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We Carry Each Other**Fighting for David: A Mom's Commitment Brings her Son Back from a Brain Injury**

By Mary Beth Sammons

It's a universal longing. Every mom wants to hear others speak positively about her child. "She's beautiful." "He's adorable." Star student. Athletic. Funny. Sensitive. Charming. These are the words we want to hear.

"Vegetable," as in "he will be a vegetable and in a permanent vegetative state his whole life," are words that knocked Leone Nunley to the ground.

But not for long.

This Yakima, Washington mom of five sons rose from the mat with a fighting spirit to do everything she could for her then 21-year-old son David when she got the call from the hospital. David had suffered permanent brain injury after he was thrown 39 feet in mid air and then skidded 20 feet more on the highway following a motorcycle accident, that was not his fault. His helmet was completely cracked and his face guard was in shreds.

"If he hadn't been wearing a helmet, he wouldn't have a face," says Leone.

"They had to remove a significant part of his brain to save his life." David lost a significant oxygen at the accident scene.

Suddenly, the son who had just graduated from Yakima Community College with honors and was a junior at Washington State University, was being pronounced helpless by rehabilitation specialists who for the most part offered no hope or care.

"People were always telling me what an extraordinary child David was, he lived so fully," said Leone. "We were devastated."

She refused to give up hope and the family set up their own rehab center in their garage, moving David home and caring for him 24/7. David was in diapers and almost completely paralyzed, except for his left arm. He was mute and ate with a stomach tube. Like an infant, he had to learn everything again.

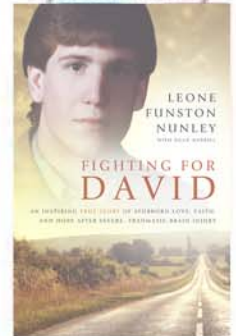
"When people say to you to put your child in a nursing home and get on with your life, they don't get that you child IS your life," says Leone. "You don't get on with your life unless you do everything you can to help your child."

Through years of physical therapy, David has conquered many barriers; eager and sweet-natured, he communicates through hand signals and words and by loudly vocalizing his approval when pleased - and that's almost all the time.

Today, David, 39, lives in his own duplex with a full-time caregiver, showers, dresses and feeds himself breakfast. He walks three miles a day with his mom, and is taking new physical and mental strides each day. His signature gestures are a beaming smile, a quick squeal and a thumbs-up motion. And he remembers everyone in the family clan.

Every time he sees his mom, he tells her: "I love you." And with others, he says "we are friends forever."

His mom has written a book, "Fighting for David," Tyndale House Publishers. Leone has designated that the

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