

Love of dance aids patient in recovery at Madonna

Dancing comes as naturally to Megan Steele as walking and talking. “I love dance; it’s always been a huge part of my life,” explained the bubbly, 16-year-old from Wichita, Kan.

Unfortunately, she had to relearn all three skills following a Dec. 30 car accident that left her with a traumatic brain injury (TBI) and no voice.

Megan, a dance team member and student at Southeast High School, had just left dance practice with a friend when the Jeep she was driving collided with another vehicle. The impact sent her Jeep skidding 125 yards, coming to rest in a ditch.

Megan’s friend, Kaitlyn, escaped serious injury and was able to call 911. The rescue crew used the Jaws of Life to extract Megan and she spent the next three weeks at Wesley Medical Center. “The doctors really couldn’t give us a prognosis. They had no idea what the deficits would be with Megan’s TBI—whether she’d walk or talk again,” said her mother, Stephanie.

Her mother and her father, Glenn, along with sister, Alysa, rallied around Megan and made the decision to move her to Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital on Jan. 21. Within a week, Megan’s respiratory therapists weaned her off her ventilator and trach. After four weeks of silence, Megan pointed to a photo of her best friend and uttered her first word, “Becca.”

“Two of my biggest challenges were recovering my memory and walking,” said Megan. Her room was decorated with photographs of friends and family to jog her memory and boost her spirits.

Dance was incorporated into part of Megan’s therapy sessions. Along with the rustle of pom-poms, you could hear her counting

quietly as the sessions provided a creative way to stimulate her cognitive thinking. “Gradually, it all started coming back to me pretty naturally,” said Megan.

Laura Corbridge, Madonna physical therapist, said, “I really enjoy seeing our patients recover, and it’s so rewarding to see Megan get back to the things she loves to do.”

Megan also loves children and has a part-time job at a day care in Wichita. During her therapy, she spent time at Madonna’s Child Development Center, interacting with the children. Megan appreciated having a venue on site that allowed her to ease back into that role.

Cracking the books again was another hurdle that Megan cleared with help from Madonna’s Therapeutic Learning Center (TLC). “I not only did homework at the TLC, but practiced reading

out loud, with Nova (Adams),” Megan said

While Megan worked hard in therapy, her dance team back home sold bracelets as a fundraiser, emblazoned with her name and favorite leopard print. “I’m going to donate all the monies to charity once I’m home,” said Megan.

Getting home by her birthday on March 19 was a goal that Megan set when she first arrived at Madonna. On March 13, she was excited to announce she was discharging the following morning and couldn’t wait to see her extended family and friends.

Looking back, Alysa said bringing her sister to Madonna was a difficult decision because of their security net of family and friends in Wichita. “But, people we consulted said Madonna was not just a ‘good enough’ facility, but the best, and that proved to be very accurate in Megan’s case,” Alysa said.

Southeast is having their final pep rally of the school year in May and Megan will be there, kicking up her heels with the rest of the Southeast dance team.



Megan Steele practices her pom routine as part of her physical therapy session with Laura Corbridge, Madonna physical therapist.