

Explosive Blessings

Two years ago, a terrorist's bomb at the Boston Marathon blew Rebekah Gregory's life apart. Now, the local mom is using the tragedy to inspire others and live a life without limits

Written by Susanna Donald | Select photography courtesy of Rebekah Gregory

When the first bomb exploded at the finish line of the 2013 Boston Marathon, Rebekah Gregory and her 5-year-old son, Noah, were just three feet away. They were waiting to see her boyfriend's mom cross the finish line, and Noah was bored. "It was so crowded, and I wanted to keep him right by me," she recalls. "I told him to sit on my feet and pretend he was a scientist looking at rocks in the pavement."

That decision saved Noah's life. Moments later, Gregory's legs shielded her son from the brunt of a massive explosion that killed three, injured more than 260 others, and filled the nation with an all-too-familiar fear.

The Blast

The blast hoisted Gregory into the air. When she landed, she looked down and thought her legs were completely gone. "All I was thinking was, 'Where's Noah?'" she says. "My eardrums were blown, but somehow I could hear Noah screaming 'Mommy! Mommy!' somewhere behind me."

The Aftermath

When she reached for him, she saw bones jutting out through a gaping wound in her hand. Chaos and trauma was surrounded by fragments of bone and bomb. "I prayed, 'Lord, if this is my time, take me, but let me know Noah is okay.'" When someone brought Noah to her side, she believed it was a sign that it was her time to go.

The Battle Begins

Doctors placed Gregory in a medically-induced coma for a week. "The first person I saw when I woke up was my mom," she remembers. "I wrote a note because I couldn't talk with the tube in my throat. I wrote, 'God isn't finished with me yet.'" Both of Gregory's legs were injured, along with her hand, and the left leg was all but destroyed. The

bomb obliterated muscle, nerves, and half of her fibula. Noah suffered a deep cut on his right leg, shrapnel in the back of his head, and some internal bleeding. He was out of the hospital in five days, while Gregory's battle was just beginning.



Rebekah Gregory underwent 17 surgeries and was treated at Memorial Hermann Katy Hospital once she returned from Boston

Losing a Leg

After 39 days in Boston, Gregory moved to Memorial Hermann Katy Hospital where Dr. William McGarvey took over the monumental task of helping her keep her leg. "We discussed amputation at the beginning, but Rebekah was

initially committed to trying to preserve the limb," says Dr. McGarvey, who performed seven of the 17 surgeries Gregory had on her left leg. But her continued pain and disability became very burdensome. "My leg is not my life," says Gregory. "I said that from the beginning. After the 17th surgery, I realized how silly it was to be holding onto something that was only holding me back from getting on with my life."



“I want to travel, to climb mountains, to do anything and everything I can, and not take a moment for granted.”

– Rebekah Gregory



She has the word “blessed” painted on her prosthetic leg to remind her not of what she has lost, but what she still has

Rebekah today with her son Noah, age 7

Photo by Anetorius Wallace

UT★Physicians

Specialized Orthopaedic Care for Every Age



William C. McGarvey M.D.

Board Certified Orthopaedic Surgeon
Fellowship Trained in Foot and Ankle

- Surgery of the Foot and Ankle
- Joint Replacement
- Trauma Reconstruction



Timothy Noonan M.D.

Board Certified Orthopaedic Surgeon
Fellowship in Sports Medicine and Foot and Ankle

- Sports medicine
- Total Joint replacement
- Arthritis



Matt Camarillo M.D.

Fellowship in Sports Medicine

- Sports medicine
- General Orthopaedics
- Knee and Shoulder injuries



Stephen D. Simonich M.D.

Board Certified Orthopaedic Surgeon
Fellowship Trained in Sports Medicine

- Sports Medicine
- Shoulder and Knee Reconstruction
- Knee Replacement

UT Physicians
Orthopaedics Katy

23920 Katy Freeway, Suite 160
Katy, Texas 77494
281-392-6797

UT Physicians
Orthopaedics Cinco Ranch

23923 Cinco Ranch Blvd.
Katy, Texas 77494
713-486-5300

Schedule your appointment online

ScheduleNow
powered by iStock by freemovepost



Noah was shielded by his mom's legs during the blast, saving his life



Gregory with Pete DiMartino during the recovery process

Her pain was constant and excruciating, despite multiple daily doses of pain medication, and she was mostly confined to a wheelchair. More surgeries loomed on the horizon, but none promised that she would be free from pain or that she would walk again.

The Goodbye Party

In November, Gregory went to see Dr. McGarvey for a routine follow-up. She told him matter-of-factly, "I'm ready for my amputation." The surgery was scheduled for November 10.

With her trademark optimism, Gregory threw a goodbye party for her leg, treating it to one last pedicure. "It was a celebration," she says. "And I was so relieved when I woke up from the surgery. I thought I would be scared, but it really was like the biggest weight was lifted off of me. My life wasn't in limbo anymore."

Robot Mom

On December 31, Gregory took her first steps on her new prosthesis, which she affectionately named "Felicia." Noah, who was initially hesitant about the amputation, now says it's cool because he has a "robot mom." Gregory's amputation is considered "fresh," meaning that the residual limb hasn't hardened enough for rigorous pressure from the prosthesis. Blisters form. The limb swells, then shrinks, then swells again. There are major setbacks. But Gregory survived the largest domestic terror attack on U.S. soil since 9/11, and she isn't stopping now. She began training to run the 2015 Boston Marathon the week before her amputation. According to Gregory, running the marathon is more than a

Katy Scholars

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF HELPING
KATY STUDENTS SUCCEED

MATH, READING, ENGLISH, SCIENCE AND SOCIAL STUDIES

EXCELLENT PROGRAMS

- 1 ON 1 TUTORING
- HOMEWORK RELIEF
- THE ROAD TO COLLEGE
- SAT & ACT PREP
- STUDY SKILLS
- EDUCATIONAL TESTING
- WORKSHOPS
- PHONICS
- PRE-K TUTORING

- ★ Highly skilled certified teachers only
- ★ Programs for 1st grade to college age
- ★ Katy ISD curriculum expertise

Dr. Eileen Pavlovich and her team of certified teachers, provide curricular and instructional expertise that has helped thousands of students. Dr. Pavlovich's ability to create engaging, effective, and timely programs that enhance learning helps every student succeed.

"We create programs designed for each child."
- Dr. Eileen Pavlovich

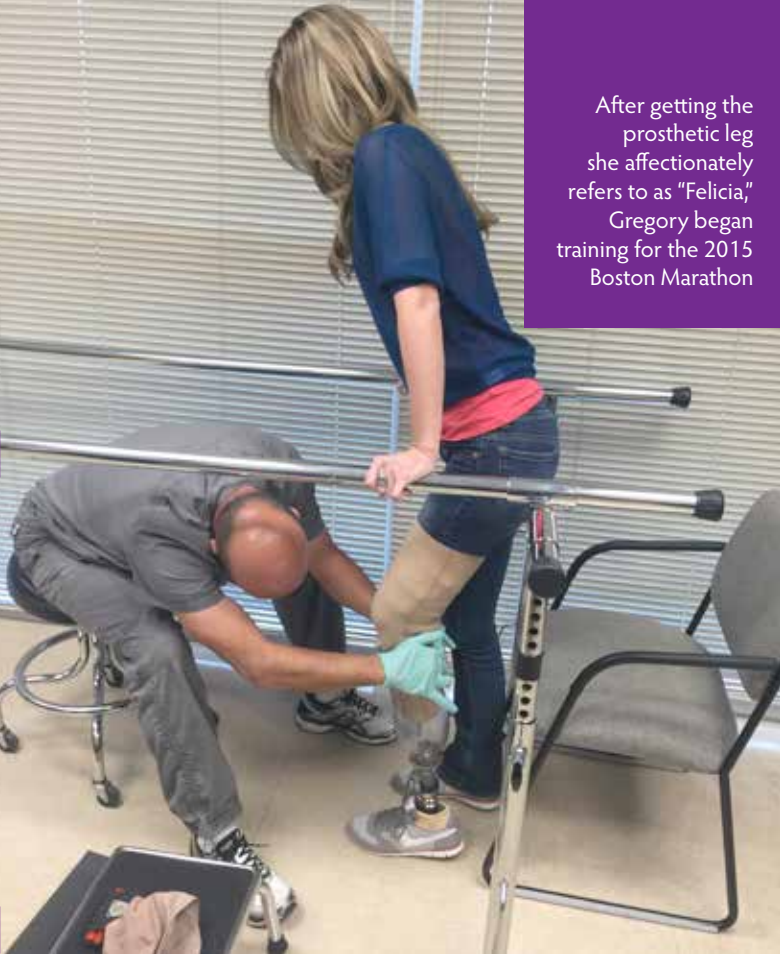
FREE CONSULTATION

Not sure which program is best for your child?
Call and we'll make our best recommendation.

OPEN Mon.-Sat.
Mon.-Thurs.: 2pm-closing
Fri.: By Appt.
Sat.: 8am-12pm

Villagio Town Center 22756 Westheimer Pkwy. Katy, TX 77494
www.KatyScholars.com 281-693-4350

© 2015 Katy Magazine



After getting the prosthetic leg she affectionately refers to as "Felicia," Gregory began training for the 2015 Boston Marathon

goal - it's a promise. She trains five days a week, in addition to her rehabilitation work at TIRR Memorial Hermann. Two weeks after getting her prosthesis, Gregory began jogging - an incredible achievement. "I push myself," she says. "Waiting is hard. I was in limbo for so long, and now that I can move, I don't want to stop."

Inspiring Others


In between rehabilitation, training, and being a full-time mom, Gregory also travels around the world sharing her inspiring story. "I realized after the bombing that I had been given a platform," she says. "I don't want to waste it. I want to do my own small part in changing the world for the better. I feel like this is my purpose."

Life Without Limits

For Gregory, life without her leg isn't defined by her limitations. "My bucket list? It's unlimited," she laughs. "I want to run the marathon of course. But I want to travel, to climb mountains, to do anything and everything I can, and not take a moment for granted." And she doesn't. She smiles as she talks about walking around the mall for the first time, or going up the stairs in her house. "I didn't want to get blown up, but now I get to hug my son a little tighter, and love my family a little more, and really value every minute." KM




SUSANNA DONALD is a freelance writer who lives in Fulshear with her husband and two sons.




Where the Fun Begins...

- Birthday Parties • Sweet 16 •
- Company Parties • Quinceaneras •
- Weddings • Reunions •


Located approximately 5 miles North of Katy
25440 Beckendorff Road
 Katy, Texas • (281) 371-3318




PADDLE BOATS



MOONWALKS



WATERSLIDES




PETTING ZOO • PONY RIDES

Relax, enjoy the view...

Book your Party Now!

www.smithranchkaty.com



grandcheerallstars.com

Cheer Teams
 (281) 371-3775

**Tumbling
 Privates
 Cheer Technique**