

# Center offers hope to trauma victims

The Center for Living sponsored an Open House on Oct. 19 to celebrate completion of the first phase of the program designed to provide services for shock trauma recoverees and their families.

The center is a program to help neuro-trauma patients and their families readjust to their life situations following long term acute and rehabilitation hospitalization.

Lisa Reeves, program director for the Easter Seal Society, said they try to provide a place where the patients can sort out their feeling toward what has happened to them with professional counselors who are familiar with the particular problems of the trauma patient.

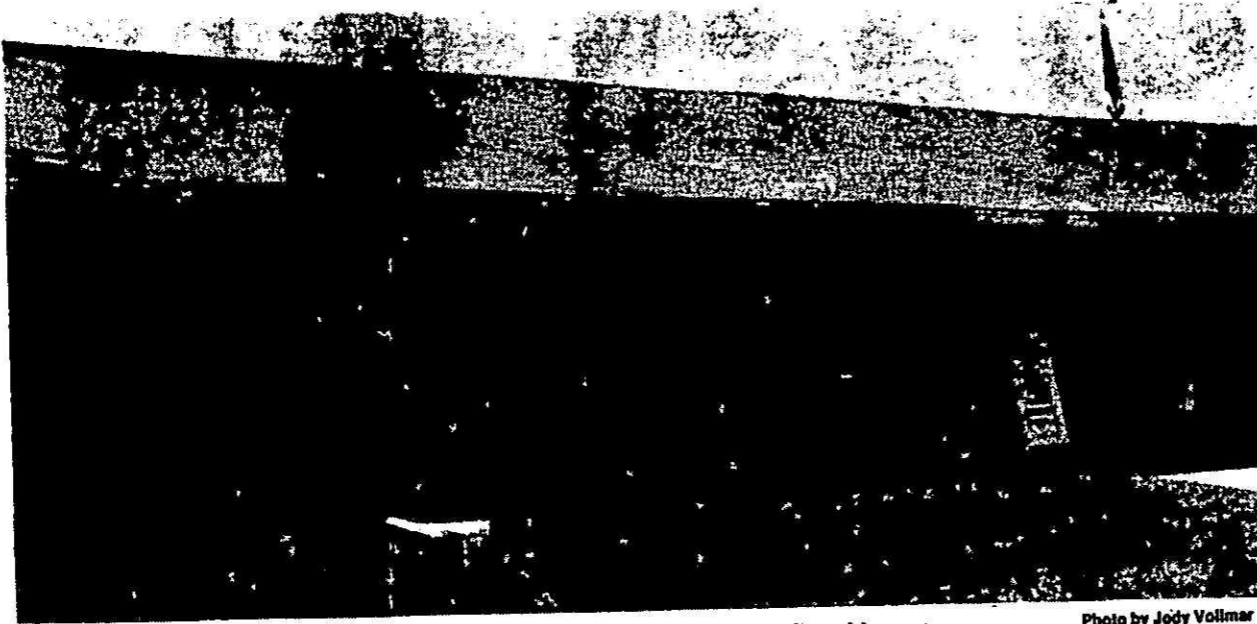
The center is a cooperative service offered by Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Service Systems and the Easter Seal Society of Maryland. It is located at 3700 4th St. in Brooklyn.

Ms. Reeves said the center tries to help the patients see that "life must go on."

Most of the patients at the center are young men between the ages of 17 to 40 who received their injuries in car accidents. They are referred to the center through a variety of social and health services but have in common that they have all survived a traumatic accident.

Prior to acceptance in a Center for Living program the trauma recoveree and his or her family participate in an evaluative process. The expectation is explicit from the first contact that the family will play an important role in the rehabilitation process.

"After the accident there is stress not only on the victim but also on the family. They have to deal with taking an adult child back into the home and the increased financial burden," Ms. Reeves said. "If we can get the families' support then the chances for rehabilitation increase."



The Center for Living at 3700 4th St. in Brooklyn.

Photo by Jody Vollmar

The trauma recovery then no longer sees himself as "a sick person alone" she said. "The recoveree is relieved of the burden of pursuing his rehabilitation on his own without a support system."

After the initial psychosocial assessment, clients have the opportunity to select individual, group and family counseling sessions. Therapy is structured to reestablish and strengthen the individual and social support resources which will sustain the trauma recoveree and his family as readjustment progresses.

The total program lasts for nine weeks during which the client has an opportunity to relearn social skills he needs to reintegrate into society.

To assist in this process the center has a psychodramatist and a dance and movement therapist will can work with the clients to help them become re-acquainted with their own bodies.

"The dance and movement therapist uses music, images and puppets to help the client develop a new social image of themselves," Ms. Reeves said. "They have to acquire a new sensory awareness about themselves."

In addition the repetitive nature of the dance movements helps develop memory recall which may have been damaged by head injuries involved in an accident.

Drama therapy provides a safe environment for the center's clients to try out alternative forms of behavior.

"Everybody has an idea of what they want to be like and what they are. By reconstructing scenes from their own lives they can have a spontaneous joining of the real and ideal self," she said.

The center also provides retraining for deficits caused by head trauma which affect communication and

cognitive functions. Therapists work on increasing auditory comprehension, visual abilities and reading, speech and language, writing skills and comprehension of numerical relationships and arithmetic skills.

A major element in the program is the Social Center. The center offers an opportunity to redevelop social skills and test social acceptability in a setting where the fear of being repulsed or ridiculed is fully recognized and addressed.

Group activities include transportation for field trips, organization of team sports, family activities and community days.

In the future the center hopes to be able to offer job and educational reorientation and respite care for the clients. The center intends to develop modern cottage industries using data processing. By installing terminals in clients' homes data processing jobs in accounting, marketing analysis and home sales can be executed for profit.

## Former patient only wants a job

By JODY VOLLMAR  
Staff Writer

The irony of the car accident that crushed Michael C. Sanford's body was that his supercharged '71 Maverick Grabber was barely moving at the time.

Road conditions were bad as Sanford, then 22, left for work on Jan. 21, 1980 and he had slowed down to only 10 miles per hour when his car hit an ice patch on Hammonds Ferry Road.

Sliding over the ice, the gold and black trimmed 302 special edition, picked up centrifugal force as it flew at a utility pole with increasing speed.

The only thing Sanford remembered before regaining consciousness several days later in the Shock-Trauma Unit at University Hospital Center Baltimore was a frantic attempt to avoid hitting anything.

The force of the collision smashed Sanford's left leg. His left arm shattered the windshield. The impact hurled his body against the seat belt and shoulder harness tearing them out of the seat. His head struck the dash.

His right arm was paralyzed, locked into position across his chest, the hand frozen in a fist. Head injuries left him unable to speak clearly or formulate thoughts. Reading and writing abilities were impaired. Parts of his memory were gone.

In a matter of seconds the bright life he had mapped out for himself was over.

Two years later a recovered San-



Photo by Jody Vollmar

Former Center for Living patient Michael C. Sanford.

ford is reluctant to talk about himself. He would rather commend the paramedics who kept him alive until he was flown to Shock-Trauma, the emergency room doctor whom Sanford credits with "giving me life again" and the therapists at the Center for Living and Deer's Head State Hospital for helping him fight back to almost total recovery.

Soft spoken with a ready sense of humor the blond-haired Sanford shows very little the effects of the

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# Only wants job

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accident. A cautiousness when he moves and a slight slurring of speech are all that remain of the terrible injuries inflicted almost two snowy winters ago.

Speaking slowly and taking care to pronounce his words Sanford spoke of himself as "one of the lucky ones."

"I can walk again. I can see. I can hear. A lot of people can't do that," he said. Referring to the number of patients at the Center for Living in wheelchairs Sanford said, "If everybody in the United States had to spend one week in a wheelchair they would give those people credit for life." Sanford is full of praise for all the people he encountered. "The paramedics are super guys. They are there 24 hours a day," he said. "Dr. Bell (Dr. Roberto B. Bellegarrigue, neurosurgeon at the Shock-Trauma Unit) put me back together again. The Center helped me get into the real world again."

"These people are the finest. You get very very attached to them," he added.

Sanford remained in the Shock-Trauma Unit from Jan. 23 to March 1981. From there he was transferred to Deer's Head State Hospital to begin physical therapy.

Therapists taught him balance and to stand unaided. From there he progressed to walking a few steps and finally made it all the way around the room. "I praised God that I could do it. I was so glad that I could just walk again," he said.

Some days he made more progress than others but he credits the staff with always pushing him. "Sometimes I felt foolish. Felt I couldn't do something but they would encourage me to at least try and I would find out I could do it," he said.

After being released from the hospital Sanford began counseling at the Center for Living. Located in Brooklyn the center was established to help neuro/trauma patients re-adjust to their life situations following long term acute and rehabilitation hospitalization.

Sanford credits Elaine Rifkin, director of psycho-social services at the Center for "Turning the world around for him."

Ms. Rifkin said Sanford was unable to put the accident behind him. "He was feeling a great deal of loss and mourning. He had lost memories, athletic ability, his job and car

and independence. He felt he had caused the loss," she said.

After two months in counseling Ms. Rifkin said he had regained his confidence. "He had come to accept that maybe it wasn't his fault. Maybe it was an accident and he could go on with his life."

Ms. Rifkin referred him for speech and language counseling after his completion of therapy. Sheila Mehring, speech therapist at the Center, worked with Sanford until he had reached the goal he had set for himself.

"Michael wanted to be able to return to work so we geared his sessions to things that are needed for everyday life. We worked on his reading and writing comprehension and slowing down his speech," she said.

Sanford said Ms. Mehring taught him how to talk again. "I slurred every word when I began. Now she has me speaking clearly," he said.

Two years after the crash, Sanford only wants to be able to find a job. A graduate of Severn High School with a major in auto mechanics, Sanford attended Linthicum Technical Institute, where he is proud to point out he never missed a day.

Sanford had only been employed at his last job a few months, happily learning everything from stock to management, when the accident occurred. His job was filled while he was in the hospital.

"If only somebody would give me a chance I know I can do the job," he said. "I want to work."

Although eligible for welfare or social security payment Sanford has refused all public assistance, preferring to support himself with tuning friends cars and teaching other people to do their own minor repairs.

He sees it as a way of paying back the people who supported him through his rehabilitation process. "They all helped me when I needed it and now it's my turn to help somebody," he said.

Looking back over the entire experience Sanford is happy with the progress he has made. "The accident could have gotten the best of me but I didn't let it. I'm back to my old self," he said.

While visiting the Center during their open house on Oct. 19 one of his former counselors told Sanford they didn't see him around there very much any more.

A broad smile breaking over his face, Sanford answered in a quietly triumphant voice, "No, you don't".



Photos by Jody Vollms

The smiles on the children's faces at a puppet show at the Brooklyn Community Center tell you they enjoyed the show. Members of the Black Chern Puppets Theatre, (Left to Right) Yvonne Rug, Michael Lamason and Bill Has presented a show for the children as part of the energy conservation display at the Center on Oct. 20.



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