



# JACK'S STORY

In the summer of 2000, Jack was a very typical mainstream boy. He took for granted the ease with which he played team sports or moved about his daily life. He had a black belt in jujitsu and attended Sea Cadets. He was enjoying his holidays and looking forward to starting year 9 when he was involved in a life altering road accident. Jack survived, miraculously, though endured a long and painful recovery which involved a multitude of intricate surgeries. This took a huge toll on him, both physically and emotionally. In addition to the life-threatening injuries to his face and body, the immense pressure damage on Jack's retinas caused severe vision impairment. This was scary and distressing.

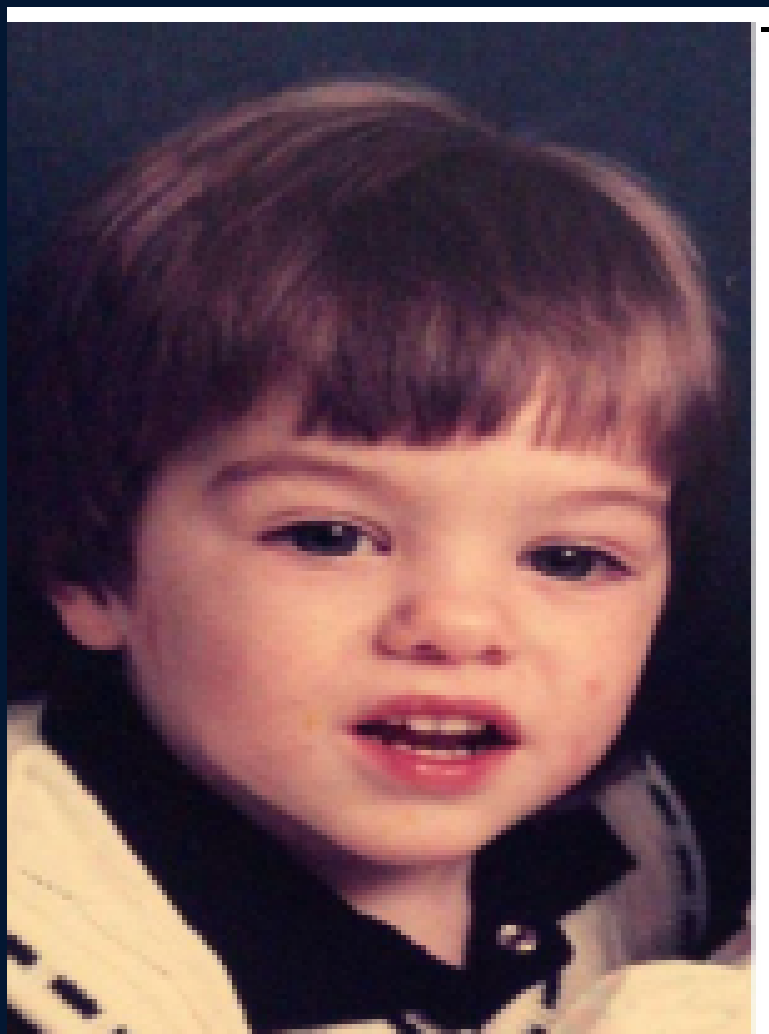




“Day by day my sight began to slowly improve, until one day I was able to see the outline of my ‘get well soon’ cards which my parents had stuck on the wall, four feet away from my bed. I could also count fingers displayed in front of my face. This was a very emotional time for me, I was overwhelmed with happiness, and all I could concentrate on was returning home and spending time with family and friends. I persistently nagged the doctors to let me go back home! Thirty-six days after the accident I arrived home, there was a crowd of people who welcomed me, they were clapping and cheering, which I will remember forever.”



Despite being home, and feeling very grateful to have some independence, Jack's journey was far from over. The trauma around what had happened and learning to adapt to his new way of life was very challenging. Jack recalls his first day at Linden Lodge: "I walked in and because I had only been at a mainstream school I wasn't aware of other people who had disabilities. I burst out crying."



But ultimately, Jack says that "coming to Linden Lodge was the best thing that could have happened." His mental health was so affected by the accident. At Linden Lodge he found acceptance, encouragement and support. He discovered a community of like-minded people and was inspired by the stories of his peers.

To his joy, he realised that through adaptation, he was able to participate in the sporting events he used to love but had given up hope on ever being able to enjoy again: canoeing, rowing and rock climbing. Jack was afraid to leave his mainstream school, but Linden Lodge was able to offer him a bespoke and unique educational experience with an appropriately adapted curriculum. He boarded at Linden Lodge during his GCSE's so he could dedicate himself fully to his studies. Aside from his academic achievements, Jack also left Linden Lodge with a wealth of independent living skills.

After school, Jack trained to be a gym instructor. He began volunteering at Linden Lodge, eventually applying for and successfully securing a job at the school, where he works to this day. Jack is a force of nature – endlessly positive and impressive. He has run a marathon and a half marathon, climbed mountains and lives by the mantra “always look on the bright side of life.”

His message to the children of Linden  
Lodge is this:

“Be confident! If you can be  
confident, you’ll never fail in  
life.

If you don’t achieve in one way,  
try another way.

There will always be barriers but  
there will always be people who  
will support us.

There will always be people who  
have new ideas.

Until you can accept your  
disability you can’t move  
forward in life – use a cane, ask  
for help!

There are amazing people out  
there.”