

## Noelle McNeil: "I Know Heaven Exists"

One of Noelle McNeil's favorite things to quote is the Law of Conservation of Energy, which states that "energy cannot be created or destroyed." For Noelle, this statement rings true in more ways than one.

Noelle, a 25-year-old Little Silver resident, was living quite the life in her second semester at James Madison University. Young, beautiful, popular, and full of energy, she had tons of friends and all the potential in the world.

One day she discovered how life can change in a split second.

A competitive horseback rider, Noelle was thrown from a horse at an equestrian event in August of 2005. She sustained a brain injury and was in a coma for 10 days. After coming through the coma she told her family that she had been to heaven and back.

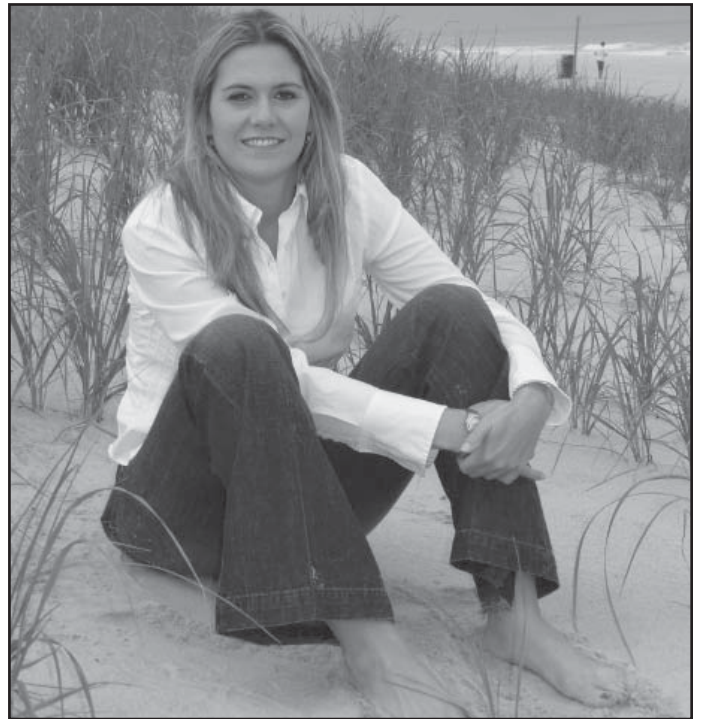
"I hovered at death's door for two weeks," Noelle describes. "I developed a terrible pneumonia that almost killed me. I developed a systemic sepsis infection. My heart race alternately raced and plummeted, and my oxygen saturation rate also dropped precipitously. The monitors crashed and my death was imminent several times, but I survived.

Even though she made it through, the outlook for Noelle's future wasn't good. Doctors said she probably would never walk or function on her own for the remainder of her life.

This began her incredible journey of energy, strength, and perseverance.

Noelle spent more than five months in rehabilitation, and more than eight months in a wheelchair. She had to learn to do everything all over again: walk, talk, eat, speak, etc. "It was the longest eight months of my life," she said.

Her progress was remarkable. She found



the energy within to overcome her devastating injuries and get back on her feet again.

Today Noelle is doing very well. She has trouble with her memory, has had surgery on her right eye, and has difficulty with the use of her right arm. She has gone back to school at Monmouth University and is studying Business and Marketing.

Noelle enjoys sharing her experience with others. She has spoken at her former High School, Red Bank Catholic, and a retirement home in Tinton Falls.

Perhaps her greatest accomplishment since the accident is that she has written a book "Heaven Exists" detailing her story in journal entry form. The book describes her incredible journey in fascinating detail.

If you would like to order Noelle's book you can visit her website at [www.noellemcneil.com](http://www.noellemcneil.com), or contact the Brain Injury Association of New Jersey to borrow it from our browse and borrow library.