

# Small steps equal big gains for Iowa burn patient

“One day at a time” were simple words of encouragement that hung in Brad Amos’ room. It’s how the 23-year-old from Griswold, Iowa, survived after being burned over 60 percent of his body.

Brad, a senior at Iowa State, was working a summer job at the local cooperative. On June 3, while refilling propane tanks with his grandfather and three other coworkers, one of the tanks suddenly exploded. His body and clothes afire, Brad tried the “stop, drop and roll” method, but the flames continued to engulf his body. A friend was finally able to get him hosed off under a water hydrant.

Still coherent, Brad ran to the nearby fire department, charred skin and clothes hanging off his arms. He was lifeflighted to University of Nebraska Medical Center and was in a medically-induced coma for two weeks in the intensive care unit.

It was heart-wrenching for Brad’s parents, Angie and Wade, to see their son. Along with his significant burns, Brad had a trach, catheter and feeding tube. “He was literally covered in bandages and had tiny slits for his eyes and mouth,” shared Angie. Gradually, his condition was upgraded and Brad endured five skin graft surgeries in three weeks.

Five weeks following his horrific accident, Brad transitioned to Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital. “It was a big adjustment because I literally could not bend my hands,” Brad said.

One of his toughest obstacles was using the

Continuous Passive Motion (CPM) machine that moves a patient’s hands and fingers in long, slow motions. The CPM treatment helps alleviate pain, tightness and swelling in burn patients. “The therapists and nurses here are awesome; they know how to treat burn wounds,” said Brad.

Brad’s therapy team and family cheered his smallest achievements. He set goals to sit and soon progressed to walking, always pushing himself forward.

Brad commented that Sara Bills, physical therapist, has a quick stride and that challenged him to keep pace. Strengthening his body and keeping his skin pliable were always foremost on his mind.

Sara’s husband, Charlie, is a fitness trainer at ProActive, and helped set up a weight-lifting program for Brad to follow. Brad felt his body start to respond and was excited to have a personalized program to take back to Iowa.

Brad is eager to show the gains he’s made. Slowly, he bends his fingers with the new, pink skin. “See? I couldn’t do that before I came to Madonna,” he

states. He picks up a large therapy ball and tosses it back and forth with Sara. She notes he’s made exceptional progress over the past weeks. His parents have noted the changes, too. “He’s never stopped improving once he came to Madonna,” said Wade.

On August 20, Brad discharged and had crossed off his goals of being independent in his care and walking. Now his goals include hunting, fishing, riding his motorcycle and returning to college. He’s grateful to be savoring life again, one day at a time.

