

# Dogs become therapy for trainer

It's been said that dogs are man's best friend. Dexter Morin sensed that early in life and knew he possessed an innate skill for training them. What he couldn't predict, was the pivotal role canines would play in his recovery following a devastating car accident.

Dexter, 22, was an apprentice with Noah's Assistance Dogs in Crete, Neb. On the afternoon of March 1, he was traveling with a friend on a county road southwest of Lincoln. Dexter lost control of the vehicle, entered a ditch and rolled the car. Neither Dexter, nor his companion were wearing seat belts and both were ejected from the car. A farmer found Dexter face down in water and called 911. He was revived at the scene and both men were stabilized at Aurora Memorial Hospital. His friend was treated and released, while Dexter was life flighted to BryanLGH West in Lincoln with a collapsed lung and diaphragm and bruising of the brain.

Back in Ponca City, Okla., Dexter's parents, Lisa and Tony Morin, received an emergency call from the hospital. "We pulled our son, Eli, out of school and made the long six-hour trek to Lincoln," Lisa recalled. It would be more than two weeks before Dexter would transition to Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital. "Given his injuries, we felt Madonna had a lot to offer Dexter and was our first choice," said Lisa.

Dexter, a former college wrestler, was dealing with chest and feeding tubes, an IV, trach and couldn't walk or talk. Within a matter of days, his Madonna team weaned him from his dependency on those devices. "I didn't remember anything until I woke up at Madonna," Dexter said.

His days were soon filled with physical, occupational and speech therapy sessions. Slowly, Dexter's body responded and he shared progress



Dexter Morin praises Sadie during a training exercise as (left) Madonna Physical Therapist Laura Corbridge and Lisa Ashby, with Noah's Assistance Dogs, look on.

updates with family members using a video phone provided by Madonna. The video phone has a screen, which allows face-to-face communication. "I enjoyed being able to see my family as I talked to them," Dexter shared.

Laura Corbridge, Madonna physical therapist, learned of Dexter's involvement with Noah's Assistance Dogs. The organization provides specially trained dogs for persons with visual and physical disabilities to enhance their quality of life.

Arrangements were made for Noah dogs to be used weekly in therapy with Dexter. Sadie, a gentle black Labrador, ran through training routines as Dexter firmly stated commands. His cognitive skills improved. "It was awesome to practice with Sadie," Dexter said.

Dexter dismissed on April 10 and was eager to return to work with his loyal, four-legged best friends.