



A star Lacrosse player at Trinity Preparatory High School, 17 year old John Michael had just signed with Mercer University in Georgia after being awarded an athletic and academic scholarship. The week before Christmas 2015, everything changed for this All-American boy and his family. John Michael suffered a brain stem stroke while sitting at his desk in class.

Over the next three days, Locked-in Syndrome set in. Locked-in syndrome (LIS) is a condition in which a patient is aware but cannot move or communicate verbally due to complete paralysis of nearly all voluntary muscles in the body except for the eyes. John Michael could see and hear his surroundings, but could no longer communicate verbally, move his limbs, or swallow food or liquids without aspirating.

John Michael was transported to the Shepherd Center in Atlanta where his family was told he would likely be dependent on a feeding tube for the remainder of his life. However, being the determined young man that he is, he and his family were not going to let that happen.

John Michael received intense physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech therapy for six months at the rehab center in Atlanta including two weeks of VitalStim Therapy before returning back home to Florida in May 2016. A final swallow study was done on May 20th, 2016 before JM's discharge from Shepherd and he was cleared for pleasure trials with family with intensive training and education. On May 25th, he began working with VitalStim Provider Shannon Vogt, M.A., CCC-SLP who has a private practice - Sunshine Speech Therapy, Inc. With the help of VitalStim Instructor Jodie Corbett, she implemented a treatment plan combining traditional oral motor exercises and VitalStim Therapy. Within 3 months of beginning VitalStim Therapy, John Michael was no longer using the feeding tube! On 9/22/16, John Michael passed yet another swallow study and was cleared for nectar thick liquids and thin liquids presented via teaspoon and cleared for a pureed diet. Surpassing doctor's expectations, John Michael's feeding tube was removed on November 10, 2016 – less than one year after his debilitating brain stem stroke. John Michael is now tolerating thin liquids, drinking small amounts of thin liquids via straw, and tolerating trials of a mechanical soft diet.

Shannon and John Michael continue to work together to improve muscle strength moving toward a regular diet especially bacon.

John Michael continues to improve every day! You can follow his progress and fundraisers to help cover his medical expenses on Facebook at [JohnMichaelStrong24](https://www.facebook.com/JohnMichaelStrong24)

Do you have a VitalStim Therapy story you would like to be featured? We would love to celebrate your success! Please email Juliana at CIAO Seminars – juliana@ciaoseminars.com.