



## June Beneficiary

### BEN FARRAR

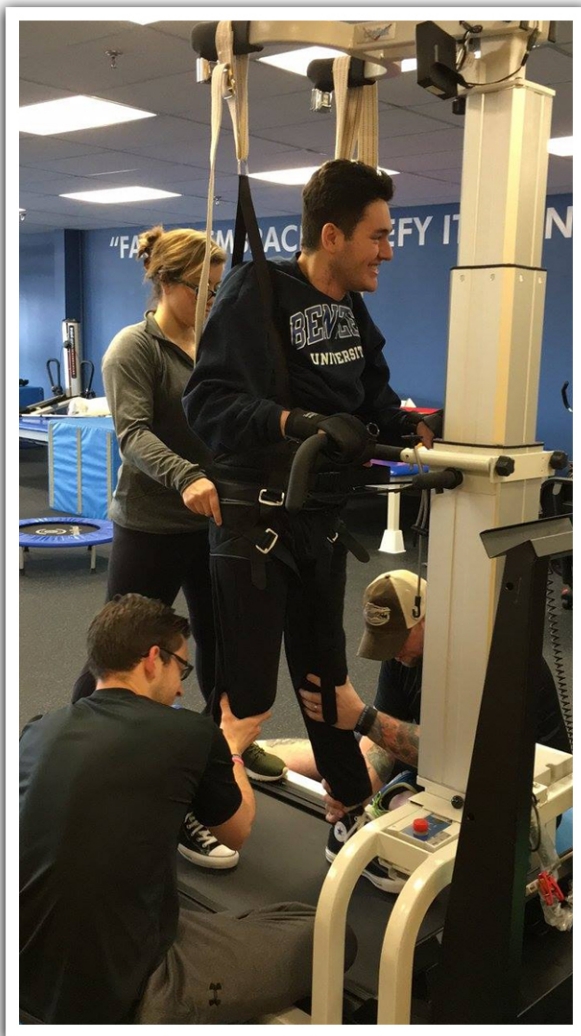
*Hi, my name is Ben Farrar and I am from Marblehead, Massachusetts. In April 2015, my entire reality was turned upside down.*

I was on a school trip in the South of France for my senior year French class visiting one of my pen pals when we decided to go swimming. It was a day as normal as any other when I dove into a wave, and with a surprising thud, my whole world went black. I sputtered awake coughing up saltwater, looking up at the gray sky and a group of my friends and strangers looking down at me. I didn't know what happened and I couldn't feel anything wrong, until I realized that I couldn't actually feel anything at all. All of a sudden, I felt a sharp ache in my neck and tried to lift my head, but my friend Jackie was holding my head tight with her legs. She told me not to move, and that help was on the way. It felt like an eternity lying on the beach looking up at my friends' faces, most of them looking at me in shock with tears running down their faces. My eyes began to well up as I realized this is very serious and unfortunately, it was too real for it to be a bad dream. The paramedics arrived after what felt like an eternity, and after a few tests, determined I'd broken my neck and sustained a cervical spinal cord injury. As they loaded me onto the back of an ambulance on a stretcher, I looked back one more time at the distraught faces of my friends and strangers who helped carry me off the beach. Their faces looked as helpless as I felt at that moment.



It was a long drive to the hospital. The paramedics had opted to go to one of the best neurosurgeons located in the hospital about 45 minutes away. Although they didn't speak English, one of the paramedics held my hand and tried to comfort me as I lay there, tears streaming down my face, scared about what the future held for me. We arrived at the hospital and rushed to the emergency room where a group of doctors were waiting. One of them spoke English told me they would do everything they could to help me. The English-speaking doctor said to me that they were going to repair my spine the best they could and that was all going to be alright. Then, as the anesthesia entered my body, my world faded to black again.

I woke up in the yellow hospital room with nobody around hooked up to a million and one machines. I thought I had just woken up from surgery until I looked around the room a little bit closer. Plastered on the wall in front of me were cards and posters with flowers and prayers written all of them. I couldn't actually read any of them from where I was, but then my eye caught a white board in the corner. It was covered in French writing, but the one thing that stood out to me was the date; May 11. I thought something had to be wrong because yesterday was April 19 and there is no way that it had taken three weeks to do a surgery.



Later that afternoon, my parents and younger sister came and told me what happened. It was all so surreal. Then my mom showed me something that will stick with me the rest of my life. It was a box. A box full of letters and cards from all my friends and family and friends of friends from my school and all around my community. They ranged from long letters from dear friends to simple get-well cards from strangers, but they all had the same message; everyone back home was rooting for me to pull through and get better. Beyond us, they told me about the phone drive that The Greg Hill Foundation put on, raising over \$40,000 from strangers all around the country just to help me with the hard journey ahead.

Even from across the Atlantic Ocean, that tiny hospital room felt full of love and support from hundreds of people. I couldn't help but sob over these incredible acts of human kindness from strangers that were all directed towards me. It was from that moment on that I knew I couldn't let paralysis defeat me. I had to work as hard as I could to get stronger so that all these people would know that their prayers and kind words made a difference; so I could make them proud that they helped me out in my darkest hour. And over the last six years I've worked my hardest to make everyone who's donated or reached out as proud as possible.

Getting home from France was only the first step in my long journey and it was the financial support that The Greg Hill Foundation provided me that helped support months of hospital visits, along with years of physical therapy that have gotten me to where I am today.

In May of this year, I finished my bachelor's degree in finance at the University of New Hampshire. A dream I never thought I'd accomplish in the beginning, but after years of therapy I was finally strong enough to make it out there on my own. Now I'm looking for work and have the skills necessary to become independent and will be able to give back to the community like so many did for me before.

I also had the opportunity to join Greg Hill and many others who were helped by his incredible foundation during their annual gala a few years ago and needless to say, it was a truly magical event. Personally, meeting so many people that The Greg Hill Foundation has helped was incredibly moving. If I had one thing to say to the people reading this it would be that the lives of the people you're donating to are truly helped and changed for the better by all of your generosity and love. And I just want to say thank you to The Greg Hill Foundation and everyone who has helped me along my journey.

*Ben Farrar*

