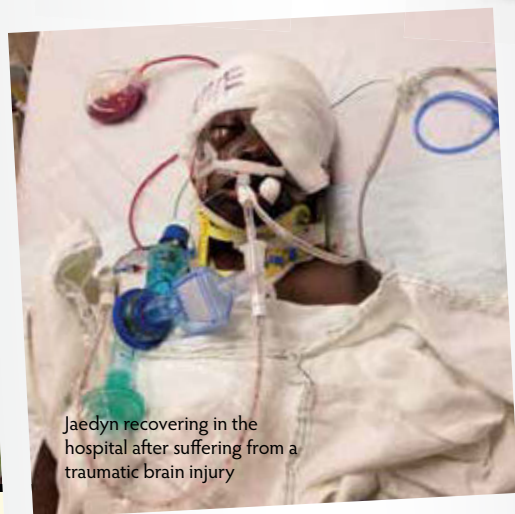




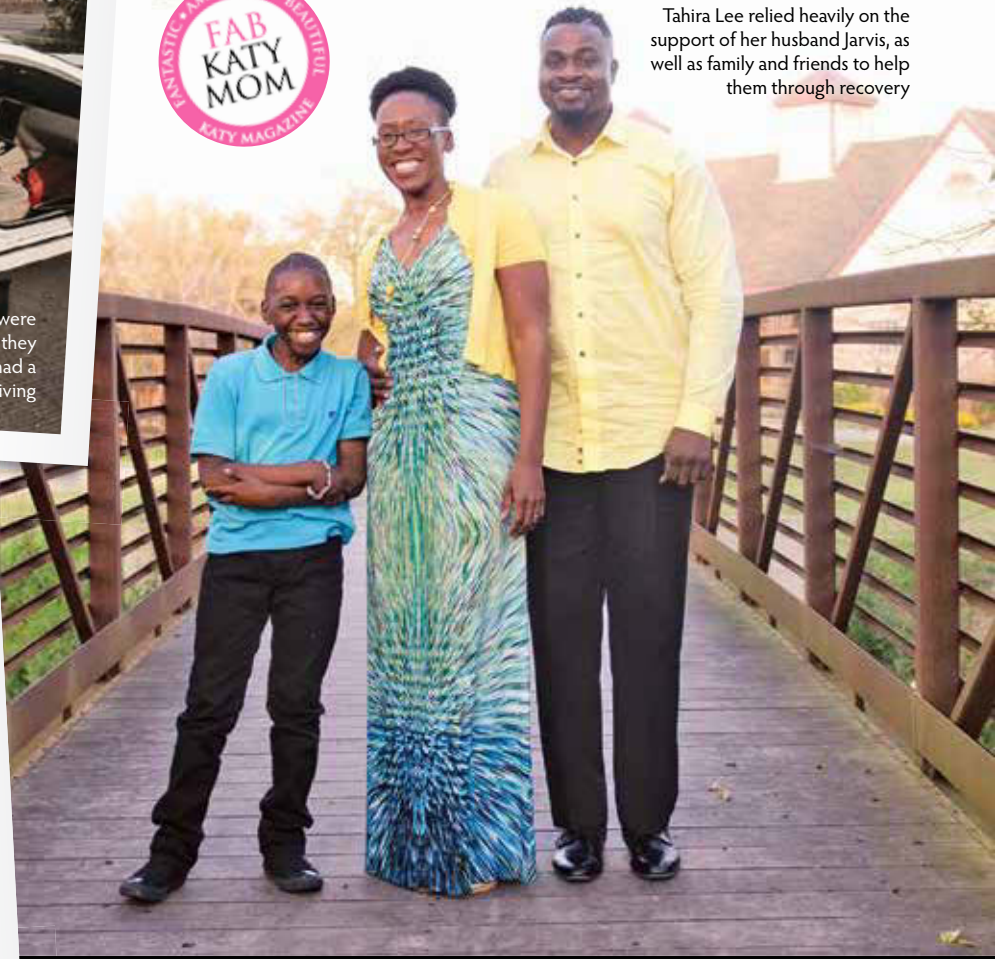
Tahira and her son Jaedyn were critically injured after they were hit by a man who had a seizure while driving



Jaedyn recovering in the hospital after suffering from a traumatic brain injury



Tahira Lee relied heavily on the support of her husband Jarvis, as well as family and friends to help them through recovery



OUT OF THE WRECKAGE

Tahira Lee tells how she and her son Jaedyn survived life-threatening injuries after a car accident

Written by Tahira Lee | Photography by Sara Isola

What I remember from the scene is brief flashes of life and momentary flashes of nothingness. January 25, 2014 still seems like a dream to me - to wake up in the middle of a terrible accident not knowing the how or the why. My son and I were in our car when we were suddenly hit by a man who had suffered from a seizure after not taking his anti-seizure medications. It crumpled our car like a paper bag. It sends chills up my spine when I think of what God brought me and my family through.

Help My Baby

I woke up on my back. I had been pulled from the front seat by bystanders. A woman stood over me explaining that I had just been in an accident and stressing to me that I should lie still. I had not truly registered what she told me. My eyes moved about. I spotted the emergency team coming to my aid. Only at that moment did I remember that my son was with me.

I turned my head to see him slumped over still strapped in his seat belt. I screamed as loud as I could for anyone within the sound of my voice to help my baby. I did not know at that time the extent of my injuries, nor did I care. I pleaded over and over again for someone to help my baby. I blacked out during my transition from the car to the gurney. I remember being loaded into the ambulance and continually telling the emergency team I wanted my son with me.

Against the Odds

The next time I awoke, I was being wheeled into an area to be prepped for surgery. As I was en route, I heard the voice of an old friend. I could recognize her island accent and undeniable laugh from anywhere. She came to my side and continued to watch over us during our entire stay in the hospital. That truly helped me to feel safe among all these faces and hands that were coming at me.

I was stripped and primed for surgery with many doctors and nurses scurrying in and out. I was asked over and over again if I could feel this or that, which is when I realized I had no feeling in my right arm. I still did not know what was wrong with my body. Meanwhile my son was fighting for his life. My family and friends filled the waiting room with prayer, faith, and vigilance. I found out later that the entire waiting room - family, friends, and strangers - were praying together for all of us as we were fighting against the odds that night.

"My son and I were in our car when we were suddenly hit by a man who had suffered from a seizure after not taking his anti-seizure medications. It crumpled our car like a paper bag. It sends chills up my spine when I think of what God brought me and my family through."

- Tahira Lee

Lucky to be Alive

When I finally woke from surgery wearing a halo, I was told that I had a C1 fracture. To repair the fracture, Dr. Parsarn, my orthopedic surgeon, used bone marrow from my hip to fuse the bone into place. He also inserted a rod from my neck to the back of my skull. I would wear the halo for three months while the fusion set. He told me I was lucky to be alive. Most C1 injuries die on the scene. I knew the hand of God was in the midst of the whole situation.

I finally began to receive word on the status of my son, Jaedyn. He had suffered a traumatic brain injury (TBI), severe axonal diffusion. In other words, every part of his brain had been damaged resulting in little to no functional capability. I was told by the doctors he would spend the rest of his life in a vegetative state.

Fight of His Life

I blocked out what I had been told and began to pray. Prior to his surgery, but right after mine, I was approached by a research team on behalf of my son. They were studying the effects of stem cells used for TBI's acquired by children. I had heard many things about this research from Special Cheers, an occupational therapy center where I was working, and I signed the papers.

Jaedyn had to have a craniotomy to release the pressure that accumulated in his skull. While I was in the ICU recovering, I had to hear about my son's condition through my husband, Jarvis. He never sugar-coated it or withheld information from me. And for that, I remain appreciative. It was this information that gave me the drive to get out of my own bed so that I could be with my son.

When I was finally able to travel by wheelchair I went straight to Jaedyn's room and prayed with him. I remember the day we had the family meeting to discuss his future. I was able to see scans of his brain and given a detailed medical explanation of Jaedyn's condition and prognosis. I was in tears, not because of what the doctor told me, but because of the fight my son had on his hands. I was wheeled back into his room and spoke life to my son. My mother tells me to this day, it was hearing those words spoken to him by my mouth that woke him up. Just a few days later, Jaedyn began to show brain activity and opened his eyes.

Blessed in Katy

On February 15, I was released from the hospital with my halo, walking on my own two feet. Three days later, Jaedyn was transferred to Healthbridge Children's Hospital where he remained until April 30. On that day, he danced his way out of the hospital.

Since then, I have returned to school to complete my studies as an occupational therapy assistant. Jaedyn

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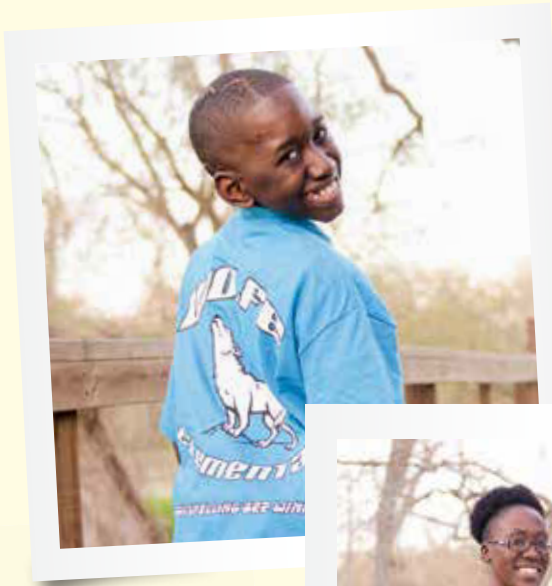
"I knew the hand of God was in the midst of the whole situation."

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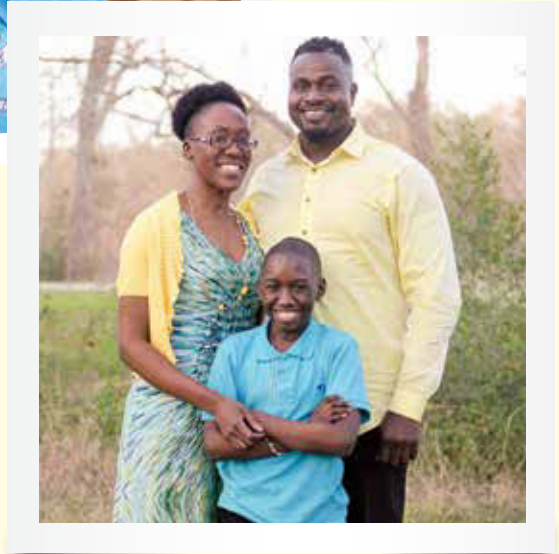
returned to Wolfe Elementary and was welcomed back with open arms from all the staff and students who knew what he had been through. Since then he has been elected STAR student at school and has competed in the Katy ISD district spelling bee.

Our family grew that day. We were blessed to be a part of such a loving congregation, supportive family and friends, and caring staff of various facilities and institutions that helped us to see through that horrific event. For that we are forever thankful. **KM**

EDITOR'S NOTE: We would like to thank Tahira Lee for sharing her story of faith, courage, and recovery. Do you have an inspiring story to share? Email us at editor@katymagazine.com.



After three months in the hospital, Jaedyn returned to Wolfe Elementary where he competed in the Katy ISD spelling bee



Tahira suffered a C1 fracture and doctors had to use marrow from her hip to fuse her bone back into place. She wore a halo for three months during recovery.



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