



Good News Report

A Monthly Report to Shriners Fraternity from the St. Louis Shriners Hospital

February 2009

Former St. Louis Patient Turns Passion into Book

Jessica Burkhart launches "Canterwood Crest" Series

It may have been eight years since her spinal fusion at Shriners Hospital in St. Louis, but Jessica Burkhart's time at Shriners did more than heal her body, it awakened her enthusiasm for writing children's literature.

At age 13, Jessica had a spinal fusion for severe scoliosis. Before surgery, she had been an active equestrian with dreams of competing in high school and college. After her surgery, however, her spine surgeon, Lawrence Lenke, M.D., asked her to wait at least two years before riding again.

"Dr. Lenke told me that if I did ride after two years and fell off the wrong way, I could damage the rod in my spine," said Jessica. "I didn't know if I could risk going through another surgery. But giving up riding meant giving up my passion."

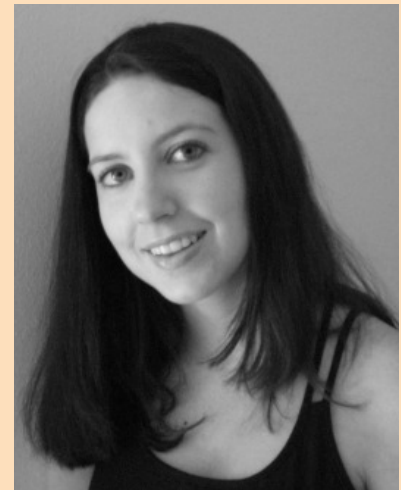
While she recovered, Jessica had a lot of time to read, write and think about what she wanted to do with her life. In that time, she decided she wanted to be a full time writer.

"Without Shriners, I wonder if I would have pursued writing with such determination," she said. "I turned my love of riding horses into a desire to write about them."

Jessica's first book, "Take the Reins," debuted in January. The first in her Canterwood Crest series from Simon & Schuster, "Take the Reins" allows Jessica to live vicariously through her character, 12-year-old Sasha Silver.

Sasha is a small town equestrian who heads off to a ritzy Connecticut boarding school. There, she competes for a coveted spot on Canterwood Crest's advanced riding team. Along the way, she makes friends, meets a cute boy and must contend with girls who will stop at nothing to keep her off the team. With 256 pages, it is aimed at children ages 9-12 and costs just \$5.99.

Her second installment in the series, "Chasing Blue," is expected in June 2009.



Now, at 21, Jessica shares her journey with Shriners in magazine articles, personal essays and through newspaper interviews.

"The scars on my back are still fading, but the things I learned about myself during that tough time are more apparent than ever," she said.

Jessica is president and founder of "Str8 Spines for Shriners," a support group that helps kids, teens and their families cope

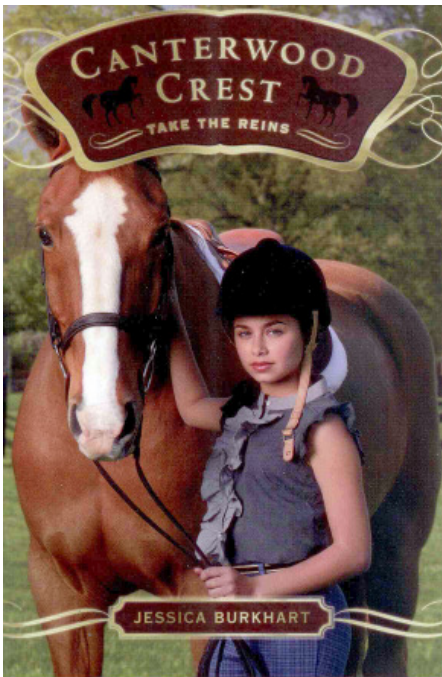
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with spinal surgery at Shriners. She will also be featured in an upcoming DVD about Shriners Hospital.

"Str8 Spines for Shriners is my way of paying it forward," said Jessica.

For more information about Jessica and her writing career, go to www.jessicaburkhart.com or www.canterwoodcrest.com.



Shriners Hospital Inspires Student Science Projects

8th graders build prosthetic hands and make donation

On Friday, Jan. 30, members of the 8th grade class from Ste. Genevieve Du Bois School made a special presentation to the Shriners Hospital staff. The students, with the advice of Emery Miko, director of the orthotics and prosthetics department, completed a project to research, plan, and design an upper extremity prosthetic.

"It was a project that looked challenging," said teacher Doug Bambini. "The objective was to create a prosthetic that was capable of grasping an object and move it from one point to another."

The students visited the SHOP late in 2008 and met with Miko to learn how to create an upper extremity prosthetic device. He provided them with a detailed explanation about what makes a prosthetic functional as well as how to begin the planning process to determine the outcome of the device.

Through the knowledge and expertise from our orthotic and prosthetic specialists, the students finished their projects early in January. When the projects were complete, the students invited Miko to view them during a class presentation at Ste. Genevieve School. Miko returned to Shriners in astonishment.

"I was totally amazed at the designs and function of these devices," Miko said. "The essence of prosthetic principles was there and considering these were constructed in basements and garages using everyday common materials, they were excellent."

Miko was so impressed, he invited the students to present their projects to his department. But when they arrived on Jan. 30, they found a standing-room-only crowd of hospital staff, parents, and Shriners waiting for them in the boardroom.

At the end of the presentations, several of the students stepped out and into an adjacent room. They immediately returned with baskets full of toys and a donation of more than \$2,500. Inspired by their tour of the hospital, these 8th-grade students turned a required class project into a service project for Shriners Hospital. It was an emotional moment for many.

"It tugged at my heart when they presented the check," said Janice Sheets, performance improvement assistant. "I turned around to wipe my eyes and realized I wasn't the only one who was touched. The kids were fantastic!"



A team of 8th graders from St. Genevieve DuBois School - just a half mile from Shriners Hospital - display a prosthetic. they build using household items. Four teams of students in science teacher Doug Bambini's class built the devices with the advice of Shriners O & P Director, Emery Miko, with materials such as rubber gloves, wood, fishing line, and silicone caulk.