

“He was very independent, always on the go. Now he has to rely on other people, and he doesn't like that at all.”

— Wanda Brunette, Kenny Brunette's mother

Kenny Brunette, left, of rural Cameron and his dad, Steve, looked over a family vehicle. Kenny was severely injured last summer while riding in a truck. A horse ran out of a ditch, and its head collided with his, which was resting on his arm propped up on the edge of a passenger-side window.

Staff photo by Steve Kinderman

Thinking positive

A man who suffered a serious brain injury in a freak accident is making progress.

By Christena T. O'Brien
Leader-Telegram staff

CAMERON — Kenny Brunette knows what it means to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. The rural Cameron man was seriously injured July 14, 2006, when a horse ran out of a ditch and its head struck his. His head was resting on his arm, which was propped on the edge of a window in the truck he was riding in.

Then 19, Kenny, who had spent the evening working on his truck with friends, suffered a traumatic brain injury and multiple facial fractures in the accident less than a mile from his home. His head dented the window frame, and his left ear was almost torn off.

He was taken to Lakeview Medical Center in Rice Lake and then flown to Sacred Heart Hospital's emergency department at about 1 a.m., registered nurse Michelle Hazard said.

“It was the most unusual mechanism of injury that I've ever heard of,” she said.

“When I looked at him and the symptoms he was displaying, I thought, ‘This is serious.’”

Initially, doctors didn't know if he'd live. But little by little, Kenny, who spent almost three months in the hospital, part of the time in a coma, has made strides toward recovery. His family is grateful he is alive.

“What can I say? I'm hard-headed,” Kenny joked during an interview at home.

Kidding aside, he said he knows he isn't the same Kenny anymore.

“He's altogether different,” said his dad, Steve Brunette. “I used to ... see wrenches flying out of the garage (in anger and frustration). Now, he's more mellow.”

But Kenny — Steve and Wanda Brunette's fourth child — gets frustrated at times because he's not as agile as he used to be, his mom said.

“He was very independent, always on the go,” she said. “Now he has to rely on other people, and he doesn't like that at all.”

“He moves slower, he thinks slower, he speaks slower,” she said. “He knows what

he could do then and what he can't do now, and that's just overwhelming at times.”

The accident put Kenny's plans on hold. At the time of his injury, he was serving in the Army National Guard as a private first class. He was medically discharged this month.

He also was scheduled to start classes at the Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College campus in Rice Lake three days after the incident, but instead of learning in a class or making a career in the military, Kenny spent his days healing and learning how to speak and walk again after the accident, which also resulted in the loss of teeth and a broken jaw.

Today he has a metal plate in his jaw, which for a time was wired shut to heal, and he has to wear special glasses because of double vision resulting from the accident.

Dr. John Lamoureux, a rehab physician at Sacred Heart Hospital, remains hopeful Kenny will continue to improve.

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Health Matters

HAND WASHING: Red Cedar Medical Center will provide signs and six hand-washing stations to help Dunn County Fair attendees protect against E. coli and other germs that can cause disease.

The hand-washing stations, which provide running water, soap and disposable towels, will be near the food court, petting zoo, horse arena and other high traffic areas. The fair runs today through Sunday.

A report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention warns that thousands of children have been exposed to E. coli bacteria at petting zoos and county fairs.

“According to the CDC, hand washing is one of the most important means of preventing the spread of infection,” said Dr. Sara Herrmann, a pediatrician at Red Cedar Medical Center. “If you wash your hands, you can greatly decrease the spread of diarrhea, colds and more serious life-threatening diseases.” Symptoms of E. coli infection may include severe diarrhea and abdominal cramps. There is little or no fever, and people usually feel better in five to 10 days. Complications can be serious, particularly for those at increased risk. Those who have sudden bloody diarrhea should see their doctor.

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SPORTS MEDICINE: Luther Midelfort again is offering its Saturday Morning Sports Medicine Clinic.

The clinic is from 9 to 10 a.m. each Saturday, Aug. 18 through Oct. 13, in the Orthopedic Center at Midelfort Clinic-Luther Campus, 1400 Bellinger St. Take the elevator to the fourth floor for treatment. Signs will be posted.

The walk-in clinic is designed to help athletes injured during practices or events earlier in the week. While the service is offered during the football season, it is not limited to football players.

A team — including a physician, physical therapist/athletic trainer, nurse and X-ray technician — is on site

to provide injured athletes with evaluation and treatment. Common injuries seen include knee sprains, fractures and shoulder injuries.

Parental consent is required before any treatment.

Appointments can be made beginning at 8:45 a.m. the day of the clinic by calling 838-6363, or athletes can walk in for treatment.

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WELLNESS RETREAT: As part of promoting the physical, mental and spiritual health of women, Luther Midelfort is offering its fall women's retreat Oct. 18 to 21 at Wild Eagle Lodge in Eagle River.

The retreat offers three days of nature, personal time, renewing activities, relaxation and tranquility at a pristine point that overlooks Duck and Lynx lakes.

Numerous activities are available, such as hiking, biking, canoeing, pontooning, playing tennis, swimming in the indoor pool or relaxing in the sauna or hot tub. For an additional charge, participants can golf, go horseback riding or take in yoga or a massage

therapy session.

Luther Midelfort's Women & Family Health Wellness Clinic is sponsoring the retreat. The cost is \$339 per person and includes lodging, two meals daily and gratuities. Transportation is not provided.

The deadline to register is Friday, Aug. 31. To register call at 838-6767.

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DENTAL WEB SITE: Consumers are invited to visit the newly renovated Wisconsin Dental Association Web site at www.wda.org for easy access to oral health news and dental practice information.

Individuals seeking dental care or needing help with oral health concerns can use “Find a Dentist” to quickly locate WDA member dentists who practice general dentistry or any of nine specialties approved by the American Dental Association's Council on Dental Education. The site also includes a public poll on a variety of dental health topics.

From staff reports

Meetings and More

Notices of health-related special events that are open to the public should be sent to: Christena O'Brien, Leader-Telegram, 701 S. Farwell St., Eau Claire, WI 54701 or e-mailed to christena.obrien@ecpc.com. Items must be submitted no later than the Friday before the following Wednesday's publication. Regularly scheduled events will run the last Wednesday of the month. For more information call O'Brien at 830-5838 or (800) 236-7077.

Special events

■ Healing touch, offered by Sue Peck from Optima Health & Vitality, 10 a.m. to noon Monday, Unity Health & Fitness, 3656 Mall Drive. Free. Registration: 833-2201.

■ “How to Stay Young the First 100 Years,” offered by Jon Shimoda of CareFull Chiropractic, 5 to 6 p.m. Tuesday, Unity Health & Fitness, 3656 Mall Drive. Free. Registration: 833-2201.

■ Cancer Empowerment Group, 6 p.m. Tuesday, Luther Midelfort Chippewa Valley, clinic conference room, 1501 Thompson St., Bloomer. Free.

■ “Get to the CORE of Your Training,” 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Tuesdays, Aug. 14, 21 and 28,

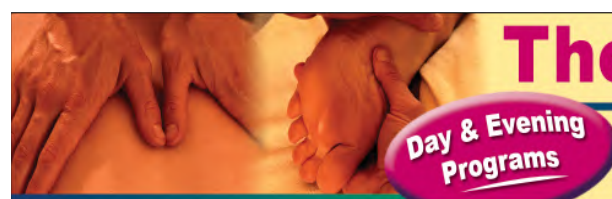
Unity Health & Fitness, 3656 Mall Drive. Free for members, \$20 for nonmembers. Registration: 833-2201 no later than Monday.

■ “The Art of Forgiveness,” first of a two-part workshop, 6:30 to 8 p.m. Tuesday, The Healing Place, 1010 Oakridge Drive. Free. Registration: 833-6028 by Friday. The second part will be from 6:30 to 8 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 23.

■ CVOA Ostomate Support Group, 2 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 15, Luther Hospital, lower-level cafeteria, 1221 Whipple St. Free. Information: Leo Court at 834-2795.

■ “Grief in the Workplace,” 6:30 to 8 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 15, The Healing Place, 1010 Oakridge Drive. Free. Registration: 833-6028 by Monday. The program will offer information for those who facilitate the grief process in the workplace, those returning to work after the loss of a loved one or a co-worker, or those who want to reach out to a bereaved co-worker.

■ Spouse Loss Support Group, 6:30 to 8 p.m. Tuesdays, Aug. 21 through Oct. 9, The Healing Place, 1010 Oakridge Drive. Free. Registration: 833-6028 by Friday, Aug. 17.



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