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The
University
Hospital

Office of
Media Relations

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September 1, 1989

Dear Member of the Media:

The story of 16-year-old accident victim, Michelle Fisher, her struggle to survive with the help of the University Hospital's (UH) trauma team, and her determination to regain world-class equestrian skills despite severe spinal injuries would make a good back-to-school feature. Michelle, who hasn't been in school since she was injured in an automobile accident 10 months ago, plans to return to Easton's Oliver Ames High School on Wednesday, September 6.

When the jeep she was riding in flipped over on October 30, 1988, Michelle was flung from the back seat onto a nearby lawn. Her back was broken, and she was paralyzed from the waist down. From the scene of the accident, she was taken to Stoughton's Goddard Memorial Hospital where physicians determined that her spinal injury needed the expertise available at UH.

The care she received over the next several days is an example of how the UH/Boston City Hospital (BCH) Trauma Center works to save lives. This level I trauma center--staffed by a dual-institution team of trauma experts--is ready to respond at a moment's notice, 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week at either hospital. Each team member is qualified to admit and coordinate the overall care of trauma patients--calling on experts from other specialties as needed.

Director of the Trauma Center, Erwin F. Hirsch, M.D., who was the team member in charge the day Michelle arrived, had already assembled a group of neurosurgeons and orthopedic surgeons when the ambulance pulled in. On examining Michelle, the team discovered that not only did she have a spinal injury, she also had extensive internal injuries. Her diaphragm had been ruptured, her liver lacerated and her kidneys torn. Most importantly they found that her liver had traveled into her lungs. "This was a life-threatening situation," says Hirsch.

Hirsch performed the initial surgery to repair and rearrange Michelle's internal organs. Over the next several months, neurosurgeons and orthopedic surgeons performed three additional operations to repair her spine.

On December 27, 1989, Michelle left UH and began a period of intensive outpatient rehabilitation at a hospital near her home. Her recovery continues. At first she felt nothing below the waist. "After each surgery I could feel more and more," she says. Today Michelle has regained the muscles in her thighs and hips, and is experiencing sensation in her calves and feet. "My goal," she says, "is to ride horses the way I did, and I really believe that someday I will." Michelle was a world champion in 1984.

Says her father, Clint Fisher, "Each day she is closer to being the Michelle of 10 months ago."

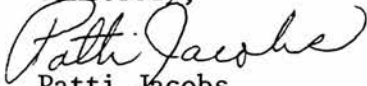
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When Michelle returns to school this week, she will have very little catching up to do. Each day during the past 10 months, one of her teachers tutored her at home, so that she could maintain her straight-A average. Says Mr. Fisher: "We are very grateful for all the support we received from Michelle's teachers and especially from high school principal, Duncan Oliver, throughout the year."

If you would like to do a story, please call me at 617/638-8491 to arrange interviews.

Sincerely,



Patti Jacobs
Manager of Media Relations
The University Hospital