

KID CAPTAIN



**Savannah Erck, 15
Alexandria Bay,
New York**

**Iowa
vs.
Penn State**

September 26, 2009

By the time she was seven years old, Savannah Erck had endured two surgeries for scoliosis, a curvature of the spinal column that can be caused by the disorder. Two years ago, she began experiencing double vision when playing softball. Diagnosed at Syracuse University Hospital in New York with basilar invagination, a condition which causes the top vertebrae to migrate upwards into the brain, her doctor felt the only neurosurgeon who could save her life was nearly 1,000 miles away, at University of Iowa Children's Hospital.

In Savannah's case, the vertebrae were compressing the lower part of her brain stem. Left untreated, the progression of the disorder would have been painful and, ultimately, fatal.

Correcting her condition required a very delicate and complex surgery, so Savannah's parents turned to Iowa for the expertise of one of the world's most renowned pediatric neurosurgeons. According to her father, Dean, "Every neurosurgeon on the East Coast that I talked to said that if this was their daughter, they would want Dr. Arnold Menezes to perform the surgery."

Savannah's 12-hour surgery involved a large surgical team and was followed by weeks of recovery at UI Children's Hospital. She also returned in December 2008 for an additional surgery to correct scoliosis. "My daughter's first operation was so successful that, when it came time to put titanium rods in her back eight months later,

we came back to Iowa because of the complicated nature of intubating a child with this condition," says Dean.

"We have made two treks to Iowa for two very serious surgeries that could not be done anywhere else," says her father. "Every aspect of our Iowa experience was life-changing. We love and admire the UI more than I can say."

While recovering after her first UI surgery, Savannah had a very special brush with the Iowa Hawkeyes. Her intensive care nurse arranged for now-former Hawkeye football player Tyler Blum to visit Savannah. Dean and Julia, Savannah's mother, remember that as a special occasion. "When he came in the room, my daughter smiled for the first time since the surgery," said Dean. "I can't tell you how much of a difference this made to her. This young man demonstrated everything that was right with Iowa and college athletes."

Today, Savannah is back at home in Alexandria Bay where she lives with her parents, brother Bryn, 13, and sister Susie, 9. By all accounts, she is a typical tenth grader at Alexandria Bay Central School who enjoys music and reading and is doing very well in school. "Savannah is a beautiful 15-year-old girl," says her proud father. "UI Children's Hospital changed all our lives. I can't thank them enough for saving my daughter's life and then fixing her so she could enjoy it."

From her home halfway across the U.S., Savannah cheers on her team as Kid Captain of the Iowa Hawkeyes.



University of Iowa Health Care





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Families rely on UI Children's Hospital for the highest level of pediatric care available anywhere.

That's why UI Children's Hospital is ranked as one of:

- America's Best Children's Hospitals by *U.S. News & World Report* for pediatric kidney disorders
- the nation's Best Children's Hospitals by *Parents* magazine

University of Iowa Children's Hospital

UI Children's Hospital has been dedicated to meeting the health care needs of children and their families for more than 90 years. We provide comprehensive health care for children from birth to young adulthood, not only through inpatient services, but also in our many outpatient clinics, surgical treatment and diagnostic centers, plus pediatric community clinics. As part of an academic medical center, UI Children's Hospital also performs groundbreaking research to help solve the mysteries of childhood diseases.

During the 2009 football season, UI Children's Hospital is proud to partner with the Iowa Hawkeyes to feature life-changing stories of pediatric patients treated at UI Children's Hospital.

Watch Kid Captains take the field at Kinnick this fall and read more about their remarkable stories at www.uihealthcare.com/children.

You can help

The ability of UI Children's Hospital to offer top-quality care in a welcoming environment is due, in part, to support from generous supporters. Thanks to private gifts, we have been able to:

- Offer programs and amenities that **enhance the emotional well-being** of our patients and their families, making the hospital feel as comfortable and home-like as possible
- Purchase **advanced medical technology** that can more easily diagnose or treat childhood conditions
- **Expand and renovate our facilities** to reflect our commitment to family-centered care. Most patient rooms are now private, with space for parents to stay in their child's room, 24 hours a day.

With your help, we can do even more to help children and their families.

Here are just some of the ways we can enhance our services with the help of private support:

- Build a new UI Children's Hospital, designed from the ground up as a state-of-the-art, family-friendly environment
- Create a research endowment aimed at solving childhood's most common and difficult conditions, from diabetes to leukemia
- Attract more of the world's best pediatric physicians and researchers to UI Children's Hospital

Be a part of UI Children's Hospital by making a gift online at:
www.uifoundation.org/kidcaptain

Changing Medicine. Changing ^{Kids'} Lives.



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