



STAFF PHOTO BY LAWRENCE H. MCKEE

Supportive healing: Michael Breyer, 50, is appreciative of the support he receives from Beaumont staff and his family while he recovers from a head injury. The Bloomfield Hills dentist is undergoing physical and occupational therapy at the Beaumont Rehabilitation and Health Center in Birmingham.

Walk benefits Alzheimer's victims

Join the fight against Alzheimer's disease by participating in the Sixth Annual Memory Walk on Saturday, Aug. 23 at the Detroit Zoo.

Registration begins at 8:15, followed by the walk at 9:30 a.m.

The two mile walk is open to the general public and to walking clubs. There is a \$25 minimum pledge or donation to participate.

A \$5 registration/zoo admission fee also is charged.

For registration forms, contact the Alzheimer's Association, 17220 W. 12 Mile, Suite 100, Southfield, 48076; phone (248) 557-8277, or fax (248) 557-4642.

Activities include music, aerobic exercises, snacks, door prizes and face painting.

Support, humor aid Hills dentist

BY SALLY TATO
STAFF WRITER

His head injury hasn't changed Michael Breyer. The Bloomfield Hills dentist has come a long way since a patch of ice on Twelve Mile Road sent his car in a tailspin six months ago. It ended soon after, with his brain slamming up against the side of his skull.

Michael Breyer, 50, uses a walker to help him get around now. His speech is clear, his posture straight, his sense of humor intact.

After 31 days in a coma and four life-surviving months at Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak, Michael Breyer has managed to squeeze past doctors' predictions that he wouldn't live, and if he did, he would be bed-ridden, a vegetable.

"They told me it's truly a miracle. There's no way he should be here," said Michael Breyer's wife, Melody.

The dentist's wife knows how long it takes for the brain to heal. She stood faithful by her

comatose husband's bed, talking to him everyday, sharing stories about their daughters, ages 16 and 28, insisting he get up because he had two dental practices to run, clipping his nails and trimming his hair.

She demands more of him when he loses hope and strength. And she still supports him during his last leg of recovery at Beaumont Rehabilitation and Health Center in Birmingham, where he is fine tuning his short-term memory, regaining use of his left-arm and building stamina.

Last month's limousine crash, which injured three members of the Detroit Red Wings team, was like deja vu for the couple. Melody Breyer's thoughts turned immediately to the pain the wives and families of those men would experience and the support they needed to offer.

"It's almost too close for comfort. I've been able to point out to Michael what he went through, through them," Melody Breyer said. "I really have had moments where I've said I've got

to get to those women."

Wings defenseman Vladimir Konstantinov and team masseur Sergei Mnatsakanov are slowly recovering from head injuries at Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak. The two were upgraded recently from "serious" to "fair" condition but still face months of therapy to heal their wounds.

Doctors and therapists can't predict when and to what extent the men will recover. Brain healing still remains a mystery but explanations seem to tiptoe around the amount of swelling and lack of oxygen to the brain, as well as the physical trauma the brain experiences during the accident, said Dr. Sherry Viola, medical director of William Beaumont Hospital's Cognitive Retraining Program.

Viola and a staff of doctors and therapists joined Michael Breyer and two other head injury patients last week at the Beaumont Rehabilitation Center to show the varied stages of recovery, as well as the possible paths Konstantinov and Mnatsakanov could take. All three of the patients suffered their head injuries during car accidents.

Sandra Piazza, 24, needs assistance to walk and speaks haltingly and softly. She is recovering from a Feb. 23 accident. Shantanu Ambaatha, 28, says he's back to normal and was released from the rehabilitation center in February.

Michael Breyer doesn't know if he'll still be undergoing physical and occupational therapy at the rehabilitation center by the time the Wings get there but said he's willing to offer his support.

He credits the support he got from the center, as well as from his wife and daughters to his own healthy healing.

"I feel like the luckiest guy in the world," said Michael Breyer, who eventually wants to return to his practice in Wayne. "I'm starting to walk with a cane and things are looking really good for me... It's a very long, hard road."

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