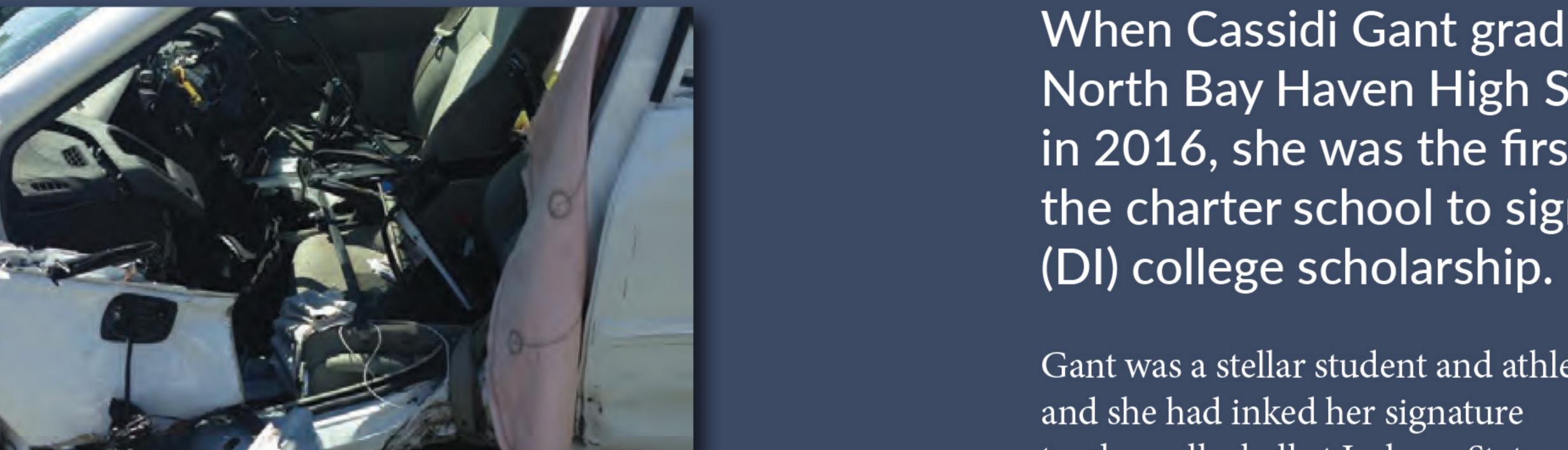
BEGINNINGAGAIN

By: Lee Ann Swartzentruber





and she had inked her signature to play volleyball at Jackson State University (JSU) in Jackson, MS. She was the NBH MVP of the year Student-Athlete and named one of Bay County's Top Five Student-Athletes in 2016.

Three days after high school graduation, she left Florida and traveled to MS to enroll at JSU where she would complete 12 hours that summer towards her Stem

and Mathematics).

She was scheduled to finish the summer program on August 4th and then begin her volleyball season three days later. Cassidi decided to take a quick trip home to visit with her family in FL before her season began.

Major (Studies in Science, Technology, Engineering,

"I was driving through a town called Lucedale, MS when it started raining really bad. I hydroplaned and hit a guardrail. I was ejected from the vehicle, landing in a ditch, but two truck drivers saved me. I spent many hours in surgery to repair my broken femur, then four days in the hospital in Hattiesburg, MS, followed by 12 days in HealthSouth in Panama City," remembers Cassidi.

When she first woke up in the hospital, she began crying at the thought of her volleyball career being over. "It was a hard time for me. My father looked at me and told me I was going to be okay, and from then on, I knew I had to work hard if I ever wanted to play volleyball again. My family motivated me. The feeling of people wanting to see me improve motivated me. I had so many people on my side that wanted to see me succeed," shared Cassidi.

When Cassidi Gant graduated from North Bay Haven High School (NBH) in 2016, she was the first athlete from the charter school to sign a Division I

Gant was a stellar student and athlete,



YOU!" The family also acknowledged gratitude to Dr. Cory Gaiser of Southern Orthopedics, HealthSouth and Therapy One. With their help, now in the spring of 2018, things are looking up for Cassidi, and the talent-

> ed volleyball player is stronger and ready to get back in action on the court. Once again, she's been signed for a college volleyball scholarship.

> She received many letters, cards, and gifts from family,

friends and others - it made her realize she had a mega

knew I had to get back on the court. From the moment

I checked into HealthSouth, they pushed me to keep

going. I had to learn how to do the little things in life

I asked Desiree Gant what it was like as a parent to go

through this experience with her daughter. "I feel like

me from the scariest moments of my life to some of

we are watching a made-for-TV movie which has taken

the happiest moments, and with God's blessings, more

to come," explains Desiree. "To understand the levels

of her accident I must begin with the fact that she was

her way back to the car, bleeding with a broken femur.

trauma. She underwent a six-hour surgery to repair her

femur and add a titanium rod and screws. With her leg

broken, hand broken and face burned, this child battled

with courage and conviction that one day she would

play sports again!! She learned to walk, she learned to

run, and she learned to hit her beloved volleyball again.

DO NOT EVER SAY WHAT GOD CAN'T DO FOR

thrown from the vehicle in a rainstorm and crawled

She had to endure a 53-mile ride in the ambulance

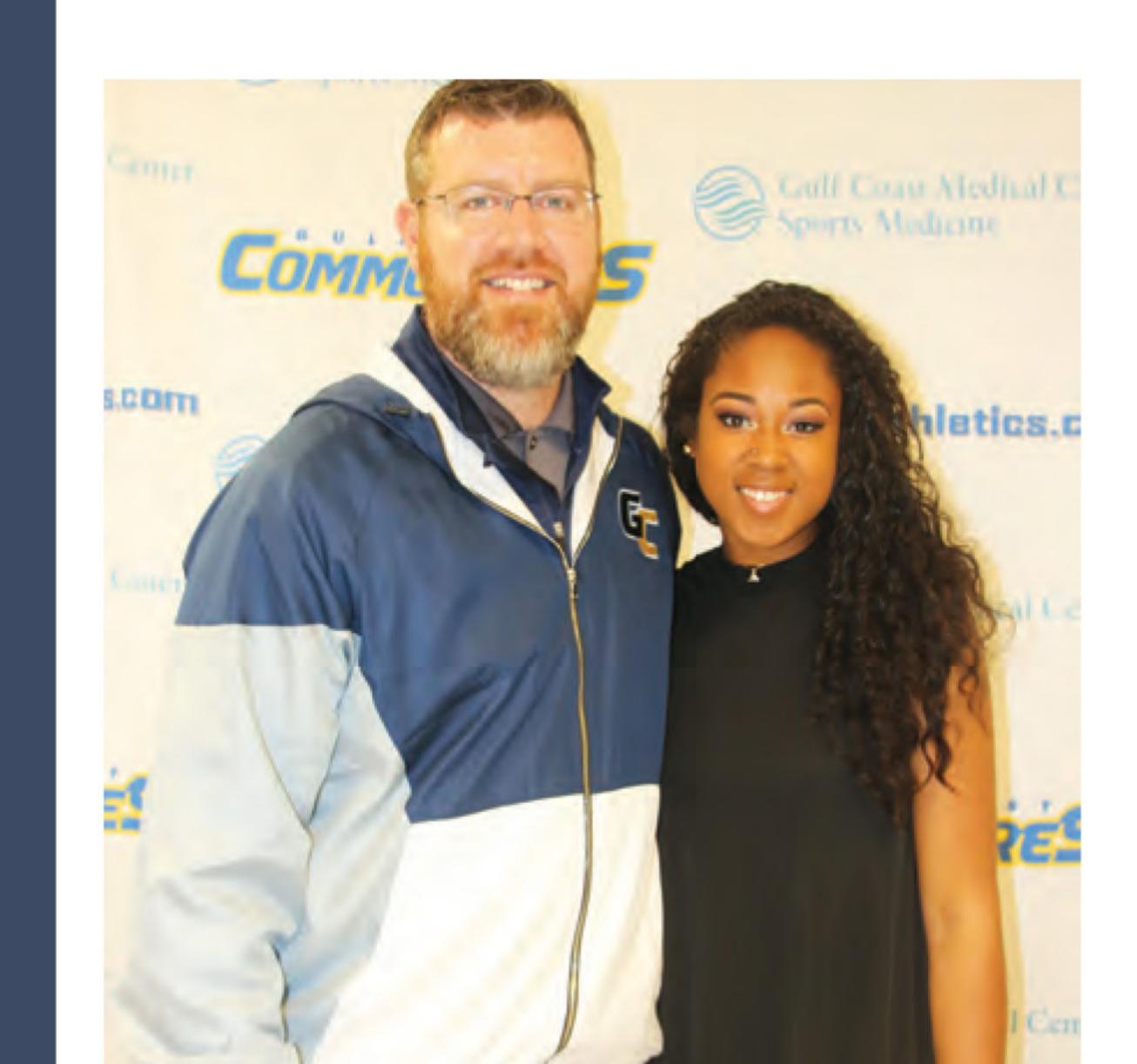
to get to the nearest hospital that could handle her

again. I had to learn how to maneuver around in a

wheelchair with a broken hand too," said Cassidi.

support system in place. "I really felt the love, and I

New Gulf Coast State College Head Women's Volleyball Coach, Scott Allen, recently signed his first athlete,



Cassidi Gant. "He's considered a genius in the volleyball world. I'm so excited to work with him and to learn from his knowledge of the game," said Cassidi.

Allen began his volleyball career in high school and ultimately played with the Air Force Volleyball team from 2001-2004; winning a Gold and Silver Medal in the AF Tournament. In 2003 he was selected to represent the USA in the CISM Military World Games in Catania, Italy. His local coaching career includes being the Head Coach of the Choctaw High School Lady Indians from 2013-2017, where he led them to a state championship and the Elite 8 twice, including coaching two DI and two D2 athletes. Overall, he's coached four AAU All-Americans.

Cassidi Gant is excited about playing for GCSC and for her new beginning. "My teammates have welcomed me in with open arms and I can't wait to contribute to some wins. I'm so thankful to Coach Allen," said Cassidi.

Against all odds, this athlete's miraculous story has a happy ending. She held onto her dreams, worked tirelessly and never gave up. MVP wishes Cassidi, Coach Allen, and the Lady Commodore Volleyball Team the best of luck this season!



