

Positive Energy

“I want my life back. I know it won’t be like it was before, but I want to live in my own house. I want to take care of my kids. I want to drive.”

An energetic Katie Beauchamp, brimming with plans for the future, is confident she’ll achieve her goals. After a two-year journey that has taken her from the hospital intensive care unit through Rainbow Rehabilitation Center’s residential program and, most recently, to its home-based therapy program, it’s easy to see why she’s hopeful.

In September of 2009, Katie was thrown from a car and hit her head on the pavement. She was transported to Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak, Michigan where emergency surgery was performed to alleviate pressure on her brain. A CT scan showed bilateral subdural hematoma in the frontal, temporal and parietal regions of her brain as well as an occipital fracture and an injury to several vertebrae for which she briefly wore a cervical collar. Within weeks of the accident she also developed seizures, not uncommon after a traumatic brain injury.

For nearly a week after her accident, Katie lay unconscious and doctors didn’t know if she would survive. They told her family to “wait and see.” When she regained consciousness she was confused and agitated. She had difficulty recalling the names of her family members and mixed up her words. While hospitalized, she tried to pull out her IVs and insisted that there was nothing wrong with her. Ultimately, the familiar motions of throwing a ball calmed Katie who was a star athlete in high school. “I played catch with Katie for hour after hour when she was at the hospital,” said her father, Art Carlson.

When it was determined that Katie could leave the hospital, her family chose Rainbow for her post-acute rehabilitation because of its comfortable, home-like atmosphere. Katie experienced frequent periods of agitation at first, so the staff made sure to provide a calm environment until she adjusted to her new space. Eventually she came to appreciate the company of her Rainbow family, but was glad to be able to spend time in her private room whenever she needed it.

Before the accident, Katie was raising her children in Ortonville, Michigan, the same small community in which she grew up. A divorced mom of three, she enjoyed a 20-year career with the Oakland County Records Department and owned a home just minutes from her parents. Her mother passed away while Katie was residing at Rainbow’s Gill House, and the loss of her mom, though painful, has made Katie



Katie Beauchamp

even more determined to do the work necessary to be a good mother to her own children. “My mom meant the world to me. I feel her with me every day.” Framed letters from her mother grace the walls of Katie’s home.

Determined to work

Intensive rehabilitation began as soon as Katie came to Rainbow, and she received occupational therapy (OT) and speech and language therapy every day. Her OT goals included improving her residential independent living skills such as taking care of the laundry and other activities of daily living. Her speech and language therapist worked with her to express simple thoughts and to improve her word-finding ability and comprehension, both written and auditory.

Helping Katie to manage her agitation and maintain a stable mood was the focus of Rainbow’s mental health professionals who worked with Katie. She was dedicated to her therapy and progressed rapidly. Before long her friendly demeanor returned and she enjoyed conversing with others, and spending time in the community.

In July 2010, Katie transitioned from Rainbow’s residential program to her father’s home where she receives therapy services from Rainbow’s Functional Recovery home and community-based therapy division.

Living with her father and her children, Katie is closer than ever to her ultimate goal of living in her own home without assistance. She continues to receive occupational therapy to help her re-gain independence with advanced home management tasks, meal planning, cooking and housekeeping. She also receives speech and language therapy to improve memory, reading comprehension and problem solving.

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Katie spends up to four hours a day in her own home without supervision, and her children join her for two of those hours. With continued success, her unsupervised time will increase. Her memory is much improved but some cognitive deficits remain. To compensate for them, Katie keeps a journal and writes everything down. She tracks her own finances and medications, and keeps appointments and events organized on a calendar. The strategies seem to be working. During a recent visit she recalled her doctors' names and their specialties when her family could not.

She'll soon be participating in a pre-driver's screening assessment now that her seizures are under control, a service that Functional Recovery offers. The independence of driving herself is something she very much wants.

Parenting is also a skill on which Katie is focusing, and her current therapy goals include organizing a daily chore chart for her children and devising a list of house rules. Assigning chores is still a bit of a challenge for her. "I like doing the work myself, so I don't like to tell them to do it," she says. Nevertheless, all three are good students, friendly and active in school sports. One of Katie's favorite things to do is to watch her children play for their teams.



Katie along with her family (from left to right), children, Brandon, Kaitlyn and Ryan, and her father, Art Carlson.

Staying positive

Katie's positive attitude and determination to succeed are ever-present and, according to Functional Recovery's Director, Char Combs, a large part of why she has progressed so well. "Rehab is 90% attitude and 10% actual therapy," said Char. "Katie has progressed well because of her positive attitude, her willingness to follow through on all therapy goals, and her ability to remain focused on her end goal of returning to her own home independently."

Katie's father said, "Rainbow has helped Katie to stay positive and has been a big support for us. We attribute much of her success to Rainbow."

Katie's positive attitude also comes from her deep spirituality, and she gives much credit for her success to her faith in God. Reading a daily devotional not only strengthens her reading comprehension, it gives her great encouragement. Although she remembers nothing consciously right after her accident, she believes she heard God's voice, and that knowledge gives her comfort and a renewed sense of faith and optimism. "It was beautiful" she says.

Katie is happy to have external support as she progresses but she is eager for the day when she can be in her own home, cooking, cleaning and fixing up the yard and basement. In the meantime she's joined a bowling league, keeps herself fit by visiting a local gym two to three times a week and enjoys latch-hook rug making. If every cloud has a silver lining, Katie says hers is that she gets to spend more time with her kids. Though she may not get her life back exactly as it was before her injury, she knows that the outcome could have been much worse. She looks to the future with a positive attitude and determined optimism. ❖

*Written By Celine DeMeyer
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