

## Comedian will highlight fundraiser for Beverly Hills resident

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BEVERLY HILLS - When Ross **Niskar** received a call from his 26-year-old brother Adam's friend, telling him there had been an "accident" on Walnut Lake, he didn't think, he just rushed out the door. The Birmingham resident made it there in time to see the ambulance pull away, and he followed it to Pontiac Osteopathic Hospital. One hour later, he discovered his brother's life would be changed forever.

"The doctor came out and told us Adam had sustained a spinal cord injury ... and that he would never walk again," Ross recalled.

"My mother was in shock; we all were in shock. It was devastating - you have no idea what something like that entails." It was Aug. 1, 1999, when Adam, a Beverly Hills resident, was attending a lake party with friends and saw his dog swimming a little too far out.

"He dove off of the dock and into 33 inches of water, hitting his head on the bottom," Ross said.

"He has kind of a sick sense of humor, so his friends thought he was just joking around. He still remembers to this day what it was like to be underwater and realize he couldn't move, couldn't breathe ... and hear people talking around him until they noticed something was really wrong." Fortunately, a doctor was at the scene and was able to resuscitate Adam before paramedics arrived. After leaving POH, Adam was transferred to Beaumont Hospital, and then spent three months at Craig Hospital in Colorado for physical therapy and rehabilitation.

"Within days of the accident, there was an outpouring of support.

Everyone was asking what they could do, so we set up the Friends for Adam **Niskar** Trust and held a fundraiser, which raised over \$100, 000," Ross said.

One decade later, Ross still takes it upon himself to organize a yearly fundraiser to help his brother out with a portion of the enormous medical bills not covered by insurance.

"Adam lives independently, and there's a lot of necessities that go above and beyond insurance coverage," he said. "He needs someone to come in and help him with personal things several times a week, so that's about \$30, 000 per year, plus the cost of modifying his vehicle, and the portion of the wheelchair that isn't covered. It's hard enough to make a living just for yourself these days, without an extra \$50, 000 in medical expenses." In the past, Ross has held golf outings, wine tastings and bar nights, but this year's event involves a little celebrity assistance from someone who knows the pain of seeing a loved one paralyzed.

Comedian Artie Lange, an actor and personality on the Howard Stern radio show, will perform Oct. 9 at the Detroit Opera House to benefit Adam's trust fund. Southfield native and comedian Mike Young will open the show, and tickets go on sale July 31 for \$30-\$60.

Ross, who had learned Lange's father was also paralyzed after listening to Lange on the Howard Stern broadcast and reading his book "Too Fat to Fish," decided to take a chance and write to Lange about Adam's cause. Several days later, he received a surprise - a call from Lange himself.

"I thought someone was playing a joke on me at first," Ross said.

"He was really cool and very down-to-earth - it was like talking to one of my buddies. The common theme in his book is the love for his father, and how badly it hurt him when his father was injured, because he was his hero.

The fact that he's willing to donate and help Adam out is unbelievably nice." Adam, who is now engaged and expecting a baby with his fiancée in December, called his brother's work "unbelievable." "He does this every year, and it takes him and all the people on his team a lot of time. It's such a blessing that I have someone like Ross to support me," he said.

"He's my right-hand man, and he's always taken care of me.

For whatever I need, he's always there." Tickets are available through Ticketmaster at (248) 645-6666.

Proceeds are non-tax-deductible.

For more information about the event or the Friends for Adam **Niskar** Trust, visit [www.friendsforadam.com](http://www.friendsforadam.com).

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Caption:Photo provided Comedian Artie Lange will perform at the Detroit Opera House on Oct. 9.