

'Never Ever Boy' from Quincy proving doctors wrong

By KELLY WILSON

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Quincy native Trevor Akers is called a "Never Ever Boy" at a physical therapy clinic in Fayetteville, Ga.

That's because after a motorcycle accident in July 2003 in Quincy, doctors told him he would "never ever" walk again because of the severity of his spinal cord injury.

But Akers "never ever" accepted that verdict.

"Don't let anybody break you down," he said. "A lot of people doubt. They say, 'That guy will never walk again.' That drives me to want to prove to those people that it is possible, and the harder you work for it, the more you'll get back."

With the help of CenterIMT Atlanta, which specializes in spinal cord injuries, Akers is walking again.

A 2002 Quincy High School graduate and son of Grayling and Robyn Akers of Quincy, Akers spent the last two summers at the Georgia clinic getting intensive physical therapy.

He learned about the facility, operated by Susan Leger, through his physical therapist at Advance Physical Therapy and Sports Medicine in Quincy, Natalie Stratton.

"The first summer, by the beginning of July, I was able to lock my knees again (using the support of) ankle braces and a walker," Akers said. "It was three years and 245 days that it took me to get my knees to lock again. That was the biggest recovery the first summer."

This summer, Akers continued to get stronger.

"I got up to walking 120 feet," he said. "It took me 10 minutes without sitting down. From being told I would never live outside a power wheelchair to being able to walk around her (Leger's) clinic, it's a blessing."

This summer, Akers participated in the one-mile portion of the Toga Trot, a charity race conducted by the Rotary Club of Peachtree City, Ga., and sponsored by the clinic. He wheeled his wheelchair all but the last 10 meters of the mile, where he got up on his feet, and with the aid of his walker and ankle supports, walked across the finish line.

"That was pretty neat to do that in front of people. It was neat to be a part of something hardly anybody had seen before," Akers said.

Three other "Never Ever Boys" from the clinic, in various stages of recovery, also participated in the Toga Trot.

Akers believes he will make a full recovery, but it will take time, perseverance and hard work.

He's already proven that he can be independent. A student at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, he lives in an apartment and drives himself around in a specially equipped pickup.

"I enjoy going out with my friends," he said. "They love to go to the bar with me. When they are associated with me, they get free drinks and meet a lot of new people. For the most part, as long as I put on a good front and good attitude, people like to come up and talk to me."

Akers says he doesn't drink, so he serves as the designated driver for his friends.

"I'm the limousine service," he said.

Akers plans to graduate in May 2009 with a bachelor's degree in psychology and hopes to be accepted into a physical therapy school.

"I would like to go to Georgia State because it's close to my clinic," he said, and added that his girlfriend lives in Georgia.

CenterIMT Atlanta has told him they're interested in hiring him once he finishes physical therapy school, which typically takes three years. Akers said Stratton was the one who urged him to think about physical therapy as a career.

"I was going to go out west and be a firefighter," he said. "She saw how I interacted with other people and saw that I took an interest in it, the whole network of how the body works."

While working toward a career in physical therapy, Akers also will continue working on his rehabilitation.

"The thing that was taken away from me was my ability to walk, and I have that back," Akers said. "I'm over the hump. It's just a little more time to work out the little kinks. I'll make it.

"I want to, within my first year of PT school, by the middle of that year ... that would be Christmas 2009 ... I would like to be able to stand without my hands on the walker, to be able to use my hands and work on people at the table," he said.

By the time he graduates from physical therapy school, he wants to be able to play sand volleyball.

It's a lofty goal for a guy who was told he'd never get out of his power wheelchair.

"Part of it is being in the clinic and seeing other people recover and knowing it's possible for me," Akers said.

He says his parents have been instrumental in his recovery, and also believes that God has had a hand in it.

"The prayers are working," he said. "There are so many people out there who have been praying for me and believed in me from the beginning. I appreciate all the prayers for sure."

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