



PREPARING FOR THE REAL WORLD

Imagine you are a 17-year-old woman who is paralyzed due to a spinal cord injury; or a 63-year-old man whose stroke has left him wheelchair bound and unable to speak; or a 29-year-old man whose brain injury has impaired his ability to think.

Now imagine returning home after two or three months in the safety of a hospital. You must go to the grocery store. How will you reach the cereal box on the top shelf from your wheelchair? How will you get your wheelchair around the bread cart in the middle of the aisle? How will you tell the deli clerk which lunchmeat you want? And how will people react to you?

Experiencing a debilitating injury or illness can destroy a person's self-confidence. The challenges patients face include not only physical barriers, such as doorways that are not wheelchair accessible, but also the emotional stress of dealing with the general public's reaction to their disabilities.

To help patients cope with these challenges, "we wanted to create a simulated environment, an approach used by some physical rehabilitation facilities, but we did not believe that would give patients the kind of real-world experience they need to prepare to return to their community," says Julie Baptista, director of Occupational Therapy at St. Francis Health Care Centre in Green Springs, OH. "An inpatient rehabilitation

Program Helps Rehabilita- tion Patients Perform Everyday Tasks

**BY WARRENETTE
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program can teach a person to adjust to the life-changes to some degree, but St. Francis clinicians felt our patients needed more," Baptista says.

She noted that simulated environments in rehabilitation facilities are staffed by clinicians whose reactions would not be the same as those of the general public. "We wanted to prepare our patients to deal with as many challenges as we could imagine they would face in the 'real world,'" Baptista says. "We wanted them to know their rights and to know how to exercise those rights."

The facility's answer to the challenges was "Broadway: A Route Home," a program that allows rehabilitation patients to practice everyday tasks at participating businesses.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Green Springs, near Lake Erie in northern Ohio, is a village of 1,500. Since St. Francis Health Care

Summary St. Francis Health Care Centre in Green Springs, OH, decided in 1991 to enlist local merchants in a program in rehabilitative medicine. The program, named for Green Springs's main street, is "Broadway: A Route Home."

Broadway is a program for persons who, because of severe illness or injury, require extended rehabilitation. Along with care for continuing physical or cognitive problems, such patients often need help in performing tasks—buying groceries, cashing a check, renting a video—that most people take for granted.

Under the Broadway program patients can practice these tasks safely in shops, restaurants, and theaters in Green Springs and other nearby communities. Later, escorted by therapists, some patients journey to larger cities and, finally, to their own communities, to exercise everyday skills.



Ms. Parthemore is director of marketing, St. Francis Health Care Centre, Green Springs, OH.



Centre began offering physical rehabilitative services there in 1961, the town's government and businesses have helped enhance the facility's therapy programs. Formalization of this cooperation in spring 1991 was a natural development, according to Baptista.

The Broadway program was developed by the hospital's occupational therapy department with the participation of staff from physical therapy, speech pathology, therapeutic recreation, and social work. The therapists proposed the idea to local merchants at a meeting of the Green Springs Business Association, and the merchants agreed to go along.

"Even the name of the program was a natural," Baptista says. St. Francis is located on Broadway Street, which runs through the middle of the village.

A logo was created for brochures and for stickers that participating merchants could place in their windows. A St. Francis representative contacted every business in Green Springs and movie theaters and restaurants in other communities nearby. The representative explained the patients' need to participate in everyday life. In turn, those merchants who chose to join the program were acknowledged in the brochure, and St. Francis supporters were encouraged to do business with them.

Because the goal is to provide real-life experiences for patients, merchants were given no special training. They were expected to treat patients no differently from the way they treat their other customers.

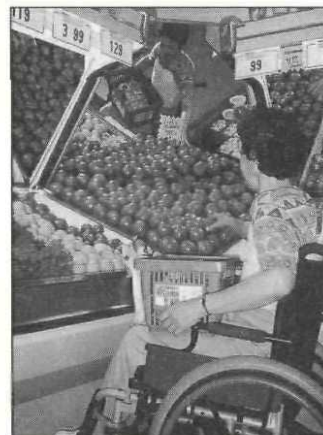
A few problems arose during the implementation stage. One occurred when the village installed ramps on curbs to make all sidewalks wheelchair accessible. Mayor Fred Audritsh asked the therapists organizing the program to check the ramps to make sure they met Americans with Disability Act standards and St. Francis's needs. They found the ramps were too steep. The curbs were reconstructed with free consultation provided by St. Francis. St. Francis has also helped many participating businesses that have requested assistance in increasing their accessibility to persons with disabilities.

Start-up costs for Broadway: A Route Home were negligible because the program takes advantage of the existing environment. Brochures, window stickers, and therapist training time were the only charges. Ongoing costs for transportation and therapist time are covered in the charges for the program.

Persons with disabilities are given the opportunity to practice such skills as banking, dining out, and checking out a book from the library or a video from a store.

How It Works

Broadway is a unique partnership agreement between St. Francis, Green Springs, and surrounding communities. Persons who use wheelchairs, walkers, or canes; those who wear braces or prostheses; or those having cognitive/perceptual deficits are given the opportunity to practice such skills as banking, shopping, dining out, and checking out a book from the library or a video from a store.



Sharon Kidd, a patient in the Spinal Cord Injury Program at St. Francis, practices grocery shopping while seated in a wheelchair.

Some patients may just need to practice walking or propelling a wheelchair on sidewalks, over curbs, or through various types of doorways. Others may need to relearn the thinking processes necessary to carry out everyday tasks. Patients who have had a traumatic brain injury frequently have difficulty with memory, organization, or sequencing of events. In Broadway, they may be instructed in compensation techniques such as using a memory logbook or writing a grocery list in accordance with the store's layout.

The program is divided into four modules, each of which has distinct characteristics.

Module 1: Preparation Activities In the first module, patients begin practicing such skills as money management, map reading, direction giving and following, wheelchair mobility, meal planning, and perceptual/cognitive tasks. This takes place inside St. Francis's therapy departments. It is the first step in preparing patients for their return to the "outside world."

Module 2: A Safe Environment Therapeutic programs in this module help integrate patients into a safe, supportive external community. For many patients, this will be the first excursion outside the hospital since their accident or illness. They may be frightened, embarrassed, or confused, but accompanying therapists offer assistance when it is needed. Patients may go to the bank, store, laundromat, gas station, library, video store, or

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HOSPICE

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HOSPICE VOLUNTEERS

Hospice volunteers play an important role in the lives of patients and families. They provide rest breaks for caregivers, help with meal preparation and simple housekeeping, run errands, comfort patients and family, and listen when others may find their story too overwhelming. All volunteers receive a minimum of 20 hours of specialized instruction and are supervised closely by an assigned hospice team member. Those volunteers who work with Alzheimer's or AIDS patients and those who serve as bereavement support staff receive additional, specific training.

Many of the hospice volunteers become involved with the program after a personal experience with hospice through the loss of a loved one. Because of their experience, these volunteers bring a valuable level of understanding and empathy as they help hospice patients and families cope with the challenges of a life-limiting illness.

THE HOSPICE MISSION

Incarnate Word Family and Alzheimer's Hospice is a living example of the mission of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, the hospital's sponsor. Those in need of hospice care can depend on a comprehensive support system to guide them through the challenges of a life-limiting illness. Despite fiscal constraints, hospice achieves its mission of meeting each patient's unique needs through the dedication of a creative and talented team of staff members and volunteers committed to community outreach and growth. The many cards, letters, and personal thank-yous that hospice receives are testimony to the program's success and the importance of giving each person an end to life that is dignified and pain-free. □

REAL WORLD

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The Broadway program enhances the mission of St. Francis Health Care Centre.

other places that they would normally visit.

St. Francis Health Care Centre has been an integral part of the village of Green Springs for many years. Community residents are accustomed to seeing people from the facility in town and are supportive of patients and knowledgeable about their needs. This enables patients to practice the skills in a real, yet still somewhat protected, world.

Module 3: A Small Community Some patients may need to practice skills, such as shopping in a crowded mall, going to a movie theater, or eating in a restaurant, in environments unavailable in Green Springs. St. Francis has a bus, a van, and several cars for transporting patients when they need to try their independence in a larger community.

Module 4: Larger Cities Patients who live in metropolitan areas may need to practice still more special skills in order to be independent. If patients need experience using public transportation and banking or shopping on a busy street, arrangements are made for them to try their skills in their own cities.

BENEFITS FOR ALL

The Broadway program greatly enhances the mission of St. Francis, according to Sr. Carol Beckermann, OSF, associate administrator of Mission Integration at St. Francis.

"The program helps our patients adapt to their disabilities while increasing their independence and helping them maintain their dignity," Sr. Beckermann says. "Our holistic approach to healthcare deals not only with physical independence, but also with the cognitive and social integration needed to get our patients home again."

Residents of Green Springs believe

the program has helped *them* too.

"It's working well," says Ted Rutherford, branch manager of Croghan Colonial Bank, a participant in the program. "We don't have an automatic door, but we have installed a bell that can be used by a person in a wheelchair. The tellers open the door themselves, and they enjoy the experience of helping."

Patients report that the real-world practice helps them better prepare for the physical challenges they face when they return home.


"You actually see some of the obstacles you'll face when you go home," says Sharon Kidd, a patient at St. Francis. "I went to the hardware part of a store and could see what I wanted in an aisle, but the aisle was too narrow for my wheelchair. It was like 'look but don't touch.'"

"You feel like people are staring at you and you feel very self-conscious at first," she continues. "You wonder if people are just being nice to you because you are in a wheelchair. But the more you're out, the easier it gets. I guess that's how the Broadway program helps the most."

Several other facilities have expressed an interest in the program, according to Baptista.

"The program is good for the patients and the community, and it is low-cost," Baptista says. "Everyone benefits. We consider it a tremendous success." □

Some information for this article was provided by the following St. Francis Health Care Centre employees: Julie Baptista, director of Occupational Therapy; Tim Hillier, marketing communication specialist; and Wendy Pearce, marketing operations specialist.

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