in the fall of 2011.

She returned for more therapy in the fall of 2012. “Gaylord stands apart because of the personalized attention,” she said. “The therapists stayed in touch with me by email and showed interest in my life apart from therapy. They genuinely cared and didn’t just look at therapy as a job.”

Ready for Yale

The Mohans moved to Washington, D.C. in 2013, and then Tarini’s father was again offered a professorship at Yale that began in 2016. “It was the same year I felt ready to enroll [at Yale]. Because I’m not able to manage the upkeep of the house or prepare my meals, I need to live with my folks,” she explained. “However, Gaylord trained me how to take care of my personal needs with just one functioning arm and poor balance – not an easy task.”

Tarini has started her second year at the SOM, after completing a summer internship with The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation’s India office. Yale gave her four years to complete her MBA in compliance with the American with Disabilities Act. Her long-term goal is to work in the non-profit sector focusing on organizational strategies for international development.

Being open and honest about her injuries, limitations, and abilities has been liberating for Tarini. She has a blog and hopes to write an autobiography someday, “When I’ve made my life more interesting!”

Tarini’s Blog:
http://www.posttbimusings.weebly.com

A Reservoir of Positivity

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After completing inpatient therapy, Dan returned home and now comes to Gaylord for weekly outpatient therapy. To his amazement and relief, he is gaining more and more use of his right side. And, he continues to talk with patients during his visits, offering them support and encouragement.

In the year since his surgery, Dan and Matthias have ticked off a number of Dan’s bucket list trips, including Hawaii and Iceland. They are now discussing spending New Year’s Eve in Barcelona. True to form, Dan said, “If you don’t get out of the chair and make an effort, it isn’t going to happen!”

“I’ve treated Tarini since she began her outpatient rehab seven years ago. Tarini walked by herself for the first time in the pool during aquatic therapy and she was later able to walk on her own with a cane. I remember how proud her family was of every achievement. Tarini’s determination and positive attitude, combined with the support of her family, will enable her to achieve her future goals.” Sue Goldstein, PT
to him in the front seat, and his younger daughter, Joey, age 3, was in a booster seat on the back seat. Noticing that Joey’s seatbelt was tangled, Joe reached back to fix it and lost control of the car.

“I lost consciousness as the car flipped down an embankment,” he said. “But right before we rolled, I remember lunging into the back seat and pulling Joey’s seatbelt tight.” Joe came to with his legs sticking through the windshield and under the hood of the car. “I couldn’t move anything except my lips and eyes,” he said. His next thought was terrifying. Why didn’t he hear crying? What had happened to the girls? Miraculously, both girls had survived the crash unscathed.

For Joe, the accident was another test in a life that had never been easy. Born when his mother was just 15 years old, Joe had lived in poverty with the abuse and addictions that his mother had grown up with spilling over into his life. When he was 18, Joe’s mother turned her life around through Alcoholics Anonymous, and she told Joe that she often talked to God. Inspired, Joe began a spiritual journey of his own that resulted in a deep and transforming faith.

An Epiphany

In the hospital, Joe told the doctor to give it to him straight. “The doctor said, ‘More than likely you will never move anything from the chest down again,’ ” said Joe. Undeterred and feeling that the accident had a deeper purpose, he threw himself into recovery with the goal of eventually walking again. His involvement with wheelchair rugby and then a move to Connecticut landed Joe at Gaylord.

One day, while at the hospital to see about joining the Sports Association’s wheelchair rugby team, he had an epiphany. “I realized that this is the place that a friend from my church in Florida told me to go! She’d been a nurse at Gaylord for 27 years,” he said.

Other facilities were closer to his home, but Joe knew that Gaylord was where he wanted to continue his therapy. “There was just something about Gaylord. I really needed to be here!”

Ekso, Walking, and More

After 18 months of intensive outpatient therapy, including nine months of using the Ekso bionic exoskeleton, Joe can now walk about 100 feet using only a walker. “At Gaylord, I met some of my goals, which included being able to stand up and walk,” he said.

Five years after the accident, Joe has movement in his toes and ankles, and he can extend his legs with his quadriceps. Almost all of the function is back on his left side, including his arm. The right side still has paralysis. His right arm is atrophied, and his hand remains flexed, but his progress has been incredible.

Always pushing against the odds, Joe has developed a personal exercise regimen. “It’s part of my will to come back,” he said. “Many people try and don’t succeed and just give up. But I tried and tried and then I’d have a little something come back. I’d work with that and try and try, and I’d get a little more back. It has been a slow progression but definite progress.”

Completing the Gauntlet was a personal goal, but Joe also wanted to inspire others to never give up. At the finish line, he thanked his family and the Sports Association team for their love and support. He is now attending college to become a therapeutic recreation therapist with a focus on adaptive sports. Go, Joe!
Giving Update:

Thanks to You: **The Traurig Challenge Meets its Goals**

The renovations to the interior of Traurig House are done! We met our goal of $160,000, which allowed us to do almost all of the critical interior updates for Traurig House. On Friday, September 22, 2017, we held a special reception and house tour for our Challenge donors, which also included many of our staff. Thank you for your generous support.

Donors were also invited to attend the Annual Traurig House Alumni Picnic and mingle with many Traurig House alumni. This year’s picnic hosted about 125 former patients and their families.
Ongoing Needs
We still need $10,000 to update Traurig’s computer infrastructure and Internet accessibility. New technology will help our residents access the many resources available to them on the Internet.

Donor Plaque
During the reception, Tara Knapp, Gaylord’s VP of development, public relations, and marketing, and Leigh Golembiewski, CTRS, manager of Traurig House, unveiled the donor plaque to honor those who gave to the Traurig Challenge.

To donate, use the enclosed envelope or give online at: www.gaylord.org/traurigchallenge
GAYLORD WELCOMES Mark Herceg, PhD

Renowned concussion expert, Mark Herceg, PhD, joined our staff on August 7, 2017, as the director of psychology and director of the Gaylord Center for Brain Health and the Center for Concussion Care.

Dr. Herceg leads a team of neuropsychologists as they diagnose and treat various neurocognitive and psychological changes due to traumatic brain injuries, stroke, Parkinson's disease, and more.

“I’ve long known about Gaylord’s incredible reputation and the staff’s attentiveness to each patient’s specific and individual recovery. I’m especially impressed by Gaylord’s focus on the importance of neuropsychology in the treatment of traumatic brain injuries, an emphasis not often seen in other rehabilitation centers,” he said.

Dr. Herceg has nearly 20 years of experience, including working with high school, college, and professional athletes who have sustained concussions. Prior to arriving at Gaylord, Dr. Herceg was the Commissioner of Mental Health for Westchester County, NY, where he served as chair of the 28-member County Concussion Task Force and was lead author of the group's article, “10 Best Practices for Concussion Management,” which was endorsed by the Brain Injury Association of America and the New York State Chapter (BIANYS). He was honored with the BIANYS Founder’s Award for his efforts to increase concussion awareness in youth and high school sports.

Prior to his County appointment, Dr. Herceg was the director of neuropsychology for the Brain Injury Unit at Burke Rehabilitation Hospital in White Plains, NY, where he specialized in evaluating and treating individuals with various neurological changes, illnesses, and brain injuries across the life spectrum.

Dr. Herceg is an assistant professor of psychology in clinical neurology at Weill Cornell Medical College, a lecturer in the Department of Epidemiology and Community Health at New York Medical College, and is also a member of the Big Ten/Ivy League TBI Research Collaboration.