

# USU Undergrad Earns Elementary Education Degree Following Near Fatal Car Accident

Frei completed her student teaching requirements in April 2025.

July 30, 2020 seemed like a normal summer day for Sarah Frei and her friends. They had just completed a weekend trip to Bear Lake and were returning home to Syracuse. Going through Logan Canyon, Frei and her friends were struck head-on by a drunk driver.

Frei was instantly paralyzed from the waist down and had suffered a pinched abdominal aorta. Her legs were no longer getting any blood flow. It took emergency workers more than an hour to reach Frei and her friends, who were trapped in the vehicle. After being rushed to Logan Regional, Frei was helicoptered to Primary Children's Hospital. It was determined that in order to save her life, she would need to have both of her legs removed. Twenty surgeries and three months later, Frei left the hospital and had to reimagine her life.

Fast forward nearly five years later, Frei graduated from high school, is engaged to be married, and is a 2025 graduate in Elementary Education from Utah State University Kaysville. Ever grateful to be alive and to have so much support from family and friends, Frei is excited to enter her next chapter of life.

"It's a bittersweet moment," Frei said of graduating. "I have loved attending USU and have made so many friends and memories. I've been looking forward to graduating college and becoming a teacher for so long and the time is finally here. This has been a goal of mine ever since I was in elementary school."

A member of the high school cheer and golf teams and an active socialite, Frei had to figure out new ways to do the things that she loves. She admits that her wheelchair poses physical challenges every day. Yet she credits her family for their support for being a great support system.

"We all choose to stay positive despite the circumstances," she said. "I have such a great support system that will

help me with anything, whenever I need it. I'm so grateful to have the family that I do, and grateful for the life that I have."

After graduating high school, Frei decided to come to USU in Logan after hearing about its excellent Elementary Education program. She loves children, helping them thrive and seeing them experience and understand new ideas.

While loving her experience on the main campus, Frei decided she wanted to be closer to home as she navigated her circumstances and pursued her education. She started taking courses online and through USU Kaysville. She has loved the experience. It has allowed her to be home and take classes at her own pace.

"Sarah is a light to everyone who has the privilege to know her," said Kristen Walton, director of Student Services for the USU Brigham City Region. "She has overcome many obstacles to get to this point. She has been a personification of the Aggie Spirit. Her intelligence, dedication, resilience and optimism are infectious, and we are just so proud of what she has achieved, not only as a student, but as a human."

"It is so gratifying to see that our local campus in Kaysville has allowed Sarah to thrive on her terms. We certainly look forward to seeing her continue to make waves in the world following her graduation; we are certain that this is just the beginning for her."

Frei did her student teaching at Bluff Ridge Elementary and has worked with several mentors at USU. She is grateful for all the professors who have taken an interest in not only her career, but also in herself. She credits all of her elementary education teachers for taking an interest in her and wanting her to succeed.

"They have taught me about my future career and have given me a great experience and feel more confident in my ability to be a teacher," Frei said. "I felt very comfortable with them about I knew they genuinely cared about me and wanted to help in my education career and learning process."

Since her accident, Frei has continued to live her active lifestyle. She has been skydiving, wakeboarding, camping and more. She keeps a running virtual diary of her experiences on her Instagram page ([strong.like.sarah](https://www.instagram.com/strong.like.sarah)). This page has allowed her to build a community of other wheelchair bound people, to ask advice, and share her own experiences. She hopes she can be an inspiration to

others that they can accomplish anything and find joy in life.

I want to inspire others to do what makes them happy, and giving other people hope for their own future,” Frei said of her Instagram page. “I want people to know that no matter what they’re going through, they can find joy in doing new things and figuring out life in their own way.”

Frei is looking forward to applying for teaching jobs in Davis County and to her upcoming marriage this summer.