



Beyond the Storm

May 3, 2020 was a typical Sunday afternoon for the Colvin family until an unexpected storm turned their lives upside down.

3-year-old Judge Colvin was excited to go on a hike with his dad, Jeff, and uncle Andrew. The trio set off, and Judge was proud to walk the entire hike by himself. They decided to reward themselves with a swim in the lake.

As they were preparing to get in the water, Jeff's phone rang. His wife, Shelly, was calling to warn them of an approaching storm.

They headed back to the car, but the storm was coming quickly. While Jeff was trying to get them to safety with Judge in his arms, a gust of wind brought down a 75-foot oak tree onto the pair. Jeff said the next thing he knew, he was pinned under the tree, and Judge was no longer in his arms. Judge lay unconscious on the ground nearby, and Jeff was able to crawl to him.

Andrew, who was a few steps ahead, rushed Judge back to the car to get him to a hospital while Jeff waited for rescue from paramedics.

Meanwhile, Shelly was desperately trying to get to them.

"I knew I had to get to my boys and get them help as quickly as possible," she said.

Judge was routed to Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt, as he was in a coma and had suffered a traumatic brain injury. At the same time, Jeff was in the Intensive Care Unit at Vanderbilt University Hospital with multiple injuries, including a broken back. Shelly said it was excruciating not being able to be with them both, but **she is thankful the hospitals were across the street from one another and for the Vanderbilt medical teams who coordinated their family's care so well.**



After two weeks, Judge woke from his coma.

At that time, the family learned that the next step for Judge's recovery would be inpatient rehabilitation. They came to understand that this also meant a move to Atlanta, since there are no pediatric inpatient rehabilitation services in the state of Tennessee.

Jeff and Judge were discharged from the hospital on the same day. The family relocated to Atlanta, where they both would begin their rehabilitation journeys.

Rehabilitation in Atlanta was both daunting and financially difficult, but they knew how important inpatient rehabilitation would be for their recovery. Friends of the Colvins started a GoFundMe page to help make the move possible.

A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR CHILDREN IN TENNESSEE

Today, Judge is 5 years old. Shelly and Jeff describe him as "wise beyond his years, a deep thinker, curious, silly and determined."

"If you were to meet him now, you would never know that anything had ever happened to him. That is the importance of rehab," said Shelly.

The Colvins know firsthand how much of a difference it would make to have these services close to home. That's why they are sharing their story so other families will have a better solution.

"It's heartbreaking to think that you couldn't come up with the resources to get your child the care they need," said Jeff. "Having our own program would prevent parents from feeling that helplessness that they feel when they can't give their child every opportunity for a complete recovery."

Because of rehabilitation, Judge is now thriving. He loves to hike, golf and play soccer.

"Judge is my hero," said Shelly. "He has defied the odds and is going to do whatever he wants in life."



"There is hope for a full recovery. Children in Tennessee deserve this service closer to home. It gives me chills thinking about more kids having access to rehab.

Supporting this effort for an inpatient unit and program will make all the difference."

—Shelly Colvin, Judge's mom

