**Text of Harshada Rajani’s speech at We Win’s Gala**

**on September 18th, 2015 at the TPC Piper Glen Country Club**

My life stopped at 23. It didn't pause, no, it just stopped. My mind was still at 23 years old and counting, but the rest of me was stuck in time, refusing to budge. I was like a broken record, stuck on one beat, one note, one word, as eternity swiftly and unapologetically passed me by. People my age are now getting married, starting families, getting incredible degrees, earning fabulous jobs, and so easily and briskly living their dreams. That could have been me. No, that SHOULD have been me. Before all of this, I had hopes, I had dreams, I had a plan. But you know what they say, if you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans. Now, I have to dig deep down into the depths of my soul, to find a new purpose for me in this life. I have to search in my heart, through layers of frustration and failure, to find some trace of self-worth. I have to re-define in my mind, the words success, love and happiness, and find them somewhere within the ashes of my broken life.

But, I am not alone in this unjust fate, not at all. There are hundreds of young people exactly like me, whose lives were robbed in an instant. We all have to let go of everything we know and want out of life, and fight fiercely to take our lives back...to win. But I'm one of the lucky ones, to have the means, and enough social support to move mountains and access the therapies necessary for my fight. Not everyone is so lucky. I'm on my way to the finish line but I refuse to leave anyone behind. There are so many other young catastrophic injury survivors who have immense potential, but aren't able to fight for a better life, or even dream of a better life due to financial constraints. With my loving cousin Simran's passion and my experience, we started with a dream, a dream to help those who need it most reach that finish line. All of you coming here tonight and showing your overwhelming support, have made this a reality.

Thank you to my friends for always believing in me, to my teachers for always inspiring me, to my doctors and therapists for always pushing me and to my family for always loving me. When I had my stroke and began this challenging new life, instead of taking the easy way out and running away from me, you all have run TOWARDS me. You all have no idea how much that means to me. I appreciate that single fact with every fiber of my being. But thank you most of all to my mom, dad and brother: you all picked me up from the ashes and put me back together again. Now, I just want every young survivor to have as much support and hope as I've had. You have all brought me closer to that dream by graciously coming out tonight! Together, we'll help young people who have had a bit of bad luck, to hope...to dream...to fight...to succeed...to win.

Harshada Rajani

**(** Speech was read on Harshada’s behalf by her close friend Rajul **)**