

SHARING A STORY OF HOPE

Ariella Green

(From: *Rivier Today*, Spring 2008)

When assistant soccer coach Kori Feener learned about a former classmate's accident, she decided to see how she could help.

Kori Feener has always had an affinity for images. "When I was younger, my mom used to have to pull me away from the TV," says Feener with a laugh. "I would just stare at the TV with my mouth open."

Feener's affinity turned into a passion that led to a bachelor's degree in film and media arts in 2006 from the University of Tampa. She is a dedicated filmmaker with a desire to create movies start to finish. This summer, Feener created her first full-length documentary, "Where There is a Will," which chronicles the journey of a high school classmate and his family after a traumatic brain injury.



Patrick and his mother, Marianne, at Crotched Mountain.

Patrick Killilea was 22 years old in March 2006 when he fell 30 feet off an escalator and landed on his head. Feener heard about the accident while she was at college. Although she didn't know Patrick well in high school, she remembered him as an amazing soccer player, a sport that Feener also played. His injury stuck with her. "Knowing him as an athlete, and seeing him now, he can't talk, can't walk," she says.

The Killileas' insurance wouldn't cover the rehabilitation that Patrick desperately needed because he wasn't

making enough progress. The family's funds were set to run out in the fall of 2007, leaving them no way to pay for his care at Crotched Mountain in Greenfield, NH, which costs \$18,000 per month. Insurance companies felt that a nursing home was a reasonable place for Patrick. His family didn't agree, and neither did Feener. She contacted Patrick's mother to see if she could help.

"The best way to help people is doing something you're good at."

—Kori Feener

"The best way to help people is doing something you're good at," says Feener. For her, that meant movies. She met with the family in June, and began filming a documentary to help raise funds. "Usually a documentary takes a long time, with filming and editing," said Feener. "I needed to work fast." She used up all of her vacation time and sick days to film the documentary, which she created completely on her own.

Her time with the Killileas and her visits to Crotched Mountain were a "humbling experience." Feener saw how far Patrick had come, and how hard he was working, despite how far he still had to go.

“The fact that he even survived the fall, it’s a credit to his family,” she says. “You just thank whatever you believe in that that hasn’t happened to you.”



Feener, at right, prepares to film Marianne and Patrick Killilea at their home in Middleton, Mass.

The completed documentary premiered at a fundraiser on October 13, 2007. Through interviews with family, friends and medical personnel, it gives an intimate view of what Patrick and his family have gone through, and the medical and bureaucratic struggles they have faced. It highlights the importance of community, the strength of family and the power of hope.

Patrick has a long road ahead of him, and will never be the same as he was before the accident. He will always need help, and will never be able to live alone. But “Where There is a Will” highlights some of the challenges he’s faced and the progress he’s made, and as Feener said, “If people see the film and talk about it and it raises awareness, that would be a good thing.” ■

Note: The film’s premiere raised over \$15,000 for the Killilea family with over 300 people in attendance. Feener is working to schedule additional showings.