


# EXPERIENCE the Restorative Power of a **NEW YEAR HIKE**

A man in a blue jacket and grey pants sits in a wheelchair on a wooden boardwalk. He has a grey bag slung over his shoulder and is looking towards the camera. In the background, there is a body of water and a sign that reads "An Oasis for Wetland Birds".

Joon Chang, Jan. 1, 2019

This time last year, Faith Chang wasn't sure what the future would hold for her family. Her husband, Joon, had just returned home in a wheelchair after suffering a debilitating leg injury in a mountain biking accident on Aug. 4, 2018. It required multiple surgeries, bone and skin grafts, an extended hospital stay and inpatient rehabilitation. By Thanksgiving, Joon faced several more months of in-home physical therapy, and the typically outdoorsy Chang family was slowly adjusting to the realities of its new normal.

"We were homebound; especially him," Faith recalled solemnly. "We love to go kayaking, biking and hiking as a family, and we missed being outdoors."

Faith's glimmer of hope came on New Year's Day, 2019 when she, Joon, their daughter, Isabella, and their extended family participated in the Park Authority's First Hike Fairfax promotion that encourages Fairfax County residents to start the new year the right way with a walk in a park. Joon was starting to feel better, and Faith chose Huntley Meadows Park for their first outdoor excursion since the accident nearly five months earlier. As Isabella pushed her father's wheelchair along the boardwalk, Faith saw nature's restorative power work its magic on Joon.

"Being in the park and enjoying nature can do wonders for your mind, and it really lifted his spirits to enjoy the fresh air," Faith said enthusiastically. "Once he was out there, he listened to nature and the birds and had forgotten how nice it is. It was the first time I really saw him smile since before the accident, and it was very therapeutic for all of us."

The park visit was one giant step on the long road to recovery, and the family commemorated the moment with the snapshot they entered in the online First Hike photo contest (Partakes cover photo). Since then, Joon has progressed from a cast and a wheelchair to a boot and a cane, and he expects his long road to recovery to end next summer when he reaches his goal to walk on his own again. Until then, the Chang family plans to enjoy many more walks in Fairfax County parks, including a reflective first hike on New Year's Day, 2020.



Isabella, Joon and Faith Chang, Sept. 22, 2019

Experience the restorative power of a New Year hike for yourself. Submit your First Hike photo for a chance to win one of several prizes. Check the web in December for details: [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/first-hike](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/first-hike)