Helping patients recover and make their way back home

Inpatient Rehabilitation Unit helps patients recover from debilitating injuries

Ronnie Hayes is a walking example of the rewards of determination, hard work and intensive rehabilitation therapy.

In the fall of 2008, Hayes had double knee surgery that was followed by an unfortunate series of complications. "I ended up with blood clots in my legs and was taken into surgery four times," explains Hayes. The surgeries and complications left him debilitated, weak and unable to walk. "My legs just hung like noodles; I didn't think I was ever going to walk again."

Though Hayes was ready to be discharged from the hospital he was receiving care at, he wasn't physically ready to go home. He needed intensive rehab therapy to regain his strength and the ability to walk.

While Hayes was looking for a rehab facility, New River Medical Center was just about to open the new Inpatient Rehabilitation Unit. Hayes, a resident of Big Lake, was excited to hear about the new program in Monticello and the opportunity to move closer to his family and home.

Hayes became the very first patient at New River Medical Center's Inpatient Rehabilitation Unit and one of many rehab patient success stories. More than two years after leaving the rehab unit, Hayes continues to praise the individuals who helped him reach his goals of walking on his own and returning to his home.

"The people who worked with me were a good bunch of people," recalls Hayes. "I couldn't have been treated any nicer; they bent over backwards for me."

The person Hayes credits most for his recovery progress is Anne Adix, a physical therapist at New River Medical Center's Inpatient Rehabilitation Unit. "I love that lady. I stop in and see her as much as I can. She's a very special person to me. Anne's the one who got me walking. She pushed me to the limit every day."

Hayes appreciates the strength and independence he regained at New River Medical Center that allowed him to return home with his wife, Joyce, and to the activities he enjoys. "I'm glad I can walk and do the things I do," says Hayes. "I would recommend that place to anybody."

More than two years after leaving New River Medical Center's Inpatient Rehabilitation Unit, Ronnie Hayes continues to praise the individuals who helped him reach his goals of walking on his own and returning to his home.

Anne Adix, physical therapist, worked with Ronnie Hayes during his stay at New River Medical Center's Inpatient Rehabilitation Unit in 2008.

Expanding rehabilitation services

New River Medical Center's Inpatient Rehabilitation Unit was expanded in 2010 to provide intensive rehabilitation therapies to a greater number of patients.

The program features a full complement of aggressive rehabilitation services including occupational, physical and speech therapy. Typical patients require early, intensive therapies for optimal recovery and include those with stroke, traumatic brain injury, orthopedic surgeries, neurological disorders or other critical illness.

"Even if a patient goes to a larger facility because of a serious injury or illness, they can come back to their own community for rehab," says Sharon Davalos, director of Inpatient Rehabilitation at New River Medical Center. "It gives patients the opportunity to be close to home and near their family and friends."

Moms regain strength and independence

New River Medical Center's Inpatient Rehabilitation Unit helps patients recover from debilitating injuries

New River Medical Center's Inpatient Rehabilitation Unit helps patients regain strength and maximize independence after a debilitating injury or illness. The program features a full complement of aggressive rehabilitation services including occupational, physical and speech therapy.

"Our primary goal is to get people as independent as possible," says Dr. Steven Lockman, physical medicine and rehabilitation specialist and medical director of New River Medical Center's rehabilitation unit. Typical rehab patients include individuals recovering from stroke, brain injury, neurological disorders, amputation, major multiple trauma or prolonged hospitalizations.

During its first year in operation, the Inpatient Rehabilitation Unit cared for more than 90 patients including New River Medical Center CEO Marshall Smith's mom, Kirsti Smith, and Inpatient Rehabilitation Program Director Sharon Davalos's mom, Karen Johnson.

When their moms needed rehab care, both Smith and Davalos knew that New River Medical Center would deliver the best. "I knew this was a place that could offer her the services that she needed to return home independently," says Davalos, "and I wanted her here so I could be involved."

When their moms needed rehab care, CEO Marshall Smith and Inpatient Rehab Program Director Sharon Davalos brought their mothers to New River Medical Center. Pictured are Karen Johnson, Sharon Davalos, Kirsti Smith and Marshall Smith.

Karen Johnson's rehab story

Karen Johnson is mother to Sharon Davalos, New River Medical Center's inpatient rehabilitation program director

In September, Karen Johnson was on her way to enjoy a fall color tour of New England. During a stop in Illinois, while she was crossing a street, Johnson was hit by a car.

The accident left Johnson with an array of injuries including a concussion, fractures in both legs, nerve damage in her left shoulder, a fracture in her right shoulder, dozens of stitches and vertebrae damage. After a week of hospitalization in Illinois, she was ready for rehab care and wanted to return home to Minnesota.

Johnson spent 19 days at New River Medical Center's Inpatient Rehabilitation Unit regaining her strength and recovering from her injuries. "I was so fortunate to be in a place with the people and the good care that I got there," says Johnson. For three hours a day, Johnson worked with physical and occupational therapists. "I don't know that I could have been in a better place. Everyone was wonderful. It was a really good experience for me."

Johnson has made an amazing recovery and is currently enjoying the winter months under the Florida sun. "I think I'm doing wonderful," says Johnson. "I thank God there was that place for me. I think I am where I am today because of it."

Kirsti Smith's rehab story

Kirsti Smith is mother to Marshall Smith, New River Medical Center's CEO

Last February, Kirsti Smith's life took an unexpected turn after she had a stroke. "I struggled at first," explains Kirsti, "but as time goes on it gets easier and easier." At the time of her stroke, Kirsti was living in Michigan; she received extensive care in nearby Wisconsin hospitals before she was ready for rehabilitation care at New River Medical Center.

"I'm glad Marshall took me back to Minnesota," says Kirsti. "When things settled down and I realized I was coming here, it gave me a feeling of contentment because I knew I was being taken care of."

Kirsti's time was spent in physical, occupational and speech therapy. "They did everything to get me moving again. They were wonderful and so considerate."

After progressing through the inpatient rehabilitation program, Kirsti spent time at the New River Medical Center Extended Care facility. "The nursing staff in the hospital and extended care facility was exceptional," says Marshall. "They cared for her as if she was their own family member."

Kirsti moved home with Marshall and his family in August and continues making progress through outpatient therapy at NovaCare in Monticello. "I'm getting stronger all the time," says Kirsti.