



Jacob Danwood Rogers

August 17, 2005 - May 27, 2026

Paralyzed from the neck down, Jake Rogers told his mother of a vision: there was a version of him that was still physically healthy, still studying abroad to become a doctor, still hiking mountains and sailing the seas.

And then he willed it into existence. Relying on his God-given inner strength, he fought back. He stood again. He ran a 5k five months later. Resumed a full course-load at the University of Florida, and once again set out to study abroad.

“It was that acceptance, mental strength and that inner-drive that God gave him, that turned the impossible into possible while he was still here on this earth,” said his mother, Rachel Perrin Rogers.

That same fire and boundary-pushing spirit that paved the way for Jake’s incredible recovery was evident in his plans during his final hours. He died in his sleep shortly before he was to attend a DJ set that began at 3am in Ibiza, Spain. He was 20 years old.

True to his nature, Jake had traveled to Spain as an encore to cap off a European study abroad trip for the University of Florida’s microbiology program.

His friends, new and old, described him as wise beyond his years, the student who taught others to laugh, to be kind, to adventure, to inquire. He had a light and charismatic magnetism.

“Everyone wanted to be around him. He brought people closer. And the way he talked about life and all his stories made me aspire to be him,” Hadlee Fuller, who studied abroad with Jake, wrote. “It was always the little things he did that made everything better.”

In Prague, Jake led a band of students on an adventure away from the bars (getting lost briefly in a tunnel at one point) to sightsee one of its wonders: the Prague Orloj, a medieval astronomical clock attached to the city’s old Town Hall.

Jake didn’t just want to see the tower with his friends. He wanted to snap a picture in front of it because his mother had been there two years before. He was always thinking about his family, whether he was selecting a scarf for his mom in the Silk Museum gift shop in Lyon, France or searching for a gift in Budapest for his beautiful 9-year-old sister, Caroline.

“He always put everyone else before himself and would make sure everyone was safe and okay. He made sure I never walked alone from the bars and that I was always smiling,” Haven Wilson, another student on the trip, wrote.

Kindness was central to Jake’s identity.

When he turned 7, he made sure to invite a boy from his Cub Scouts troop to his birthday party. He befriended the boy after he noticed him being left out. The boy’s father thanked Jake’s stepdad, Brian Hughes, for including his son.

“That was Jake. That’s what kind of person he was,” Brian said.

Ten years later, when his mother suffered a bout of depression, Jake hand-

wrote a note to let her know how much he loved her.

“I can’t wait until the moment —when everything feels okay— even if it’s just a moment,” he wrote. “We love you, be open to change because who knows what will come/happen. That is part of the fun of Life, right? Love you always & forever.”

Before the ink fully faded, Rachel photographed the note and transcribed it. She sent it back to Jake a month ago.

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In true Florida Man fashion, Jake’s birth was menaced by a hurricane during the active 2005 storm season. Hospitals were rapidly filling up along the Gulf Coast. But Jake wanted to be born early. So he was.

Jake never crawled, which was of concern, until at 10 months old, he stood up. By the time he was 11 months old, he was running full-force. Sometimes into the arms of those who loved him - albeit far more likely to be running straight towards adventure or danger, depending upon your vantage point.

Over the years his zest for living led him to see much of America. Always planning his next journey, some highlights over the years included the Caribbean, Virgin Islands, London, Fiji, Australia, New Zealand, France, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Hungary, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and Spain. As he rode horses in New Zealand, and slept under the stars in the Outback, he found young love with Chloe Mossman. “When I’m old and gray my grandkids will ask me about my first love and I’ll get to smile and tell them about Jake. I’m so grateful for all the time I got to spend traveling the world with my best friend.”

Jake technically had two stepparents; Jenna and Brian. But in actuality he simply had four parents. Holidays were spent together, because the love for Jake was always bigger than any differences. Through Brian and Jenna's work in government and politics, Jake grew up dining with governors, making small talk with senators, and sitting at the desk of the Chief Justice of the Florida Supreme Court on take your child to work day.

His dry wit, sarcasm and humor developed early on. If ever complimented on his well-mannered demeanor he was quick to give credit where credit was due: "Thank you, I attended a very good preschool." (It was true. Stacey Duggar at Trinity Methodist, well done).

When he was 3, Granpa Jim taught him to fish at the family home on Keuka Lake, an activity he loved to enjoy as well with his Uncle Zach Childs in the years to come. Many a magical summer was spent in upstate New York with the Rogers clan and out on the Gulf with Uncle Zach and Aunt Shell in Florida.

A joyful, bright and adventurous child, schoolwork came easy. His love of reading was strong. Being read to sleep each night, adrift in the magical worlds created by Roald Dahl, J.K. Rowling, and Rick Riordan sparked a wanderlust for this world, and what lies beyond it. He spent summers at Camp Carolina in Brevard, and learned much more about friendship, camaraderie, archery, surfing, skiing, and of course, starting (camp)fires.

When he turned 10, his beloved stepmother, Jenna, was pregnant with Caroline and Jake made sure to talk to her belly so she would know his voice once she was born. Only Jake could elicit this guttural laugh from Caroline. He read to her and helped her with homework. He played silly games with her as only a loving big brother could.

"If Jake was near, it was always his hand Caroline wanted to hold, his seat

she wanted to be next to, his help she wanted. She would always choose him,” Jenna said.

Jenna and Rachel’s husband, Brian, both fell in love with not just their future spouses, but with a darling little boy. They made the choice to raise someone else’s child. The family was richer and stronger for it.

From his dad, Steve, Jake inherited his curious nature and a high tolerance for pain that helped him excel at running, as well as his love for golf and Jeopardy. Brian gave Jake his love for rollercoasters, motorcycles, Star Wars, and travel.

When Jake was 14, the pandemic took hold. After being stuck for a week at home he begged for purpose (and time away from his parents). He was hired by Publix, where he worked until after high school graduation. At the sage advice of family friend Wilton Simpson, he invested all his earnings and savings in Publix stock.

When he was 16 and taking his motorcycle endorsement class at Harley Davidson, he witnessed the car next to his run a red light and seriously injure a fellow rider on Thomasville Road. He assisted the critically injured man until EMS arrived, came home, and collapsed into his mother’s arms at the horror of the scene. The next morning, he returned to class, passed with flying colors, and owned a motorcycle until the end (a Harley, and a Suzuki, for the curious).

That same year, he became a certified lifeguard. During a gathering of teenagers at a local (no trespassing allowed) spring, another young man fell and was unable to move. Jake’s training overrode his fear of repercussions and against the wishes of others, he called for help and as a result, the back and spine health of the injured teen was restored.

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One of the last photos of Jake was snapped in the mountains of Chamonix, France. What's the point of being the 1% of those with quadriplegia who can move freely if you can't hike the Alps?

Just 10 months before, no one (except for Jake) imagined he would be there.

On July 1, on a summer trip with a friend in Tokyo, Japan, Jake was doing acrobatic flips (of course he was) and landed badly, resulting in a serious C5 spinal cord injury. He was paralyzed and rushed to the hospital. He underwent eight hours of emergency surgery under the care of Dr. Megumi Yazaki. Six days later he was flown on Miley Cyrus's old jet to one of the top spinal cord rehabilitation centers in the U.S., the Shepherd Center in Atlanta. A place full of love, healing and hope.

Jake missed his UF study abroad in summer 2025 - he was to be shadowing at Public Hospital 47 in Thailand. And then he could not be in person for the fall semester of school. He had no time to study microbiology. He needed to learn how to walk again.

When he returned to school, he was determined to make up for lost time, said Thomas Fitzpatrick, his roommate and fraternity brother from Theta Chi.

"Whenever I woke up, he was in his room grinding. He treated school like a 9-to-5. He would lock in all day long," Fitzpatrick said. "His room would always have so much traffic in it. People would always be in and out to hang out. He always had his door open. It wasn't just his kindness. It was his leadership. He would get to know anyone in the fraternity and anyone we would bring around. No matter who it was. He was always there for them."

While recuperating in Atlanta, Jake took an interest in the Japanese practice of kintsugi, the art of repairing cracked pottery with gold, silver and platinum lacquer and glue. His aunt, Angela, sent him his own kintsugi piece, as “a reminder that healing does not hide the cracks, but transforms them into something meaningful and strong.”

On Thanksgiving, five months after his injury, Jake slipped away from home and decided to run in the 5K Turkey Trot in Tallahassee with his friend Josh Robinson. His family thought he'd be walking in the one mile event. Jake ran in the 5K event instead. Strenuous exercise for people with traumatic spinal cord injuries pushes the limits. In high school, during the height of his running career - once ranked the fastest freshman in Florida - his 5k time was under 16 minutes. On Thanksgiving it took him over 30, but it was the proudest he'd ever been of a race.

Spinal cord injuries are complex. Every day activities and minor injuries can result in autonomic dysreflexia, a life threatening condition.

But Jake refused to live in fear, he told his dear friend Natalie Torres.

“He mentioned that he would rather live doing all the activities he enjoyed and loving as much as possible than live with the fear of getting hurt,” Torres wrote. “He taught me to live in the moment as I was someone who previously lived with reservations.”

So he headed abroad the first chance he got.

The day before Jake's death, his mother had a premonition about her son, telling a dear friend in a message that “I can keep his body safe. Or his mind healthy. Those seem to be the choices. His is not a spirit that's easily contained.”

His mind was always sharp and inquisitive. He was as fascinated by virology as he was taken by the Stoics. Jake dog-eared a page of his book, *The Daily Stoic*, that featured a telling quote by Marcus Aurelius: "If you've seen the present, you've seen all things, from time immemorial into all of eternity. For everything that happens is related and the same."

When he was in the hospital, Jake told his mother that he believed in God, in Heaven and in vast possibilities of versions of our souls in multiple universes.

"As he lay in bed, paralyzed, unable to do even the most basic humanly functions on his own, he talked to me about the mysteries of the universe," she said.

"I know that there was a version of his story where he died on the operating table in Japan. Where we never got to say goodbye," she said. "Where we never had these 10 months of learning from his strength and wisdom. And I also believe in and can envision a universe in which he becomes a physician, and gives the gift of healing to so many. He marries a beautiful woman, and they have the most precious, chubby, green-eyed babies. I believe we will feel the joy from those possibilities echo through space and time for rest of our days. Because he showed us how to. Jake gave us enough love and joy in his 20 years to last us many lifetimes."

In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to the Shepherd Center in Jake's memory.

Niki Carney and Jessie Hill of Bevis Funeral Home (www.bevisfh.com or 850-385-2193) are assisting the Rogers family with their arrangements.

Previous Events

Church Open For Prayer

JUN 8. 10:00 AM (ET)

Co-Cathedral of St. Thomas More
900 West Tennessee Street
Tallahassee, FL 32304

The church will open at 10:00 AM for prayer with the Funeral Mass starting at 11:00 AM.

Funeral Mass

JUN 8. 11:00 AM (ET)

Co-Cathedral of St. Thomas More
900 West Tennessee Street
Tallahassee, FL 32304

The family cordially invites you to join them for a reception following the service in the social hall.

Memorial Gathering

JUN 20. 12:00 PM - 3:00 PM (ET)

Charlie Park
801 S Gadsden St
Tallahassee, FL 32301
<https://charlieparkrooftop.com>

More details to follow.

Tribute Wall

NT

“ Jake sent me this photo a while ago with his sister. I saw it immediately: their eyes matched in spark. I am so grateful to have met you, Jake. Generous, kind, and extraordinary you were. I will miss you. Love, Natalie



Natalie Torres - June 08 at 12:18 PM

RH

Thank you dear heart ❤️

Rachel Perrin Rogers Hughes - June 10 at 10:15 PM

JD

“ Jake was my roommate at the University of Florida from 2023 to 2024. In such a short time he made such an impact on so many lives. Jake was a stellar student, on top of his radiant social life. He was kind and inclusive, and always made sure everyone around him felt seen and appreciated. Whether it was a fun night out, a cozy night in with some good cooking, or our shared love of the natural world and deep conversations, Jake made our 5-bedroom apartment unit feel like a found family. He was a great listener, an expert communicator, and always knew how to be professional or charming, depending on what the situation called for. It's heartbreaking to know that he's no longer with us, but his journey was truly inspiring to be even a small part of. The world lost a creative, determined, and brilliant mind when you left. Jake, you were my friend, and there will always be a piece of you that will be carried by those of us who remember you.



Jonah DiLeonardo - June 05 at 10:38 PM

RP

Thank you Jonah. He loved you and the friendship you shared. Please stay in touch, would love to hear about where life takes you.

Rachel PerrinRogers - June 18 at 03:15 AM

MM

“ We cherish our Wonderful conversations with Jake.
An Amazing young man, Jake's spirit of adventure, curiosity, energy, candidness, thoughtfulness, and easy-going nature, were a Joy to experience. This past year Jake has been an Inspiration to us as he faced, and overcame, immense challenges. It has been a Privilege to share a brief moment in time with Jake. Love, Margaret and Blas Mirabal

Margaret Garner Mirabal - June 04 at 05:55 PM

RR

Thank you. He so admired you both.

Rachel Perrin Rogers - June 18 at 03:13 AM

B
BEVIS

“ 2 files added to the album Rogers Memories Album



Bevis Funeral Home - June 04 at 01:53 PM

MA

What an amazing young man!

I learned so much from reading this wonderfully written obituary and all the stories included. I didn't get to see Jake too often as we are the upstate NY family but through the years, had various opportunities to spend a little time together, visiting his home with Steven and Jenna. Watching him be such a wonderful big brother to Caroline and her look up to him like I do my brothers.

Years at Keuka Lake and even some time at Conesus tubing.

When I last saw Jake at his grandparents anniversary celebration I spent time with him as an adult.

I remember I went upstairs to find him hanging out and specifically asked him to come talk to our son Thomas who is also very adventurous and had been to Thailand for 10 months in high school and knowing as travelers their paths would not cross often this was an opportunity. He obliged my request and a fun conversation ensued in the living room.

I danced with him at the reception as he wasn't comfortable dancing I said, no one is, that's why we practice with family. I wanted to have a few memories with him before he left for his journeys, I am so happy and blessed that we did ❤️

May our Lord be with you as you navigate these difficult times ahead and with Jake to hold him in the palm of Jesus's hand.

*You will be forever missed and remembered by so many. A life too short yet fully lived! A gift to all who knew you. 🧡🙏
May your entire family & friends find peace through the tears and love that has no ending.*

He has such an incredible story of adventure to his miraculous recovery after his injury. It's so hard to believe he's gone but he'll never be forgotten!

*~ Aunt Mary Alice, Uncle Tom,
& Tommy May*

Mary Alice - June 07 at 08:10 AM