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LEE COUNTY NEIGHBORS: Andi Webb comes home from accident

by Bobby Pepper/NEMS Daily Journal

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Sherry Webb was told earlier this year her daughter would never regain consciousness from the injuries she suffered in an auto accident.

She recalled those words April 15 as she knelt beside her only child in the den of their Tupelo house. About 30 minutes earlier, 19-year-old Andi Webb had come home after spending 3 1/2 months in hospitals in Jackson and Atlanta.

"We've been blessed beyond measure," Sherry said.

Andi, a 2008 Tupelo High School graduate who wants to teach music to children, was seriously injured in an early-morning auto accident Dec. 29 in Neshoba County. She was airlifted to University Medical Center in Jackson. She had a head injury and had broken three ribs, her sternum, a clavicle and an arm.

"They told us in Jackson she would never wake up," Sherry said. "And if she did, she would be in a vegetative state."

She was moved Feb. 11 to the Atlanta-based Shepherd Center, a rehabilitation hospital for patients with head or spinal cord injuries. Andi underwent extensive therapy as she began to recover and communicate with others.

"She was talking, having conversations," Sherry said. "She recognized people. She was directing her own care up to a point."

Andi, however, quit communicating about four weeks ago. According to her mother, the Shepherd Center doctors believe Andi decided on her own not to respond.

"The doctor said once you make gains and strides, you do not lose them," she said. "I think she doesn't talk because she doesn't want to."

Andi was cleared to come home this month, which also meant her mom was returning, too. Monday, April 12, was Sherry's first day at home since the accident.

Wings of Hope, a humanitarian aviation charity, flew Andi free of charge from Atlanta to Tupelo Regional Airport. Two off-duty paramedics volunteered their time to transport the wheelchair-bound teen from the airport to the family home. When Andi arrived, she was greeted by family, friends and colorful "Welcome Home" signs on the front porch.

Sherry is hoping a change in scenery will help Andi break out of her shell.

"We hope and pray that being home in a different environment without people poking or prodding on her all the time, and to be with friends, will help her get better," she said.

Andi's extensive recovery will continue at home. "We're still going to do outpatient rehab," Sherry said. "By no means are we home to give up."

There has been a tremendous outpouring of support and encouragement for the Webb family. The support for Andi included a benefit music show at Main Street Bar and Grill, while the Hill TOP teenagers visited the Webb home this past weekend to do yard work.

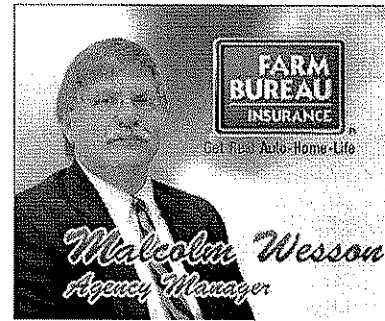
"Our church (Tupelo First United Methodist) has been phenomenal," Sherry said. "I want to thank everyone in the community for supporting us and taking care of us and loving us."

Bobby Pepper is editor of Lee County Neighbors. Contact Bobby at (662) 678-1592 or bobby.pepper@djournal.com

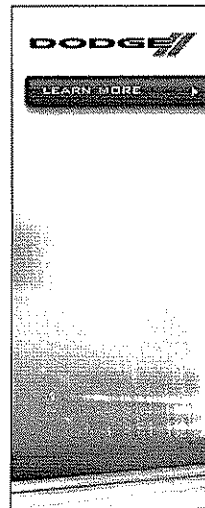
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