

Perseverance in the Face of Adversity

Before the fall of 2010, Honeoye Falls-Lima sophomore Jenna Hanson was a normal teenager. She excelled in her academics as one of the District's top students, taking a number of honors and AP courses, and was a three sport athlete, competing in Cross Country, Nordic Skiing, and Track & Field. Then one day last October, Jenna was playing with friends on the family's trampoline when she failed to complete a flip, landing on her neck. The accident was initially diagnosed as a sprain and Jenna continued on with school, participated in early morning work-outs, and even raced with her cross-country team. A week later it was discovered that Jenna had not sprained her neck, but had actually fractured and dislocated her neck.

Jenna was immediately immobilized and transferred to Strong Memorial Hospital by ambulance where she faced the possibility of a potentially dangerous and invasive surgery. The doctors expressed how controversial her treatment possibilities were and Jenna's surgeon, Dr. Molinari, told the family that of the last ten patients he's seen with Jenna's injury, six are completely paralyzed and are wheelchair dependent. Due to her physical strength from being an athlete and her unwavering optimism, Dr. Molinari and his medical team, which included HF-L graduate Michael Stanton, made the decision to place Jenna into head traction for three days with bolts screwed directly into her skull.

For the next 12 weeks, Jenna wore an immobilizing neck brace and was not permitted to undertake any physical activity whatsoever. While she was allowed to attend school, Jenna was confined to a wheelchair during the school day. Forbidden to engage in physical activity and training Jenna turned to mental training. She spent those 12 weeks watching Olympic skiers, reading their stories, and mentally preparing herself for her own comeback. Because Jenna had missed 75% of the snow season while recuperating, it looked like her comeback would have to wait until the following year. But, adversity had met its match in Jenna Hanson.



With three short weeks left in the season, Jenna finally returned to skiing on Bristol Mountain, just one hour after she had her neck brace removed. Dedicated to reaching her goal of getting back to the top of NY State Racing, Jenna trained with so much passion, dedication, and ambition that she qualified for the Empire State Games. Those who know Jenna, know that her optimism, determination, and refusal to give up in the face of adversity are what helped to overcome the odds and go on to win two silver medals and the overall gold medal.

Throughout her entire ordeal, Jenna remained positive. Even faced with the real prospect of becoming a quadriplegic, Jenna's contagious smile and positive attitude were refreshing reminders to all that we can make the best of any situation. Not only did she make the comeback of a lifetime, but through all of the uncertainty, she also still maintained her high honor roll status at school. "It's like that saying, "Luck is when preparation meets opportunity," HF-L coach Bernie Gardner said. "Jenna has dedicated herself to preparing to achieve greatness and in a flash that preparation was tested by this crisis. Her fortitude is what allowed her to come through this ordeal so successfully. Jenna's story is very indicative of the HF-L spirit. Our students are prepared for so much more than just the classroom."

The month of April is "Girls Sports Month" at HighSchoolSports.net and to celebrate, they are running a contest to find the ultimate athlete who has overcome adversity. HF-L coaches David Ghidiu and Bernie Gardner have helped Jenna's family share her story, chronicled in a three minute video. **Jenna's entry was one of nine videos selected among the national entries as a finalist.** The winner of the contest will be decided by internet voters. For the entire month of April anyone can view and vote for the finalists. **To view and vote for Jenna's story visit: <http://www.highschoolsports.net/GSM>.**

Physical Education Receives "STARS"

The physical education program of Honeoye Falls-Lima High School has received national acclaim as a STARS school. The National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) STARS program identifies and honors physical education programs that model essential elements for quality education and provide meaningful learning opportunities for all students. STARS schools exemplify excellence in teaching students the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed for motor development to achieve movement competency. In the eight years of the NASPE STARS project, only 56 schools in the nation have achieved this elite status.

To earn this distinction, HF-L's physical education staff compiled documentation about its curriculum, best practices, and teaching methods over a year's time, which was then rigorously reviewed by an independent panel of judges from around the country. "This award represents the great work and commitment our K-12 physical education staff has put into the District's program," Director of K-12 Health Brian Donohue said. "They have really committed to this process of evaluating the curriculum and reflecting on ways to continually improve our best practices."