

Update on Jessie Arbogast:

From Sacred Heart Health System: *"Jessie's family says he continues to make slow progress in his rehabilitation from a brain injury and other injuries suffered in the shark attack. He continues to undergo physical therapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy. He is not able to talk, but his family believes he understands much of what they say to him."*

From the Pensacola News Journal: *"Jessie Arbogast's eyes and movements are full of meaning. He chuckles at jokes, hollers in greeting and sometimes tugs - mischievously - at his sister's hair. But even with the strength and resilience of youth, and 1 years of expert medical attention and unwavering family devotion, the 10-year-old is nowhere near the happy, agile youngster mauled by a shark in July 2001 at Pensacola Beach."*

Our son Ryan was the same age when he suffered the same time of brain injury. From personal experience, it can be quite a rough go, so why not consider a donation?:

The Jessie David Arbogast Medical Fund
Account number: 012428229
c/o Hancock Bank
P.O. Drawer 609
Ocean Springs, MS 39566

And while you're at it, why not pass on this message to others? Thanks!

UPDATE: From the Associated Press in 2004:

But today, the child is defying the odds and "growing like a weed." However, the 11-year-old is still in a wheelchair and lacks the ability to communicate. "Jessie is speaking clearer words but no sentences," said his aunt, Diana Flosenzier of Hattiesburg.

Jessie's parents, David and Claire Arbogast, did not wish to be interviewed about the shark attack and challenging recovery efforts of the past three years. "At this point, they are seeking medical direction about future treatment and therapy," said Flosenzier. "They are also struggling to get Jessie a larger wheel chair. He has outgrown his chair."

David Arbogast gave up his job as a tile setter three years ago and became Jessie's full-time caregiver. "Jessie has grown so much that David is the only one who can handle the lifting," explained Flosenzier. "Jessie is eating well and growing like a weed."

He now eats the same meals as the rest of the family (two brothers and a sister). "Some meats are run through a processor but he is not on a tube any more," his aunt said. "One new activity provides Jessie some opportunity to maneuver," she said. "David places him on a blown-up mattress. Although he can't sit up on his own, he can roll over and crawl on the air mattress. That's good to get him out of a limited position."

He interacts with his brothers and sisters with a smile and a laugh. Family members are still hopeful of some reasonable recovery and feel his reception is OK but vocal expression is difficult.

UPDATE JUNE 27, 2009: From the *Pensacola News-Journal*:



Jessie Arbogast 8 Years Later

OCEAN SPRINGS, Miss. - Jessie Arbogast has come a long way in the eight years since a shark attack at Gulf Islands National Seashore, just west of Pensacola Beach, left him bedridden with a feeding tube.

At 16, Jessie wakes up almost each morning with a smile and interest in what's going on around him, said his mother, Claire Arbogast, his constant companion.

He's got a mustache and lively blue eyes. He sits up in his wheelchair.

He's is in his second year of high school, going almost a full day in special education classes with his mother by his side. He also enjoys boat shows, cars and jets, especially the Blue Angels. He's partial to blondes on TV. And he can't get enough of superheroes like X-Men and Spider-Man.

"He takes it all in," Claire said. "Our biggest challenge now is how to help him get it out."

Jessie can't speak because of brain damage from major blood loss. He can't walk, and he can't make his arms do what he wants them to. The scars haven't gone away, either.

He has bite marks - imprints of the shark's teeth. A huge portion of his right thigh is missing. His right arm is scarred between his elbow and shoulder where it was reattached.

Claire recently talked for the first time about what it has been like since the July 6, 2001, attack thrust her family into the national spotlight. She and her husband, David, have two other sons and a daughter, and there's also a large extended family.

Now, after years of guarding the family's privacy, she thinks it's time to let the world see Jessie.

"We do want people to know how he's doing, because people have been wonderful," she said.

After the attack, Jessie got loads of mail.

"We would get mail addressed to 'The Mississippi boy who got bit by a shark,' and the post office knew where to deliver it," his mother said. "I don't think it was just curiosity. I think they cared."

After the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, Jessie's story faded from the limelight. The Arbogasts', though, were just beginning a long, slow recovery with Jessie.

Sometimes it seems like the attack happened just yesterday, Claire said.

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http://www.tommcmahon.net/2003/07/update_on_jessi_1.html