

Paralyzed student gets new home

Area builders are donating time and materials to the family of Paul Salter

July 10, 2000 - Herald-Tribune - Keramet A. Reiter

Construction is under way on a wheelchair-accessible, specially designed home for **Paul Salter**, the Sarasota Middle School student who was paralyzed after he was tackled during a football practice last fall.

The **Salters'** old home has been razed, and the family is living in a nearby rental home until Sarasota-area builders, who are donating their time and materials, complete the new house. **Paul's** father, Glenn, said the family was simply concentrating on "doing what you do every day," and having **Paul** home has been "a lot smoother than I really thought it was going to be."

After seven months in the hospital, **Paul** was released from HealthSouth Rehabilitative Center on May 20, one day before his 14th birthday. He is paralyzed below the shoulders. Though **Paul** has faced some challenges at home with new caregivers and suppliers, his spirits are good, according to his HealthSouth therapist, Shelley Rayburn.

"His favorite thing to do is play poker. Last I heard, one of his nurses owed him \$20,000," Rayburn said. Despite frustrations with **Paul's** electric wheelchair breaking down repeatedly, his father said, "It's pretty much falling into a routine."

Paul now undergoes therapy five hours a day, five days a week, in addition to the homebound education that will allow him to attend Riverview High School in the fall. The School Board plans to hire a nurse to go to school with him, with the nurse taking notes.

Rayburn said **Paul** still needs to use a ventilator at night to help him breathe. "Now that he doesn't have the ventilator on, it enables him to have a pretty much normal tone of voice. And he uses it quite well, especially if you do something that displeases him," Rayburn said.

In addition, a computer recently donated to the family allows **Paul** to type through dictation, and Rayburn said the "next thing we've got to do is find some computer games."

Rayburn said she is concentrating on occupational therapy activities, including using a mouth stick to turn pages and pliers that will eventually help him write, all of which will "give him independence."

Meanwhile, **Paul's** family is eagerly awaiting the construction of their new home, which will allow them all more independence and make caring for **Paul** easier.

Glenn **Salter** himself will install the plumbing in the new house. John King of Rampart Homes, who is managing the construction project, was unavailable for comment. Polly Costa of the Home Builders Association of Sarasota County said the builders are seeking "fill dirt, lots of fill dirt," in addition to monetary contributions.

Costa said, "I know we've gotten a whole lot of contributions from membership and public at large, cash, material, labor donations." All contributions will be recognized at the ribbon-cutting ceremony when the house is completed and the keys turned over to **Paul** and his family later this year.

All content © 2000 Herald-Tribune Corp. and may not be republished without permission.