



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Stu Keiller

772-492-3243

[stu.keiller@ysfirc.org](mailto:stu.keiller@ysfirc.org)

### **Shelby's Heartwarming Story of Recovery**

Shelby's is a story of triumph over tragedy, with sailing playing an important role in her recovery. Shelby was a normal teenager with an independent streak when her life changed in an instant in December 2012. While driving her truck on a Michigan road, she suffered an aneurysm, crashed into a tree, and suffered a second brain bleed. Doctors gave her almost zero chance of survival and asked her parents to sign an organ donor form. There was no brain activity. Shelby was left a total paraplegic and non-verbal.

Shelby's mother, Lori, refused to give up telling doctors that "Shelby is a fighter". Shelby had fought for survival as a tiny, premature baby. After spending three months in the hospital, Shelby returned home to a loving mother who nursed and nurtured her into a happy teenager living a full life.

Facing another fight for survival, Lori and Shelby's stepfather, Jerry, flipped their lives upside down and became full-time caregivers. Lori finished her nursing degree and became Shelby's primary caregiver. With the help of insurance and the state of Michigan, Jerry gave up his career and became the second member of a mother/father team that provides Shelby with 24/7 at-home care.

Fast-forward to the summer of 2022, with the family having been in Vero Beach for six years, and Shelby receiving outpatient care and simulative programming at The Arc. YSF had distributed a small brochure to The Arc advertising its nascent adaptive sailing program for members of the special needs community. Shelby, Lori, and Jerry showed up at YSF one day and began a sailing voyage of renewal. As Lori says, "This has opened her world up. This goes so far beyond sailing. I can't believe it."

Sailing specially designed boats with a powered joystick rudder and sail control, Shelby was able to regain the independence and freedom she had driving her truck on that fateful day ten years prior.



### Shelby and Volunteer Greg Gerber on her first Sail, June 14, 2022

Don Little, YSF's volunteer Director of Adaptive Sailing, reinforces the profound impact Shelby has had on all who work with her. "Shelby steals your heart with her infectious personality and brilliant smile. Her determination and optimism despite the unfathomable handicaps she endures inspire us all. Caregivers like Lori and Jerry are our heroes. Their devotion to Shelby's well-being is courageous and the ultimate self-sacrifice."

Shelby's love of life and people knows no bounds. At the interview for this story, Shelby suddenly pointed to the author's neck with a frown and questioning look in her eyes. She had noticed a recent minor dermatology procedure and was concerned for my well-being. Shelby has limited physical capacity, but her heart and soul come shining through to inspire one to do better and do more.



Shelby is all Smiles at YSF with Jerry and Lori

Youth Sailing Foundation (YSF) of Indian River County, Inc. is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit that eliminates cultural and financial barriers to sailing. YSF was founded in 2009 to use sailing as a medium to help children achieve their full potential. We operate under the banner "YSF Community Sailing" to reflect that we now serve the entire community. We make it easy and affordable for children, adults, and families to enjoy the thrill of sailing. For more information or to make a tax-deductible donation, please visit: [www.ysfirc.org](http://www.ysfirc.org) Contact: Email [info@ysfirc.org](mailto:info@ysfirc.org) Phone 772 492-3243

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