

Honor

from page 9A

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Hospital extends care to war victim

By PAT MURPHY
STAFF WRITER

She's lucky to be alive. She's even luckier to be out of Bosnia-Herzegovina and in Huron Valley Hospital, where adequate medicine is a godsend and clean sheets are a supreme luxury.

She's Esada Maksic, 42, a Muslim who was wounded in the fighting in the former Yugoslavia but managed to get to the Commerce Township hospital for treatment. The hospital serves a large percentage of West Bloomfield residents who live on the west side of the township.

Recently, Maksic was the focal point of a press conference designed to call attention to the generosity of the Huron Valley staff, whose medical expertise will likely enable her to walk again.

The war — and its devastation — seemed to weigh heavily on Maksic as she told, through an interpreter, how she arrived at the hospital Dec. 30, mainly through efforts by the United Nations and

the cooperation of Huron Valley.

But the care the hospital extended to her — and her son — was the topic of the day.

Until 13 months ago, Maksic said through interpreter George Sertic, a Croatian now living in Farmington Hills, she was a nurse. The children's hospital at which she worked had been destroyed by artillery, but she was working in another hospital and happy to be alive with her husband and son.

In late 1992, however, a random artillery shell exploded outside the apartment where Maksic and her family were staying.

The shell blew off part of her left leg, Maksic said, and mangled her right ankle. It killed four people, including a 9-year-old boy, she said, and wounded several others. One of those was her son, Adia, then 13, who sustained shrapnel wounds.

"Being a nurse, she knew what she had to do to keep from bleeding to death," said interpreter Sertic. "She held both hands

tightly around the bloody stump, waiting for help to arrive."

Help was slow in arriving, he said, in part because medical personnel were concerned about additional shelling. "For 15 minutes, all Adia could do was watch his mother bleeding."

For the next year, Maksic had a dual role in the hospital. Besides being a patient, she was a nurse, applying her much-needed skills wherever possible.

Bosnian doctors fitted her with an artificial left leg and tried to treat her other injuries, according to West Bloomfield physician Norman Markowitz, one of several specialists attending to Maksic and present at the press conference.

But the right ankle refused to heal. It was stubbornly infected and badly in need of advanced treatment.

The United Nations arranged to fly her out of the country, Maksic said, but the evacuation took much longer because she refused to leave without her son — in

part, because the UN didn't want him taking the place of a more seriously wounded countryman. On three occasions she turned down the chance for evacuation because authorities would not allow Adia to go with her.

Authorities finally relented, she said. When their chance to leave came, it was blind luck — or fate — that they were transported to the U.S.

The U.S. was one of several countries that has volunteered to accept and treat the wounded, explained Peggy Price, vice president of patient care services, who said the hospital worked through the International Organization for Migration.

"We have limited resources," said Price. "Mrs. Maksic is our first patient (from the former Yugoslavia), but we hope to have others."

Physically Maksic is progressing nicely, according to Markowitz and his colleagues.

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