

Sam's Progress

Contributed by Holly
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A note from Ashley:

The last couple of months have been so busy that we haven't even updated the website!! Hopefully this time-line with a few fun facts will give you an idea of what Sam has been doing. We're really happy about his progress and excited for him to come home in just two weeks.

(The following report was submitted by Ashley.)

March 2nd-8th Sam's learning to feed himself using adaptive equipment. He wears braces on his wrists (to keep them straight), and a special bent fork that connects to the brace at the palm of his hand. The first week of self feeding was messy, but fun.

March 9th-15th Tuesday of this week Sam went on his first outing (so nice to get some fresh air!) He went to a Spinal Cord Injury forum in Salt Lake where he learned a little bit about stem-cell research.

Later in the week he used the Power-Assist wheelchair for the first time. This chair looks like a normal wheel chair except that it has battery packs on the wheels. For each push Sam gives, the wheel chair gives a little more. We feel so blessed that Sam has enough movement in his arms to be able to push himself in a wheelchair.

One day, we sat Sam up in bed, propped Benjamin for Sam to hold, and the sweet angel baby fell asleep in his daddy's arms.

In physical therapy, Sam broke his record for long-sitting. He held himself balanced for 2 1/2 minutes.

March 16th-22nd On Sunday, the 16th, Sam felt sensation in his first finger and thumb of his left hand. Then, on Wednesday, he felt sensation in his right index and thumb.

March 23rd-29th On Easter Sunday Sam got trace movement in his left tricep. This is so exciting because with use of his tricep, Sam will eventually be able to do his own transfers.

Monday Sam met with his surgeon at the University of Utah hospital. Things were looking so good that the doctor told Sam he could take off the C-collar (that's the annoying neck-brace that kept Sam from even turning his head side to side). Sam was thrilled, to say the least.

This week Sam also learned to brush his teeth himself. He uses an electric toothbrush that he attaches to his wrist brace. All of this is made possible by Sam's occupational therapist, Kasey, who is pretty creative and talented with velcro.

Saturday we met some new friends, Chad and Shondell Hymas, who have been in our same situation for a few years now. They are an awesome and inspiring couple. (You should check out Chad's website www.chadhymas.com)

March 30th-April 5th Sunday the 30th, Sam felt sensation in his right middle finger. This week, Sam (and I) decided he was officially finished using the huge power wheel chair. He might still use one around the house, but he doesn't need it anymore because he's getting strength, coordination, and range of motion in his arms. The other great thing about the Power Assist wheelchair, as opposed to the power chair, is that it folds up and fits in the trunk.

In physical therapy, Sam and his friends have been working with the therapists to learn car transfers. Blair, McGarren, and Mike (to name a few) have learned to transfer Sam from his wheelchair to the front seat of a car. This will give Sam a lot more freedom.

On Saturday, Sam's buddy, Mike, took him out to Tooele to the raceway. They had a great time...

April 6th-12th Sam came home for Sunday dinner! We enjoyed having him home, even just for a few hours. And he, of course, appreciated a good home-cooked meal in the company of many good friends. Thank you Blair & Holly, Seth & Tia, Rich & Sarah, . . .

This week Sam broke another personal record in physical therapy. (In fact, we think he broke personal records every few days--but, sadly, we didn't write them down...) Sam progressed from long-sitting to short-sitting. He went from short-

sitting for 14 seconds max to over 2 minutes.

Our friends finished the final stage of construction on the wheelchair ramp at our home. They poured the last of the concrete Friday afternoon. We are so grateful to Rich, who spent many of his days off working on the ramp. Thanks, also, Blair and Seth, who helped with the finishing work.

April 13th-19th Time to get Ashley trained! This week I went to therapy with Sam so his Physical and Occupational therapists could train me on some important aspects of his care. I practiced transfers (from the chair to the mat, first). We worked on positioning Sam in his chair for good posture. Two of Sam's therapists, Cami and Lance, have worked with me especially on proper form and technique during transfers. I need both correct form and technique to keep the two of us safe.

. . . More updates coming soon! Thank you so much for your prayers and support!