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# After wreck, Oak Forest man makes healing his business

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BY GINGER BRASHINGER Correspondent January 9, 2013 11:50AM

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Willie Robinson says he can thank his own persistence for saving his life.

The Oak Forest man was riding his motorcycle while running an errand in 2010 when he was hit by a drunk driver. The accident left him so severely injured that he said he had to be resuscitated three times before he was put on life support at Christ Medical Center.

"The doctor told me, 'You just wouldn't die,' " Robinson said.

Robinson not only survived, but finally, years later, is getting active again. He credits massage therapy for much of his recovery, and that's why he and his life and business partner, Brenda Miller — who said it was "just persistence" that attracted her to Robinson 12 years ago — recently opened LaVida Massage of Crestwood.

Robinson, 43, said he doesn't remember much of the 27 days he spent on life support, but he vividly remembers what he calls "the best dream ever" while in an induced coma after his accident. He found himself among beloved deceased relatives, and a cousin kept urging Robinson to come with them and "be taken care of" rather than endure a long road to recovery.

Robinson said he was just about to enter a tall set of double doors which opened to "the brightest light I've ever seen" when he balked at going with them. The thought of leaving Miller and his family — his children Willie III, 21; twins Kyle and Conner, 20, Carlee, 12; and his mother, Carmella — was not an option for him.

He said that as an ex-Marine and 18-year police veteran, his sense of responsibility was stronger than his injuries.

"I told him, 'I can't go with you,' " Robinson said. "I asked to come back, not for me, but for them. It was imperative that I do something constructive to basically ensure that my family survives."

Years later, and after 88 staples and 27 stitches had helped close a midsection wound, he still uses a cane to get around. But he's making strides, and he and Miller credit massage therapy, which was suggested by several of Robinson's doctors at Christ Medical Center and Rush University Medical Center, with aiding his recovery.

"Every time they work on my calf muscles, it feels much better," Robinson said.

Although Robinson has not regained complete mobility, he and Miller said the massages increased flexibility and blood flow to Robinson's injured legs.

"There's more to (a massage) than just relaxing," Robinson said. "It's a health benefit."

Through LaVida Massage of Crestwood, Robinson and Miller want to make those benefits available to others.

"They offered us the flexibility to run our business to suit our neighborhood, our community," Miller said.

The staff includes nine certified massage therapists, and there are hydraulic massage tables for those who are unable to

"I made sure we had them. I was adamant about that," Robinson said.

Robinson and Miller hope persistence again will pay off.

"It's going to be a good year," Miller said. "We can only go up from here."

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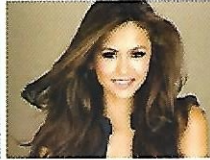
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