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Julia Engle recovers in small steps

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JULIA ENGLE'S ROAD TO RECOVERY

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"Julia has shown that she is so resilient, and we're just so proud of her at her quest for life and her resilience and strength ... her inner strength."

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City to refile campaign charges

Debbie Engle

Mother of Julia Engle, 12, severely injured March 15 when a pine tree crashed through their Manoa house

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COURTESY OF RICK FRIED

Julia Engle was flanked by family friend Pete Peterson, left, and father Tom Engle while in the hospital on Sunday.

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by June Watanabe

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Girl shows resilience with slow progress

The 12-year-old is scheduled for surgery on her cheekbone

By Rosemarie Bernardo
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Julia Engle's recovery from a severe head injury continues with small steps that give her family great hope.

The 12-year-old girl, who was hurt in her sleep last month when a large pine tree fell on her family's Manoa home, still has not spoken, but has displayed a fighting spirit, her mother, Debbie, said yesterday.

"Julia has shown that she is so resilient, and we're just so proud of her at her quest for life and her resilience and strength ... her inner strength," she said during a press conference at the office of family attorney Rick Fried.

Julia, a seventh-grader at Punahou School, is scheduled to undergo reconstructive surgery today on her left cheekbone.

On Friday, Julia's neurosurgeon at the Queen's Medical Center used titanium screws to put back a 4-inch piece of her skull that had been removed to reduce the swelling in her brain, according to Fried.

Julia was in a coma from the March 15 accident until early this month. She has been able to take some steps with a walker and help from others.

Her mother said Julia showed other signs of progress last weekend.

"I put (letters) on a magnetic letter board, and I said, 'Julia, here's your name. If mom mixes up the letters, can you spell you name for me?'" Engle said. "She slowly put the J-U-L-I-A in order. That was really exciting," she said with a bright smile on her face.

She is also playing tic-tac-toe and is working on her facial muscles.



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Yes No

Yes No

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CINDY ELLEN RUSSELL / CRUSSELL@STARBULLETIN.COM

Debbie Engle, with attorney Rick Fried, talked yesterday about the progress made by her daughter Julia, 12.

Engle said her 10-year-old daughter, Christina, has been instrumental in getting her sister to smile by making goofy faces. "She said, 'Julia, give us a big smile like this!' Slowly, Julia opened up her cheeks and gave us a smile," Engle said.

Christina will be dancing the hula in her sister's place for the May Day program at Punahou.

Julia's right side is weaker than her left side, but she was able recently to give a shaka sign and a "high five" to loved ones.

Engle noted that her daughter still cannot speak, but said she remains positive and hopeful.

"She definitely has a long way to go, but we're just so pleased that she's alive and that I can see her beautiful brown eyes again and her smile," she said.

The family has not returned to their 2347 Beckwith St. home because they want another large pine tree near the house removed.

Fried said the city has agreed to cut down the healthy pine.

"To remove one tree like this is certainly not inappropriate because of what's happened," Fried said. "This tree is even closer than the one that fell on the house."

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COURTESY OF THE ENGLE FAMILY

Julia Engle, right, is shown with sister Christina in this undated family photo.

Tree experts examined all pine trees on Beckwith Street a couple of weeks after the roughly 75-foot Norfolk Island pine crashed into the Engle home. Seven of 15 trees were recently removed after a tree expert determined they had decay caused by termites.

Fried thanked the city, including Mayor Mufi Hannemann, for agreeing to remove the healthy pine tree. City spokesman Bill Brennan said the pine is expected to be removed by the end of the month and relocated.

Engle thanked the community for its support. She said Julia's room is decorated with many cards, letters and posters from well-wishers from her school and elsewhere.

"We are truly grateful," she said.

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