

Peoria, Illinois, August 7, 2026

4-Year-Old's Remarkable Road to Recovery

For Cory McCallister and Alyssa Urrutia, watching their 4-year-old son gain independence on a bicycle quickly turned into every parent's worst nightmare.

In May 2026, Cal was riding his bicycle at his grandmother's home in Rock Falls when he lost control on a steep hill and entered the roadway. He was struck by a vehicle traveling approximately 50 mph.

Cal suffered a severe traumatic brain injury with bleeding and swelling in his brain. Emergency responders quickly arrived, and an OSF Life Flight helicopter transported him to OSF HealthCare Children's Hospital of Illinois in Peoria.

"God is real," Cory says. "Two EMTs hit him, so they knew what to do and we also found out the helicopter from Peoria was only two minutes from us, so they got him there. Once he got here, we had a great team to help him out."

The quick transport allowed Cal to receive care at OSF HealthCare Children's Hospital of Illinois, the region's only Level I Pediatric Trauma Center.

The right care at the right time

When Cal arrived at OSF Children's Hospital, he was in critical condition and required immediate care from multiple pediatric specialists, including trauma, neurosurgery and critical care teams.

Dr. Chegondi says getting Cal to the right facility at the right time was a key factor in his outcome.

"Time is of the essence, especially with dealing with very sick patients," Dr. Chegondi says. "One of the key factors in this child's positive outcome was getting early to the right facility at the right time."

A fight for recovery

Cal spent several weeks in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit, where his care team worked to control swelling and pressure inside his brain.

He underwent three craniectomies, surgeries that temporarily remove part of the skull to relieve pressure on the brain, along with additional procedures to monitor and manage his condition. He also required breathing support before he was able to breathe on his own again.

Dr. Chegondi says there were moments when Cal's future was uncertain.

"When I look back, I was so concerned at one point," Dr. Chegondi says. "We couldn't control the pressure in his brain. We were using all kinds of neurosurgical procedures."

After learning Cal had been struck by a vehicle, Cory rushed to the hospital. The drive felt endless.

"I was 10 or 15 minutes away," Cory says. "All I could say was no. I think I said it 500 times on the way there."

For Cory and Alyssa, the uncertainty was overwhelming. The family was told Cal might need to relearn basic skills, including walking, talking and eating.

A recovery called a miracle

But Cal continued to make progress beyond expectations.

His family watched as he began remembering them, his favorite toys and the things that made him who he is.

"The progress he has made is unreal in the time we have been here," Cory says. "The severity of his injuries, he is doing better than we were told and what we expected. He is a miracle baby."

Dr. Chegondi says Cal's recovery is something he will remember.

"Looking back, I'd say this was a miracle," Dr. Chegondi says. "It is a testament of our impact as a team."

Continuing his journey

After several weeks at OSF HealthCare Children's Hospital of Illinois, Cal was discharged to continue his recovery through rehabilitation services.

Throughout his hospitalization, the McCallister family found support from the OSF care team and Ronald McDonald House Charities of Central Illinois, which provided a place for the family to rest and connect with others going through similar experiences.

"They genuinely care about the kids here," Cory says. "They want the best for him as much as we do."

Cal's recovery journey continues, but his family remains grateful for every milestone and for the team that helped give him the opportunity to heal. For the McCallister family, a devastating bicycle accident became a story of faith, expert pediatric care and a miracle recovery.