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## Murfreesboro bicyclist credits NHC staff with road to recovery

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Bicycle accident victim Don Holder visits Tuesday with NHC Health Care Director Margaret Greeson, left, and occupational therapist Kelly Bryson, who worked to help get him walking again. / John A. Gillis/DNJ

Written by **Doug Davis**

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**MURFREESBORO** — An unlucky fall on St. Patrick’s Day could have gone a lot worse for avid bicyclist Don Holder if it weren’t for the doctors and staff of NHC Health Care in Murfreesboro.

Holder, 56, got introduced to the staff the hard way after taking a tumble on his Trek road bike as he was bicycling toward Bradyville, about 37 miles outside of Murfreesboro.

“I had just passed the Bradyville Post Office. I made a climb of a hill and was coming back down,” the retired Yellow Freight driver said.

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“The road conditions were slick, because it was a chip seal road.”

He made it across the first set of rough road, but then he hit a second set of chip gravel with tar over it in front of several homes.

“Some bumps got me,” he said. “I flipped over on the left side of the handle bars and the bicycle landed on top of me.”

**FYI**

NHC Health Care is located at 420 N. University St., Murfreesboro, TN 37130. Rehabilitation health care is offered to patients in their own wing of the facility. For more information, call Lynn Foster, administrator at 615-893-2602 or email [lyfoster@comcast.net](mailto:lyfoster@comcast.net).

His face took the brunt of the fall. His sunglasses smashed into his face and broke his eye socket and nose.

“His glasses looked like they had been on a belt sander,” said Patricia Holder, Don’s wife of 24 years.

A friend came back to find him when he didn’t make it up the next hill. The friend took one look at Don Holder’s bloody face and called 9-1-1.

Holder was taken to Middle Tennessee Medical Center in Murfreesboro by a Woodbury ambulance and then on to Baptist Hospital in Nashville. He remained there from March 17 to April 19 before being transferred to NHC Health Care in Murfreesboro, near the old MTMC hospital.

“The doctor said (Don) hyper-extended his neck when he hit the ground,” Patricia said.

Margaret Greeson, director of rehabilitation at NHC, said that Don Holder had an incomplete spinal chord injury.

“He had all the classic symptoms of a spinal chord injury,” Greeson said. “Blood clots, his blood pressure was low, and he couldn’t stand up. But they did a lot of great things at Baptist Hospital (for Holder). We were fortunate.”

Still, Holder couldn’t sit up by himself, Greeson said.

“He had very poor control of his arms and legs, but was getting some movement back,” she said.

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Holder had to use modified silverware and a modified cup to feed himself.

"I started him on electronic stimulation on his legs and arms," Greeson said. "As he gained confidence, we used body weight support system which holds his body weight."

That system was used after Don Holder first used the parallel bars to learn how to walk again. Ultimately the body weight support system was combined with a Rojo Walker to help improve Holder's mobility.

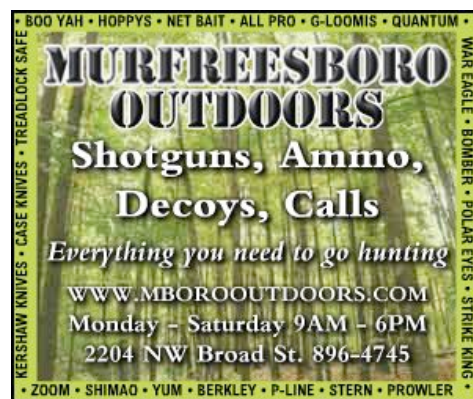
Greeson was not sure that Holder would be able to leave NHC's rehabilitation program in the 60 days which the insurance company allowed without using a wheelchair. But Don Holder was determined.

"I think that I am going to walk out of here," he remembered telling Greeson.

He was kept busy by a physical therapist assistant and an occupational therapist, working on both gross and fine motor skills.

Kelly Bryson, the OT, worked with Holder on using his hands, his strength and balance so that he could be independent and improve his self-care skills.

"He was an excellent patient and never without a smile," Bryson said last week during a reunion at the facility with Holder. "He always asked, 'What else do you want me to do?'"



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Kari Jones, the physical therapist assistant, kept Jones busy during rehab, using mats to help him with his stability.

“On Sundays, we didn’t have many people in here and had the run of the place,” Holder said, smiling. “We did pushups. These people are tough, but they are the best in the business.

“The nursing staff is excellent, too.”

When it was time to go home, the therapists helped Don Holder adjust to getting in and out of the tub, get in and off the bed and into the kitchen.

Since Patricia Holder works two days a week as a nurse at Community Care of Rutherford County, home health care comes to help Don Holder out.

But he can stand, transfer and walk with an assistant and a walker.

Don Holder hopes to be cross-country bicycle riding again by this time next year.

It helps to keep the weight off, and he enjoys the scenery.

“But I’ll stay off the chip seal,” he said.

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