SISTERS
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on her brain, causing Ryan’s Traumatic Brain Injury.

The incident was 6 years ago, and Ryan is still recovering from the serious brain injury she suffered in the freak accident. After undergoing numerous surgeries to save her life, and extended physical, occupational and speech therapies, when asked what has been the most important therapy that has helped her heal, Ryan stated with clarity, “Everyday life.”

When talking to Ryan, you get the sense of being in a nearly unstoppable force. As she said about herself, “When I was told I might only be able to walk with a walker, that added fuel to my burning fire to recover!” I was nearly 19 when the injury occurred, and I don’t know what I would have done without my whole family.” That “whole family” as Ryan says, resides in Hopedale and includes “My super sister Courtney, my mom Mary Elise, who works full time and still takes me to all my doctor appointments; and my dad Tony, who is a hard working guy who always provides for us. What I’ve learned is that family is first and foremost. When all is said and done, your family members are going to be there for you.”

Courtney Farrell, Ryan’s only sister, has taken steps to help her sister and others who suffer from brain injury by participating in the Falmouth Road Race to raise funds for the Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts (BIA-MA). That is Courtney’s 4th year running the 7-mile race. Participants must raise at least $900, and each time Courtney has run, she has exceeded her goal. “The first year I raised over $5000, and this year I’ve already exceeded my goal,” Courtney noted. Although Courtney finished the race August 21, there is still time to donate by going to http://www.firstgiving.com/funderaiser/courtney-farrell/2016-falmouth-road-race.

Ryan noted, “I’m so proud of Courtney, not just for all the money she’s raised, but for the training she put in to running that race.”

Courtney, “my best friend” in Ryan’s words, is also working to complete law school. “What happened to Ryan has made me reflect on my goals,” Courtney said in a recent interview. “When I graduate from law school I want to be able to advocate for people with disabilities. Because of Ryan, I’m much more aware of how injury can impact someone’s life. There are people who take advantage. I want to advocate for them.”

Despite the struggles of the past 6 years, Ryan has not given up on her dreams. She explained, “One of my ‘dreams’ is ‘Teamwork makes the dream work.’ I’ve just finished an internship at WMRC Radio in Milford where I learned a little about everything at the station. My career goal is to be a TV newscaster. In front of that camera interviewing people, I got the internship through Mass Rehab, so it’s a foot in the door.”


Ryan already has gotten her “foot in the door” by welcoming the opportunity, through the BIA-MA to speak at high school assemblies and other gatherings about sports-related injuries. She’s also written about her experiences, providing a voice for those who have suffered brain injuries.

Courtney noted that prior to her accident, her sister Ryan was a straight-A student. “She’s come so far, but watching her struggle, sometimes I wish it had happened to me. The doctors told her she might not be able to walk again, but she can. I don’t know if she’d be doing all she is if she didn’t have such a positive attitude.” Among Ryan’s accomplishments is graduating from college, after taking a year off because of her accident.

When talking to Ryan, you get the sense of being in the presence of an unstoppable force. As she said about herself, “When I was told I might only be able to walk with a walker, that added fuel to my burning fire to recover!” I was nearly 19 when the injury occurred, and I don’t know what I would have done without my whole family.”

Best to you Ryan, Courtney and the entire Farrell family. God bless you all continue to heal and find ways to give back.