

Continuum of Care

Specialized services at Fort Sanders Regional provide patient with coordinated care and support

It was a very ordinary April morning as Sandra Betts sat quietly in the living room of her home in Walland. She was in the middle of her daily Bible devotions when the silence was broken by a noise coming from the bedroom, where her husband Rickey was getting dressed.

"I thought maybe he dropped something," Sandra says.

When she heard the noise again, she decided to check on Rickey and make sure he was okay. He wasn't.

"I couldn't walk," Rickey says. "I kept trying to get my shorts on like normal, and I kept falling."

Finding the answers

The Betts' son, an advanced EMT, rushed to their home and checked for signs of a stroke, but Rickey had none.

The first doctor Rickey saw thought he might be experiencing Guillain-Barré syndrome, a rare and serious autoimmune disorder that can cause paralysis. Rickey was sent to Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center, a neuro-spine Center

of Excellence with the latest advancements in neurology, neurosurgery, spine surgery, and neurointerventional radiology.

The medical team at Fort Sanders Regional found the true cause of Rickey's mysterious condition. He had a cancerous mass on his spine that was causing him to lose all sensation from the waist down.

Rickey was placed in the hospital's intensive care unit and surgery was scheduled for May 9.

Sandra gives God the glory for pulling Rickey through "a close call" and credits Fort Sanders Regional for giving him lifesaving care. The hospital staff also cared for the entire family, giving Sandra and her mother-in-law a place to sleep until Rickey was ready to be moved for rehabilitation services.

"I can't tell this story without crying," Sandra says. "They were all so good to us."

Regaining quality of life

After receiving excellent, compassionate care at Fort Sanders Regional, Rickey was

transferred to Patricia Neal Rehabilitation Center, located within the hospital. The Center is recognized as East Tennessee's leader in rehabilitating patients with stroke, spinal cord and brain injuries.

The first day Rickey was there he was like a rag doll - weak, unable to sit up and unable to control his own body. Rehabilitation was difficult, but effective.

"Every day it was a challenge, but if you're not determined enough to go through it, you'll never excel," Rickey says.

Each therapist would build on what Rickey had already accomplished. The first building block was helping him gain strength to simply sit upright. The last step was teaching him how to lead a full life from his new wheelchair.

"They teach you everything," Rickey says, "how to bathe and how to brush your teeth, how to shave and dress and how to cook."

Sandra says she and Rickey were "blown away" by their experi-

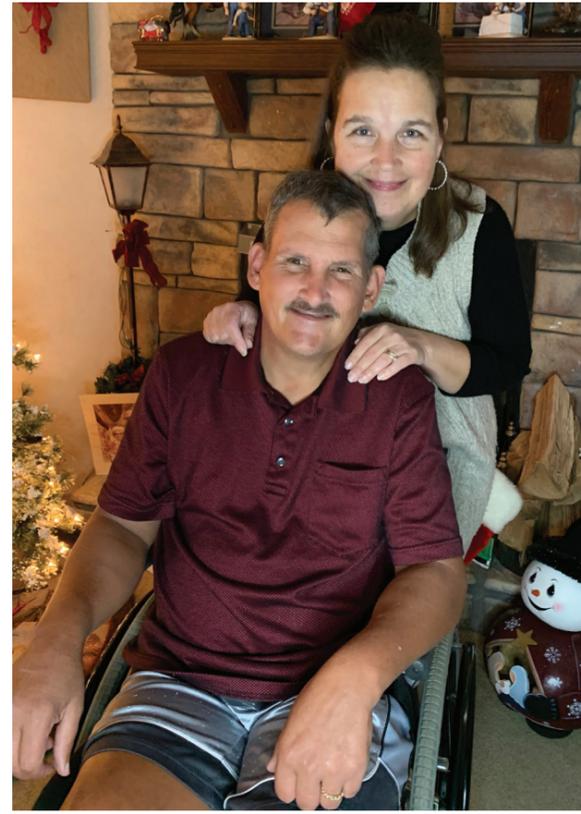
ence at PNRC. Rickey was getting first-class therapy, and Sandra was getting encouragement from everyone who was investing so much in her husband.

Continuing care

Rickey also needed radiation treatments at Thompson Cancer Survival Center, located right across the street from Fort Sanders Regional. Each day, transporters took him to his appointments while Sandra was able to stay behind to rest and return to prayer and Bible study.

"They would treat Rickey like they'd known him forever," Sandra says. "They were so amazing! I knew that he was in good hands."

Rickey finished his rehabilitation at Patricia Neal, but hadn't yet completed his radiation treatments. Sandra says God provided a way for him to get those treatments without traveling to and from his home in Walland. The couple was able to stay in a Fellowship Center house on the Fort Sanders Regional campus until



Rickey Betts says he would be bedridden had it not been for the treatment he received at Patricia Neal Rehabilitation Center.

his treatments were complete. The Fellowship Center provides a comforting, home-like environment for families who are dealing with serious illness and need a temporary place to live.

Blessed and grateful

Rickey firmly believes he would be bedridden and completely dependent on Sandra today had it not been for the grace of God and the comprehensive care he received from start to finish. Instead of thinking about the "what

ifs," Rickey and Sandra Betts are counting their blessings.

"I'm thankful just to be here after all my body went through," Rickey says.

"God is in every part of our story," Sandra says. "Our story revolves around good people. God led us to the good people, and we had an amazing experience."

For more information about the rehabilitation services offered at Patricia Neal Rehabilitation Center, visit PatNeal.org.

A Place Set Apart *Patricia Neal Rehabilitation Center helps patients build skills for "life-living"*

Patricia Neal Rehabilitation Center (PNRC) is more than a typical rehab facility. PNRC specializes in treating the effects of brain injury, spinal cord injury, stroke and orthopedic injuries. The staff at PNRC includes highly trained professional clinicians who are experienced in dealing with specific disabilities and are certified in a variety of specialty areas.

PNRC encourages staff members to keep learning and provides resources so they can continue to improve their skills. The staff can then provide patients with the most effective and up-to-date care.

The expertise of the therapists and staff is combined

with their personal commitments to prioritizing the patient's needs. Some say it's a calling.

"I want patients and the community to know that at Patricia Neal Rehabilitation Center we really are focused on putting our patients and their families first," says physical therapist Lauren Domico. "At PNRC, it is so important to us that our patients are getting the best care from every person they interact with along the way."

Registered occupational therapist Mike Orillion says the therapists work together to give the patient the best care possible on every

level. "They combine their minds, their experience, and their kindness to help the patients maximize achievements while they are here, as we strive to get them back home," Orillion says.

When a patient is able to move a part of his or her body or achieve a task for the first time after illness or injury, Orillion says there is joy for both the patient and the therapist.

"The most rewarding part of my job is witnessing a patient improve in his or her ability to care for himself or herself," Orillion says.

Domico says she likes to learn what's important to her patients in the "outside

world," and then incorporate her patients' interests into therapy sessions. The results are rewarding for both the patient and the therapist.

"Nobody plans to land themselves here, so our goal is that by the time you leave you will not only feel stronger and more confident, you will feel like part of the Patricia Neal family," Domico says.

PNRC is a recipient of several national awards for patient satisfaction. To learn more about the services offered at Patricia Neal Rehabilitation Center, visit www.patneal.org or call 865-331-3600.



Restoring Abilities. Rebuilding Lives.

- Brain Injury
- Stroke
- Cancer
- Spinal Cord Injury
- Orthopedics

The Patricia Neal Rehabilitation Center is nationally recognized for providing exceptional care and rehabilitation for patients with disabilities.

It is one of the largest inpatient rehabilitation centers within an acute care hospital in the country. Since 1978 the Patricia Neal Rehabilitation Center has touched the lives of thousands of patients and families from around the nation, resulting in more than 30,000 patient success stories.

Contact the Patricia Neal Rehabilitation Center at (865) 331-3600 or visit www.patneal.org to learn more.

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