She never saw it coming. A football slammed into the back of JoAnna Rockufeler’s head when the seventh grader inadvertently stepped in front of a long pass thrown in her school gym. A rough-and-tumble kid, she rested awhile, then shook it off to play dodgeball.

Just to be safe, her mother later took her to urgent care. The diagnosis stunned them: JoAnna had a mild-to-moderately severe concussion. Her condition soon grew worse, and parents John and Melody consulted doctors three times that next week. They watched helplessly as their social, confident, high-energy JoAnna vanished. She turned lethargic, riddled with anxieties and unable to sleep well. Attempts to return to school failed.

Then they met Stephen Lauer, MD, PhD, pediatric concussion specialist at The University of Kansas Hospital’s Center for Concussion Management. “It was so comforting finally to get answers from an expert – and a plan,” Melody said. “Our experience at the concussion clinic felt like solid ground under our feet after treading water for two weeks.”

Each concussion patient responds differently, Lauer noted, and JoAnna’s recovery was longer than average. She spent five weeks at home on full brain rest: no TV, computer, texting, phone chats, pop music, physical activity or school. Back in classes weeks later, she still needed a parent beside her for several days to quell her anxieties.

“It was frightening to have to watch JoAnna struggle with anxiety, living in a fog,” Melody said. “But in the end, the concussion center gave us our daughter back.”

Visit kumed.com/concussion to learn about concussion symptoms and treatment.

Concussions are often difficult to diagnose and treat, so it is crucial to seek care promptly from a concussion specialist. The University of Kansas Hospital’s Center for Concussion Management is a leader in innovative treatment, care and research. The team includes physician specialists in trauma, neurology, orthopedics/ sports medicine and pediatrics. A nurse practitioner and a nurse navigator coordinate care from the first assessment through post-concussion management.

A component of the concussion program is ImPACT, Immediate Post-Concussion Assessment and Cognitive Testing. The computerized evaluation assesses memory and reaction time. Student athletes, for example, can be assessed before the season begins – and then again if a head injury occurs. ImPACT is among tools used to make return-to-play decisions. Learn more at kumed.com/impact or call 913-588-1227.
Be a Chiefs player for a day!

Chiefs Fantasy Camp benefits Center for Concussion Management

The University of Kansas Hospital’s Center for Concussion Management has been chosen as the beneficiary of the inaugural Chiefs Fantasy Camp May 15-16 at Arrowhead Stadium.

“With proceeds from the camp, we’ll be able to educate even more parents, coaches and players of all athletic abilities to help them stay in the game safely,” said Bob Page, hospital president and CEO.

Ultimate fan experience

Billed as the ultimate fan experience, Chiefs Fantasy Camp offers a chance to huddle up and learn from Chiefs greats: Priest Holmes, Trent Green, Dante Hall, Eddie Kennison, Christian Okoye, Jan Stenerud, Shawn Barber and Anthony Davis. General Manager John Dorsey has signed on, as has Coach Dick Vermeil.

“This is truly going to be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to step into the shoes of the NFL pros and see what happens behind the scenes,” said Pro Bowl quarterback Trent Green. He co-chairs the event with David Gentile, president and CEO of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas City.

To ensure an up-close-and-personal experience, the camp is limited to 100 participants (must be 23 or older). A portion of the $2,000 ticket price is tax deductible. For more information, call Jennifer Laubinger, Fund Development, at 913-588-2800.

The University of Kansas Hospital is the Official Healthcare Provider of the Kansas City Chiefs.

Among the highlights ...

May 15

Cocktail reception and live auction for you and a guest

• Pick up your football to have it autographed by Chiefs greats.
• Mingle with former players, plus John Dorsey, coaches Dick Vermeil and Andy Reid, Chiefs cheerleaders and KC Wolf.
• Hear a panel discussion and Q&A with Mitch Holthus and the 2003 Chiefs team.
• Bid on Trent Green, Dante Hall, Priest Holmes and Christian Okoye to coach your team in the next day’s tournament.
• Toss the pigskin under the lights at Arrowhead.

May 16

Full-day field experience

• Break down film with some of the toughest competitors ever to take the field at Arrowhead.
• Suit up in your gear at your own locker in the Chiefs locker room.
• Test your skills in quarterbacking, catching, field goal kicking and more alongside Chiefs greats.
• Preview the 2014 season with current players.
• Hear a rousing pregame pep talk from Coach Dick Vermeil.
• Take the field for a 7-on-7 flag football tournament.
• Compete for the Chiefs Fantasy Camp trophy.

For full details or to buy tickets, visit kcchiefs.com/fantasycamp.