



“Easterseals gave me the momentum to work harder even when I was hurting and felt like giving up; they wouldn’t let me.” —Renee

This is Renee’s Story . . .

With help from Easterseals, Renee went from being told that she would never walk again to being an avid walker. When she was 8-years-old, she was hit by a car while on a family vacation, and ended up in a coma. Immediately after the accident, she was rushed to the hospital where her parents were told that she was going to need brain surgery.

Because brain surgery was still experimental at the time, this was a tough decision for her parents, but they decided to go through with it. The surgery went as planned, but Renee remained in a coma. Her parents were heartbroken and did not think that she was going to make it. However, ten days later she miraculously woke up and began to breathe on her own.

Soon after, she was transferred back home to a rehab hospital where she spent the next year in an incoherent state. She doesn’t remember much about her time there, but has a few vague memories of her parents and second grade teacher coming to visit. She had no movement in her legs or arms, and was told that she would never walk again.

When Renee was finally released from rehab, she went back to school where she repeated second grade. Her mother had heard about Easterseals, and reached out to see what support Renee could receive. Easterseals sent a physical therapist to Renee’s school to work with her every day and she recalls it being a great experience. She remembers having to repeatedly stand up from her wheel chair for long periods of time, which helped her gain strength in her legs.

Once she had made some progress, she worked on balancing on one leg at a time. It took an entire year for Renee to be able to walk again, and even longer to gain movement in her arms, but she never gave up. Eventually, she was even able to begin dancing again, which was something she had been passionate about before her accident.

“Easterseals gave me the momentum to work harder,” Renee said. “Even when I was hurting and felt like giving up, they wouldn’t let me.”

Today, at 29-years-old, Renee has full movement in both of her legs and her right arm. She can move her left arm, but her left wrist remains paralyzed and she has no movement in her left hand. Her ability to walk has improved tremendously, and she no longer walks with a limp. She has learned how to drive and got her license last year, which was something she never thought she would be able to do.

Renee was so inspired by Easterseals that she applied for a job as a bus monitor, and has worked for Easterseals for the past seven years.

“My motivation to keep going came from my family and Easterseals,” she said. “If it weren’t for them I wouldn’t be doing as well as I am doing now.”

Considering how far Renee has come, being able to walk is a very special thing to her. She now walks ten to fifteen miles every day! She aspires to write a book about her life entitled “A Walk with Renee.” Her goal is to inspire others to be persistent and never give up.

“If I can inspire somebody like that, it would mean the world to me,” she says.

