

May 25, 2022

To Whom it May Concern,

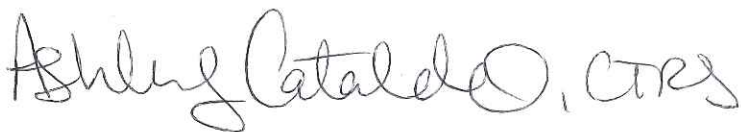
My name is Ashley Cataldo and I am the Recreational Therapist on the Spinal Cord Injury Unit at Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital. I worked with Dianne Vitkus who completed her rehab at Spaulding after sustaining a C6 spinal cord injury. I worked with Dianne regularly throughout her stay to help her regain strength, work towards her goals, introduce her to adaptive sports and show her that there is so much more life to live despite her new injury.

I quickly learned that Dianne had a zest for life. She was a four-sport athlete in high school and played division one lacrosse in college. Dianne was working as a surgical PA and loves traveling, hiking, being outdoors and is always up for an adventure. Dianne has a “no quit” attitude and puts 100% into everything she does. She has tackled this injury as she would any other aspect of her life; with drive, determination, and the mindset of pushing forward regardless of setbacks.

I’ve continued to stay in touch with Dianne since she discharged and have seen her go through the ups and downs of this journey. In the short 2 years she has had her spinal cord injury, Dianne has accomplished so much. She works out regularly and has tried adaptive sports including hiking, sailing, skiing, handcycling, rock climbing and rowing, many of which she has traveled to various states for. Dianne continues to push forward and fulfill her adventurous spirit and live her life to the fullest. However, as thoroughly as Dianne has begun to experience these adventures after her injury, she continues to struggle with the many physical and emotional challenges that come with a spinal cord injury. Throughout this journey of self-rediscovery, it is important for Dianne to explore new directions that will empower her to find this best version of herself.

Empower SCI is a “second chance at rehab”. Its goal is in its name, to “empower” those living with spinal cord injuries and help them reach their highest potential. The program is therapy and recreation based, but more importantly it provides opportunity for mentorship and creates connections with others who truly understand what you are going through. This experience is an adventure in itself as it is a week-long camp on Long Island. Participating in this program would help empower Dianne to recreate her identity and give her the skills and confidence she needs to truly live her best life and continue being her adventurous self.

I write to you today to highly recommend Dianne as a recipient of the Flyin Ryan Adventure Scholarship for the opportunity to participate in this life changing SCI program. Dianne will never stop striving to be better and she is the type of person who will share her newly found knowledge and experiences to help inspire others and show them that a disability does not define who you are. Please feel free to contact me with any questions: aacataldo@partners.org or 617-952-5317.



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