

Independence regained after two crashes

Riding his snowmobile on a lake in Whitewater, Wisc., in 2000, Bob Barrett hit a pier head-on. "Someone didn't take their pier out of the water," he said. "I hit it going about 60."

That was his first brain injury.

Flight for Life transported Bob, 42, to a hospital, where he "died twice" and had his first brain surgery.

Brain injury No. 2 came just three years ago.

"I was driving my motorcycle down the road and saw a guy in my rear-view mirror about 4 inches away from me," he said. "It was take the ditch or get run over. I took the ditch."

He again had surgery, where a portion of his skull was removed and replaced with a plate.

"Now I have what they call a brain flap in my head," said Bob, who lives in Jefferson.

As Bob put it, "I needed rehab for everything," and Care Wisconsin referred him to the Milwaukee Center for Independence's Nexday Neuro Rehab Brain Health program. Care Wisconsin matches frail seniors and individuals with disabilities to the health care and long-term care supports and services they need.

"It pretty much brought my independence back," he said.

When Bob first came to the Brain Health program, he had difficulty recalling words, organizing his thoughts and getting motivated.

"I'd sit on the couch all day, lay in the bed all day," he said.



But at MCFI Nexday, he received speech, physical and occupational therapies, and today he's more organized and has a daily routine that helps with his memory.

"I do housework, laundry, dishes, vacuuming - I do all this now," said Bob, who lives with his fiancée, her two sons, and his two daughters half the time. "I use my time wisely. I make lists and do what's on the list."

Right after his injuries, Bob said he was fearful of interacting with people, especially those he didn't know, as he didn't feel prepared for what could happen. MCFI's Nexday Neuro Rehab Brain Health program also helped him integrate back into the community.

"I can walk into a Walmart now," he said.

Bob said he still has daily headaches, and that he'll never be able to return to his job as a machinist, but he said MCFI's program has improved his life immeasurably.

"I feel that if I hadn't received the tools I received here, I'd still be on the couch." ■