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# SURGICAL MIRACLE WORKER

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Heroes impact lives in meaningful ways. They receive admiration for their selfless character and strive to make a difference in one's world. Although most people can vividly recall meeting a hero for the first time, I have no recollection of that. Whereas many people's heroes may have changed their lives mentally or emotionally, my hero actually changed my life physically. Doctor Steven Ham, now retired, worked as one of the very few pediatric neurosurgeons in Michigan. He significantly helped me become a person of strength and perseverance.

My parents discovered Dr. Ham after medical tests revealed that I had a tethered spinal cord, and I am extremely grateful for my parents' swift and thorough response to it. Tethered Cord Syndrome occurs when extra tissue connected to the spinal cord limits the movement of the spinal cord. After interviewing the two pediatric neurosurgeons available in Michigan, my parents selected Dr. Ham to perform the surgery to release my tethered cord in the hopes that I would not have any limitation of movement as I grew taller. They told me, "Dr. Ham prepared us every step of the way," and he continued to monitor my progress in the years following. At the age of three months, Dr. Ham performed surgery on me to untether the tissue from the cord, allowing my spinal cord to float freely. The surgery took place in 2010 at the Children's Hospital of Michigan. Dr. Ham continued to collaborate with my parents and me to monitor my progress until he retired. He truly was almost part of my family through this time to strengthen me, and we will never forget his dedication toward his patients.

Dr. Ham has improved my quality of life immensely. The surgery annulled my back pain, and I am significantly blessed. I balance well, in addition to walking and running correctly, all of which a tethered cord could incapacitate if not properly repaired. Sports play a significant role in my everyday life, and I would be a different person if I did not participate in them. My main sports - cross country, basketball, and track - all involve running. These sports have helped me maintain my mental and physical health.

Additionally, reflecting on the miracle of my surgery has kept me in a constant state of appreciation for that which many simply take for granted. When I set a season best time in a recent cross country race, a tear even rolled down my mom's face to see my success because she knows the struggle I endured to reach my current level of competition. I recently received a scholar athlete award, and I am overjoyed. Dr. Ham has enabled me to excel as an active participant in life instead of sitting on the sidelines.



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