

FEATURED

## Parents devoted to son after pool accident

By Briana Munoz  
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Ronnie Paderes shares a moment with his son Kirk before he begins a two-hour physical therapy session at Casa Colina in Pomona. The faces of Casa Colina employees and patients have been blurred.

Champion photo by Briana Munoz

Kirk Paderes opened his eyes for the first time on May 20 after being in a coma for two weeks. His parents and brother Kevin embraced him as he began to show signs of consciousness.

Kirk, a 25-year-old Chino Hills resident, suffered from brain trauma and cardiac arrest after he almost drowned in a pool while on vacation with his family at Bethel Island in northern California on May 6.

On Tuesday afternoon, his mother, Jennifer Paderes, played Frank Sinatra from her phone as she caressed her son in the courtyard of Casa Colina in Pomona before his physical therapy began.

His father, Ronnie Paderes, recounted the traumatic event as he broke down in tears.

Before Kirk jumped in the pool, he told his uncle that he was going to hold his breath for as long as he could, said his father. "He took a deep breath and jumped in," Mr. Paderes said.

Panic began to set in when Kirk didn't resurface. A friend of Mr. Paderes jumped in the pool and found him at the bottom. "My son was lifeless," Mr. Paderes said. "It was such an awful sight to see."

Kirk was given CPR for 20 minutes. Once paramedics arrived, they used a defibrillator 50 times until he had a slight pulse.

He was taken to Sutter Delta Hospital in Antioch where he flatlined and was declared a code blue. His pulse returned after an hour, his father said.

Neurologists found that Kirk had damage on both sides of his brain and diagnosed him with Myoclonus Status Epilepticus, a condition involving seizures and muscle jerking, with a high mortality rate.

Kirk's parents were told that he would require a ventilator, feeding tube, and dialysis for the rest of his life.

"They asked us if that's the kind of comfort we would like to give our son," Mr. Paderes said. "His mom told the doctors that she gave life to her son and she wasn't going to take it away."

Kirk was a student at UC Berkeley majoring in physics. He left the university in March and returned home to his family who has lived in Chino Hills for 22 years.

He is a graduate of Chino Hills High School where he played on the school's water polo team. Kirk enjoyed yoga, cooking, biking, swimming, and the outdoors.

In June, his diagnosis was modified to Lance Adams Syndrome, a rare neurological condition with a significantly lower mortality rate than Myoclonus Status Epilepticus.

He was then transferred to Kindred Hospital in Rancho Cucamonga. Three weeks into his stay, Kirk's breathing tube was removed.

In August, he was admitted to Casa Colina's Neurology Rehabilitation program where he began physical, speech, and occupational therapy. He was later relocated to the Transitional Living Center at Casa Colina.

Kirk now eats on his own, is off dialysis, smiles, greets people with a peace sign, and is learning to hold a spoon and toothbrush.

Mr. Paderes said Casa Colina has a very compassionate medical team and the family is lucky to live so close to Pomona.

Mr. and Mrs. Paderes spend seven hours a day with their son.

"Each time we visit him, it feels like we haven't seen him in a long time," Mr. Paderes said.

Kirk's mother describes him as a caring, smart, and humble young man. "When he was attending UC Berkeley, he would give his sweaters to the homeless," Mrs. Paderes said. "He told me I don't need them, I have my dorm."

Mr. Paderes said after the family no longer had coverage from their insurance company in late September, the Casa Colina Foundation stepped up to provide financial support to cover Kirk's rehabilitation program but he doesn't know how long the support will last.

Kirk's family has created a GoFundMe which can be found by visiting [gofundme.com](https://gofundme.com) and entering "Fundraiser for Kirk's Recovery" into the search bar or at [gofund.me/548559ff](https://gofund.me/548559ff)

Roscoe's Famous Deli at 14700 Pipeline Ave. in Chino Hills will host an all-day fundraiser for Kirk from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. on Wednesday, Nov. 9.

Ten percent of all sales will go towards Kirk's GoFundMe. Information: Roscoe's at (909) 597-3304.