



# LIFE CHANGING

## Woman learning to move on after deadly illness

By JORDAN NEAL

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Hannah was confused. Last thing she remembered was her college roommate and best friend Audrey Kubis taking her to the emergency room after a few days of being sick. When her face got some mysterious blue dots, her mom, a nurse herself, insisted her roommate take her to the ER.

While waiting to get checked in she fell asleep. When she woke up she was hooked on to machines that were helping her breathe, several of her limbs were black and her family was more happy and relieved to see her.

What happened, she wondered? Hannah had been in a coma for 12 days and her life had changed forever.

### College girl

Hannah Reyling is the 22-year-old daughter of Paulette and Chris Reyling. She was born and raised in Saint Jo where she graduated in 2021. She has an older sister named Ashley who also went to Saint Jo High School.

An active child, Hannah participated in many sports leagues in neighboring Nocona. She quickly found out basketball was not her thing and gravitated towards volleyball.

"I don't like when people touch me like in basketball," Hannah said. "Girls are mean, so I just didn't like the physical part of it. In volleyball, you don't crash into each other, or you aren't supposed to anyway. So I just like that about it. It can be very clean, but also very messy sometimes. It should have the same pass, hit rhythm to it and kind of never gets



Courtesy photo

Saint Jo's Hannah Reyling poses with her family as everyone adjusts to her new normal.

old when it's executed like that."

Hannah dove into the sport growing up and played on club teams. It paid off in high school, getting her onto the varsity team by her sophomore year and helping the team to the regional tournament twice in 2018 and 2020 as an outside hitter. She was named a Texas Sports Writers Association 1A all-state honorable mention in 2018 and was the district's most valuable player in 2020.

She was listed at 5'8", tall enough to comfortably play at the net at Saint Jo. Hannah also had a powerful frame that could put some oomph on

her spikes, though more often she was looking to place her hits.

Playing for Coach Charlie Hamilton at the time, she and her teammates helped set the standard for what modern Saint Jo volleyball teams have risen to.

"I played with a lot of good people," Reyling said. "In 1A, there are not very many setters that are very good, but all throughout high school I had really good setters. Just playing with people who had the skills and actually cared made it a lot of fun."

Being at a 1A school like Saint Jo, Hannah of course got talked into playing basketball for a

couple of seasons, threw shot put and discus in track and was a cheerleader some years. Still, volleyball was and still is her love.

That was my last experience with Hannah three years ago, covering her exploits in sports. Interviewing her in late July at her parents' home, I never knew she wore glasses since she never wore them when she played.

Even with the success on the court, Hannah went to college to study. Initially she went to Texas Women's University before transferring to Tarleton State University after one semester. She was pursuing a degree

in nutrition, but was not sure on the career path.

After two years of college, she made the conscious choice coming into the fall semester of 2023 to start saying yes to more things and also to be more social beyond just playing intramural sports.

She joined the sorority Phi Mu, despite jests from her father about buying friends and it paid off big time for Hannah.

"Just seeing how the girls are all together all the time," Hannah said. "I had friends before the sorority, but they were involved and I wanted to be more involved. It was fun and I met a lot of people through it."

On top of college classes, she now was making time for sorority activities as well as working at a coffee shop/pizza place called Cold Smoke Craft House. She kept up with her love of volleyball by volunteering to assistant coach of a club team as well as intramurals. She even had the thought about hosting a summer volleyball camp in Saint Jo.

Hannah was busy, but loving life as things looked to continue this way at the start of the 2024 winter semester.

### The illness

She was coming off a sinus infection from January, but felt good and healthy enough that she was playing in a kickball sorority event in late-February. Two days of sickness followed, with her feeling weak and throwing up. When she woke with blue dots on her face going to the emergency room immediately was a decision that saved her life.

"She's filling out my See HANNAH 2B

## sportsblitz

### High School

Oct. 12

#### Volleyball

12 p.m., Nocona vs Petrolia

Oct. 15

#### Volleyball

6 p.m., Bowie vs City View

6 p.m., Nocona vs Archer City

5 p.m., Saint Jo vs Forestburg

5 p.m., Bellevue vs Gold-Burg

Oct. 18

#### Football

7 p.m., Bowie vs Boyd

7 p.m., Nocona @Trenton

7:30 p.m., Gold-Burg @Fort Worth THESA

7 p.m., Forestburg @Throckmorton

#### Volleyball

5 p.m., Bowie vs Jacksboro

5 p.m., Nocona @Christ Academy

5 p.m., Saint Jo vs Prairie Valley

5 p.m., Gold-Burg vs Forestburg

Oct. 21

#### Regional Cross Country

2A Meet @Lynn Creek Park (Nocona)



## Dallas Mavericks

Oct. 14

@Los Angeles 9:30 p.m.

Oct. 17

vs Milwaukee 6:30 p.m.



## Dallas Cowboys

Oct. 13

vs Detroit 3:25 p.m.

Oct. 27

@San Francisco 7:20 p.m.

## inbrief

### Grand opening at Tyler Park

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and Tyler State Park will host a grand opening event Oct. 18 for the new park headquarters.

The facility, designed to resemble Civilian Conservation Corps facilities found elsewhere in the park, features an interpretive gallery highlighting the history of the park, improved accessibility for staff and visitors, increased office space, centralized conference room, better parking options to prevent traffic congestion and a new radio tower for improved communications.

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# Runners compete in district meets

By JORDAN NEAL

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This week all of the area schools competed at its district cross country meets.

Bowie ran at its 3A meet in Burkburnett on Monday, Nocona ran at its 2A meet in Seymour on Wednesday and the 1A schools ran at Henrietta Midway on Monday.

The Jackrabbit boy's team finished second overall to champs Holliday. Isaac Renteria was Bowie's top runner, finishing third overall with a time of 17:33. Brayden Willett finished one spot behind him in fourth place and was 11 second back. The two broke up the six runner Holliday sweep in the top eight.

The Jackrabbits top five runners also included Russell Anderson (12th), Monte Mayfield (13th) and Hayden Sutton (17th). The team qualified for the regional meet.

Unfortunately for Bowie, the Lady Rabbits finished just one spot outside of qualifying for

regionals in fifth place. The team's top runner was Ollie Gaston who finished 13th with a time of 13:19. Bowie's top five runners were Laney Segura (17th), Bella Lozano (19th), Harlei Hudson (32nd) and Isabella Caswell (34th). While it was disappointing, it was the first team the Lady Rabbits had fielded in three years.

For Nocona, the girl's team had only one runner compete, but she made it count. Bayler Smith finished first overall with a time of 13:20.

The Nocona boy's team finished second overall after first place Windthorst. The Indians were led by Andrew Perez who finished sixth overall with a time of 19:19. Freddy Duran finished right behind him in seventh place and Corbyn Patton finished 10th overall. The final two runners for Nocona, Brady Cunningham and Anthony Burrows, finished 24th and 27th to round out the team.

All of Nocona's varsity



News photo by Jordan Neal

Both Saint Jo cross country teams won district titles on Monday at Henrietta Midway.

runners qualified for the regional meet.

Running at the 1A meet at Henrietta Midway, it was both Saint Jo teams that dominated with first place titles while Bellevue finished second.

The Saint Jo girls were

led by Savannah Hill who got second overall with a time of 13:42. All of the Lady Panthers finished in the top eight as Taylor Patrick (third), Abigail Carter (fourth), Kaycee Clark (sixth) and Jordyn O'Neal (seventh) finished not far behind. Sixth run-

ner Mercedes Diaz did not count since only a team's top five runners are totaled, but she finished in eighth place.

The Saint Jo boy's team was nearly as dominant as its top five runners finished in the top nine. See RUNNING 5B

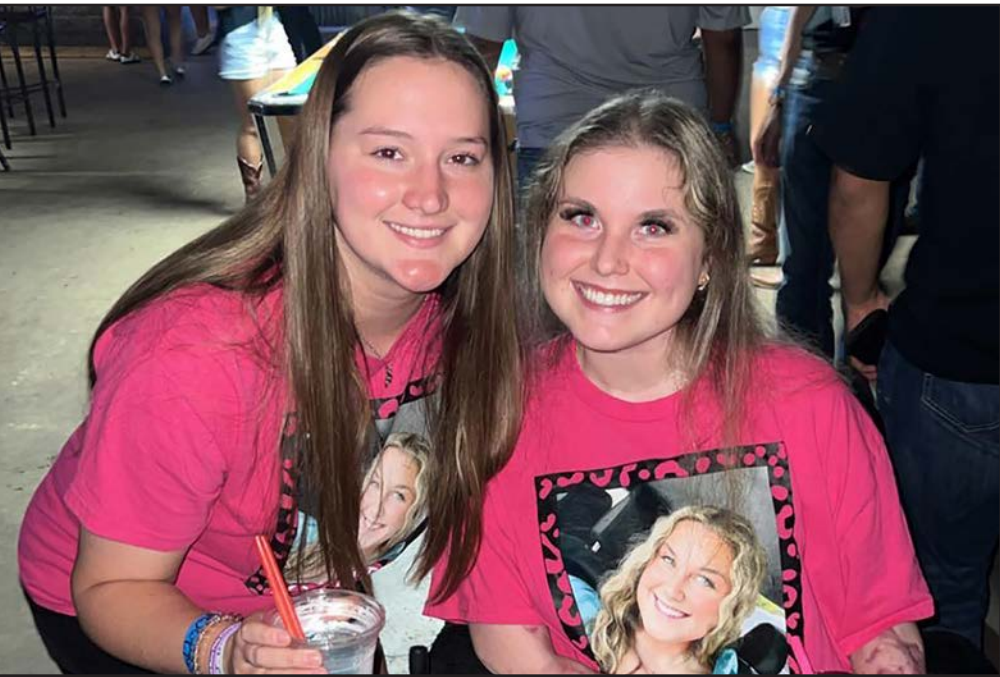




Reyling earned many volleyball accolades in high school.



Hannah helped two Saint Jo teams make it to the regional tournament, including one to the regional final in 2018.



Hannah's roommate and best friend Audrey Kubis at Tarelton State University drove her to the emergency room back on Feb. 28, which ended up saving her life.



Reyling decided to rush sorority Phi Mu in 2023 and ended up making a lot more friends and connections with people before she got sick.

# Hannah

Continued From Page 1B

papers,” Hannah recalls. “I was really thirsty and they wouldn’t give me water, so I just fell asleep. I woke up in Parkland hospital 12 days later.”

Her mother explained during those lost 12 days, Hannah was diagnosed with bacterial meningococcal meningitis and had purpura lesions that caused blisters on her arms and legs that went as deep as the bone. The infection affects the brain and spinal cord. While in the coma she was transferred to Harris Methodist in Fort Worth. Her body went into sepsis which turned her feet and fingers black.

Her family immediately came to the hospital when things took a turn. They were unaware their lives were about to change.

“She had to be ventilated on day two,” Paulette said. “They told us right away in the emergency room in Harris they feared for her life.”

The family never lost faith even when things looked dire 11 days later and there was little hope coming from the doctors.

“They came in and told us she probably wasn’t going to make it,” Paulette said. “She was still on a vent and not waking up.

They were taking her off all medication to try and get her to wake up. They brought in the chaplain and everything so it was pretty emotional at that point for us that she probably wasn’t going to wake up. They told us she most likely would have brain damage if she did wake up because of the meningitis.”

The next day the family’s prayers were answered.

“She just, woke up,” Paulette said. “She wanted the tube out. She knew what we were saying, knew who we were. I mean it was just miraculous. We couldn’t believe it. It was like she was pulling a joke on the doctor, going no I’m not going to die.”

Despite her mental capacity being fine, her body was not. On top of the rough shape her hands and feet were in, her kidneys were in bad shape and she had to be put on dialysis several times.

She also was intubated several times which damaged her vocal cords and affects her speaking voice to this day, sounding as though her voice is hoarse after a day of yelling. Her inability to raise her voice causes her annoyance

when she wants to tell her dog to settle down during the interview. She has been told the damage is not permanent and says it is much better than it was months ago.

Hannah was transferred to Parkland Hospital in Dallas since her mom said the previous hospital had not expected her to live and was not equipped to deal with the aftermath of her now black limbs.

Parkland has a burn unit and even though Hannah had not been burned, her limbs were not in good shape due to the sepsis. Eventually by the end of end of March, the difficult decision to amputate both legs, her left hand and most of her right fingers was made.

“My phantom pain was really bad in my legs,” Hannah said. “I would have sensations of my toes being crossed over

one another. Not necessarily painful, but just annoying, to feel that and not be able to fix it. A pulling in my Achilles, sharp pains in my legs. It really just was super weird.”

She got to save her left knee thanks to many different things, including leech therapy.

Hannah also got to keep her right thumb, which she appreciates being right handed so she can still work and be addicted to her phone like a normal college age person. She excitedly used it to show me pictures of some of the things she described during the interview, including the leeches.

In all the total amount of surgeries, including all of the skin grafts, amounts to six. Her nurses and doctors got to know her so well, they threw her a surprise birthday party since she would be



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Hannah

Continued From 1B

As word spread on social media, the support for Hannah was eventually shown within the community by a dark pink #HannahStrong shirt being sold during the spring.

“We were just blown away by people from Saint Jo, Muenster, Nocona just the surrounding communities,” Paulette said. “It was disbelief they were all coming together to help Hannah. Which, everybody knew Hannah, but we were so blessed with the surrounding areas helping us out.”

“We just want to make sure it gets out there how much we appreciate all the support,” Chris said. “Just everyone that helped us get through it.”

“It makes me really happy,” Hannah said. “Just seeing people I know of but I’ve never talked to reaching out saying they’re proud of me and how strong I am. All of the cards I got in the hospital, I read them all. Just seeing how much support I have, not being able to see it, but know that they’re there meant a lot.”

Her sorority family also pitched in, getting connections for a touch-screen computer she can use as well as raising money, like her friend Audrey organizing a volleyball tournament in her honor.

New life

Despite the radical shift in her life, Hannah is determined to not let this change her too much. Instead of being sad about it, she likes to cope through humor, even if it strikes as bit too morbid for her mom at times.

“With this you have to have a sense of humor about it or its just really going to take a toll on you,” Hannah said. “I joke about it. I want people to joke about it. It’s not going to hurt my feelings, I just want people to be comfortable with me.”

She calls the residual limb of her left hand her lucky fin, a reference to a character from “Finding Nemo.”

“We know the situation is not funny, but for her to just be quirky like herself like she’s always been, that’s what we want for her,” Paulette said.

For those who have not seen Hannah since the incident, her appearance can be shocking. The situation has altered her body forever. She carries a blanket everywhere she goes not just for comfort, but because she knows it makes some people uncomfortable to see her

missing limbs and the visible signs of her numerous skin grafts. She chooses to look at it as a positive since the blanket feels nice.

One thing that helps is Hannah’s megawatt smile and upbeat personality. Over the months as her mom snapped pictures of her throughout the process, she almost never failed to flash a genuine smile no matter what she was going through.

Even as she shares her story, she only tears up when she thinks about what her family went through and relating it to the Stone family from Nocona, who lost their daughter Laci in 2022 in a car crash. Hannah was friends with Laci growing up, having played with her on many youth teams.

Hannah has the determined goal to get back to a life of independence she had in college. The next step is finding and acquiring both prosthetic legs, a prosthetic hand and maybe some prosthetic fingers while learning to get around with a walker instead of the electric wheelchair she has now. That requires an occupational therapist working with her to get her body stronger after being bedridden and the new demands.

Hannah has hope after meeting other amputees, including one named Steve who also is a double amputee at the knees and wrists. She is confident she will one day play volleyball again.

“It’s cool to see how they just do things and it’s learning ways to do it differently,” Hannah said. “Just meeting people going through it, they seem very optimistic and are very happy people even though something really bad happened to them.”

Despite everything, Hannah has seen some positives come out of the situation. Her brush with death made her reconsider some of her relationships with people.

“I really don’t want any bad blood with anyone,” Reyling said. “I just want to go through life just being happy and not having any ill intentions towards anyone. So I’ve reconnected with some people since after this. Life is short and there’s no time to have ill blood towards anyone.”

Hannah also had time to reconsider her career choice. While she was going to power through and keep with her major in nutrition after spending the last two and half



Since Hannah was getting released only a couple of days before her birthday, the staff at Parkland Hospital in Dallas threw her a surprise 22nd birthday party.



Hannah’s parents Paulette and Chris Reyling spent 11 days with her in a coma before she woke up on day 12.



Hannah poses with Will Presson, a fellow amputee who invited her friends and family to a Texas Rangers game.



Reyling is going through the process of getting fitted for and training to use her prosthetics.



Hannah poses with her sister Ashley and mom Paulette as the Reyling girls celebrate all of their new normals.

years pursuing it, she is planning to pivot towards a career as an occupational therapist. She is taking classes online this fall through Tarleton and plans to go back in person when she is able, aiming for the fall semester of 2025.

“Whatever goal she sets for herself, Chris and I will definitely make

sure she hits that goal,” Paulette said. “We don’t want this to impact her life for the rest of her life. We want her to overcome this and do whatever she wants to do.”

This fall has been eventful for Hannah to get back out in the world. She got to go watch her favorite college volleyball team, Nebraska, play in

person when it played Southern Methodist University in early September. She was able to meet both teams and take pictures with them.

Later that same week, a fellow amputee she met named Will Presson invited Hannah, her family and friends to a Texas Rangers game where he had a suite. Hannah cred-

its Will with changing her mindset about her future with prosthetics.

“I think every day’s different just with the grieving process,” Hannah said. “I’m just glad to be alive now. Of course it’s easy to sit back and wonder why this would happen to me. But I’m just to glad to be here with what I have left.”

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