
COASTAL NEWS

HINESVILLE, GEORGIA

SEPTEMBER 21, 1990

Kevin's Mother Tells His Story

Closeup Editor:

To the community of Hinesville, Fort Stewart and surrounding areas:

We'd like to thank you for your kindness, prayers, and donations to help our 3-year-old son, Kevin Schumpert in a time of financial need.

I'd also like to take this time to share Kevin's story with you, and bring you up to date on his progress.

Kevin is the little boy whose picture you've seen up all over the Hinesville and some places on Fort Stewart. The pictures and posters are slowly coming down now, but I'd like to ask you all to remember Kevin and his story to share with others that might experience a tragedy in their lives.

On April 13, 1990 (Good Friday) Kevin was playing with a bungee cord, a stretchable elastic cord, with metal hooks on each end, used for holding things down when packing.

He had stretched this cord to some door knobs in our hallway, when one hook slipped off and hit Kevin in his left eye. When Kevin pulled the hook out, he pulled his own eye out of his socket. Hearing his screams, Carol his 17-year-old sister who was baby-sitting at the time, reacted quickly, applying a cold compress and putting the eye back in the socket.

She called the ambulance and myself.

(I was at Bradwell taking my GED test) Kevin was taken to the Hinesville

Hospital, then on to the Savannah hospital.

The drive to Savannah, that night seemed like forever and I prayed non-stop all the way there. I knew in my heart that Kevin would be blind if the doctors could save his eye, or worse the eye would have to be removed.

Carol had told me that Kevin's eye was hanging out of the socket and cut almost in two, this all seemed like a nightmare. I just wanted someone to wake me up. But when I heard the doctor's voice – that brought me back to the emergency room. He told me he was going to operate in hopes of saving the eye, but if it was beyond repair, he'd have to remove it. I cried until my heart ached.

I asked myself, "Why Kevin? This can't be happening, these terrible accidents happen to other people."

I looked down at his sweet little face as he slept, thinking how will I tell him when he wakes up that his eye is gone, how will I tell his father who was away at work and his brothers and sisters.

All these "hows" were pulling me down, then I remembered that God doesn't give me more than I can handle. I go through these things for a reason: to make me stronger in my faith. I started to pray again, this time for strength for Kevin and myself. I put my son in God's hands and ask him to comfort him, to keep him safe and whatever his will be done. God knows

what is best for us.

Kevin's eye was saved this time and the second time. He was blind in the left eye, but it was his eye. His life was changing and he didn't like it. He could still see from the other eye that was great. But there were stitches in his left eye that would be there for six months.

It broke his heart when I told him that he couldn't go back to preschool. He saw only bright light from the left eye, he'd cry and say the sun was hurting his bad eye (as he called it.) He was tired of me cleaning the eye and putting ointment and drops into it four to five times a day. He was tired of the eye patches. He wanted his young life to get back to normal. He was withdrawing from other children. One day he saw his preschool picture and said, "Mama, I want two good eyes again."

My heart was breaking.

During all this time his left eye was still shrinking, and the danger of infection, which could have spread to the right eye and left Kevin totally blind, was getting greater.

On May 10, Kevin had this third operation and his eye was removed. Now was the time I'd have to tell him and the family that the eye was gone. But God gave me the strength to go on.

I believed that God waited until this day, because he knew we'd be able to handle this now. My husband Larry was there with Kevin and me. We

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knew the doctors had done everything they could to save the eye.

God let us see that Kevin could and would be able to go on to live a normal life, even this handicap. Kevin was upset (mad) at first, and wanted to know what the doctor did with his eye.

We've helped Kevin to understand by drawing pictures and talking about his accident when he has felt like talking about it. Physically he was doing fine, still as energetic and rambunctious despite his accident. Emotionally he was hurting, he'd still say his eye was ugly (even though there was nothing there.) He'd look in the mirror and say, "Mama, I want two eyes again, when can I have two eyes?" His dream was to have two eyes.

Then on July 5, Kevin's dream came true. Michael, an Ocularist, (one who makes plastic eyes) from Philadelphia, PA., heard about Kevin from his sister – in – law who lives here in Hinesville.

While visiting her family, Michael stopped by to see Kevin. He brought him a very special gift for Kevin, a plastic eye. When he placed the eye in Kevin's eye socket, and a mirror was handed to Kevin his little face had the biggest smile, as he said look Mama, I have two eyes again.

He jumped down and ran out to show the rest of the family, then on to show the children in our neighborhood. This eye was a very precious gift for our son. Its only temporary until we can have one made just for Kevin. This one is a little bit smaller, he needs one a little bigger.

He will use this one until he can the other one. He will need to go in about every six month to have his eye check, as he grows, he will need many eyes.

Sometimes they can add to the eye, when they can't he'll need another one. One eye can cost \$1,000 to \$1,5000. Medicaid has helped us out, but they can't help in the cost of plas-

tic eyes, because Kevin can't see out of it, and if can't see out of it, he doesn't really need it.

I couldn't believe it, I want our son to have an eye in that empty socket. It's bad enough he had to lose it, but not to have something there for such a small child, seems so unfair. So the money that you all have donated to Kevin's trust fund at the Hinesville Bank will be used now to help us with the cost of Kevin's many eyes. He asked why his picture was up in a lot of stores, I then told him about his trust fund and how caring people all over were putting money in it to help us pay for his eyes.

He said with a big smile, "Mama I have a lot of friends in Hinesville."

I gave him a big hug and said, "Yes, you do Kevin, a lot of friends."

I had tears in my eyes.

Kevin has touched a lot of hearts all ages have given from their hearts to help us get through this ordeal.

He's on the full road to recovery now. He is learning to live with his handicap, not to feel sorry for himself. He wears safety glasses donated by Mac's Optical. He understands that he has to take care of the only eye he can see with.

He's looking forward to returning to preschool in the fall. He loves to go to the playground and pool now. He is sharing his story with other children, telling them to be careful with what they play with – to leave hooks alone.

He was singing a song with his sisters and brothers the other day, there was a verse that went: "There ain't no mountain high enough I can't climb" – yes. Kevin's voice could be heard over all of them.

I smiled as I remembered what we had all been through not so long ago – Kevin made it to the top of this mountain in his future to overcome, and I believe with God's help he'll always

make it to the top, we only have to ask God to help us.

We, the Schumpert family, have a lot to be thankful for in our lives. We still have Kevin with us, he can still see, we're going on with our live. And we live in a caring community where people are so willing to help others out in a time of need.

If the community learns anything from Kevin's story, I hope it is not to be taking anything for granted, to treasure whatever we have, because one day it could be gone.

Please, parents, read Kevin's story to your children and be watchful of what they play with. The doctor told us many ways that children losing on forks, running in the house and falling on tables and things flying out from under lawnmowers.

I wouldn't want any parent to go through way we had to. Please be watchful. Thank you all, again, for putting a smile back on Kevin's face, for being his friends and helping a little boy's dream come true.

God bless you all in Hinesville and surrounding areas.

Kevin's mother
Diane Schumpert and Family

P.S. A special thanks to: The Lion's Club, Hinesville Bank, WalMart's Donation of the color picture on the posters

L.B. Laser Printing for the flyers

To all the local stores and businesses that let us put up posters or flyers: thank you.