No adversity will keep her from university

Intermittent left hand weakness when grasping items, and headaches, not necessarily occurring together. Those were the difficulties Erika Van Buren experienced, infrequently, in her mid-teens. In July 2016, when she was 17, she experienced weakness and numbness in her lower facial muscles resulting in slurred speech, and her mother knew they needed to find answers. A pediatric rheumatologist referred them to a neurologist who determined, using imaging studies, that Erika had an enormous AVM (arteriovenous malformation), causing her symptoms. After a lengthy process to select a surgeon, a date for surgery was scheduled at Boston Children’s Hospital.

Erika came through the 10 hour surgery successfully, but now was experiencing severe left-sided weakness in her leg and arm. Her cognition was intact and her spirits and attitude were positive. Her family researched options for rehab and they chose Gaylord Hospital. Erika’s mother was encouraged after learning that another 18 year young AVM survivor has created her own success with the Gaylord team.

Erika spent 28 days aggressively pursuing her goal to return to her out of state university. Following weeks of hard work and with support from her parents, siblings and friends, she headed back to school. Erika traveled with her belongings, and absolutely no doubt, that she will take her perseverance and self-advocacy, and use them to change others’ lives along the rest of her journey.

“Gaylord was an amazing place. The gym is absolutely awesome.”

Gaylord’s expertise made the difference:
- Inpatient Rehab Care
- Physical Therapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Speech Therapy
- Flexible visiting hours for family
- Staff experience with adolescents

My Future Goals
☐ Return to driving
☐ Resume full course load

Why choose Gaylord?
“I had individual therapy sessions, but I also worked in the gym with groups which helped motivate all of us while we exercised. The physical and occupational therapists were very attentive to my desires and needs.”

~Erika

Pictured below L to R: Erika with fellow AVM survivor Sky Vumback, before and after scans, and with her PT Jaclyn.
Gaylord Exemplifies Expert

Patients come to Gaylord Hospital from all areas of the Northeast to experience the strength of our interdisciplinary clinical teams and our dedication to positive patient outcomes. Gaylord’s accreditations include:

- The only CARF accredited rehab for inpatient and outpatient programs
- Two Medical Directors who are specialty board certified in Brain Injury
- The only hospital with a working facility dog
- The only transitional living facility for stroke and brain injury survivors
- Specialty Brain Injury Adolescent Rehab Program
- The only Ekso Bionics in CT

Maintaining these specialty accreditations demonstrates our commitment to providing the ultimate in patient experience and care as a leader in the field of rehabilitation and medical care.