

Lincolnite making strides toward goal

According to Sid Whigham, it was a sneeze that led him to Madonna. September 2006, he was home alone, sneezed and immediately felt a bone snap in his neck. Sid, then 49, of Lincoln, Neb., drove himself to the emergency room at BryanLGH Medical Center. Sid, who is claustrophobic, initially didn't want the MRI, but finally consented. The scan revealed multi-myeloma, a blood cancer, had seeped into his bones, causing them to weaken. Surgeons implanted a plate in Sid's spine to stabilize it and fitted him with a neck brace. He completed two months of cancer treatment including chemotherapy and radiation. The neck brace was Sid's companion for seven months as he endured a stem cell transplant to replenish healthy blood cells lost during chemotherapy. Sid was off work from his position at Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company for nearly a year.

Fast forward to July 5, 2007, when Sid signed his retirement papers after logging 30 years at the Lincoln plant. Three days later, Sid's wife, Sandra, dialed 911 after her husband complained of being weak and disoriented. Doctors at BryanLGH discovered Sid's abnormally high blood glucose level of 1,300 mg/dl and diagnosed him as having Type 2 diabetes. A blood clot in Sid's right leg forced doctors to amputate it right above the knee – known as a transfemoral amputation. "I had to amputate that leg or the doctors said I'd be dead within 48 hours," Sid recalled. He was grateful for Sandra's unwavering support. "I thank God for my wife; I needed someone to stand by me," said Sid.

Fellow parishioners at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints helped Sid's family financially during this traumatic life event. "If it wasn't for my church family and my wife, I wouldn't be here today," said Sid, an active church member.

After the amputation, Sid was happy just to be alive. The staff at Able II Prosthetics and Orthotics custom fit Sid with a prosthesis. "It was cool, they were able to match my skin color," said Sid.

Sid knew the prosthesis would offer newfound freedom. He recalls standing for the first time, holding a walker for support. "I felt like I was 6'5" instead of 5'6"! " exclaimed Sid. He realized months of physical therapy stood between him and independence.



Sid Whigham learned different techniques during his therapy sessions to master walking with his prosthetic leg. Jessica Foster, physical therapist, said Sid tackled every challenge to reach his independence.

In August 2008, Sid began outpatient therapy at Madonna TherapyPlus. Unfortunately, after only a few weeks, Sid needed to temporarily discontinue therapy when it was determined he needed a bone marrow transplant. By September, his immune system rebounded, and Sid was given the green light to resume therapy.

Physical therapist Jessica Foster saw that Sid was very determined, pushed himself to the limit and had a wonderful sense of humor. "I'll never forget the look on his face when he was walking with his cane and I took it away from him—he had finally reached his goal to walk," remarked Jessica. Sid had an adjustment with his prosthetic, but he's met each

challenge with a smile.

"Just being at Madonna and visiting with the other patients really motivated me," said Sid. He equated the adjustment of walking with his prosthesis to riding a wave of highs and lows. "I'd start to get depressed, then would see other patients struggling and count my blessings," said the spiritual man.

Sid recently strode down the hallway at Madonna aided only by his three-point cane. "I had zero muscle mass when I came to Madonna, now I feel like King Kong," said Sid. "My goal was to be walking solo by July, and that's exactly what I'll do," he added.