

Darcy puts her life back together

By KAREN FRY

Staff Writer

Darcy Wilkinson says that if Magic Johnson is willing to educate the public about AIDS she can educate the public on closed head injuries and the possible side affects associated with head injuries.

Wilkinson, 22, of 331 W. Seventh St., Rushville, suffered a closed head or non-penetrating injury on Sept. 12, 1991, when the vehicle in which she was riding was struck broadside by a semi on a Kentucky Interstate in Grant County.

Darcy said she was traveling to Morehead State University in Kentucky from Ball State University in Muncie where she was enrolled as a senior in actuarial science. She said she was traveling to Kentucky to help start a sorority chapter at Morehead State.

Darcy said that the last thing she remembers on the return trip is stopping at a restaurant to eat. When she got into the vehicle, after eat-



Darcy (center), her mother Ramona and father Darrel

ing at the restaurant, Darcy changed positions in the car. "I was riding in the center of the back seat and then I

switched to riding directly behind the driver," Wilkinson said.

Darcy's mother Ramona

Wilkinson said that Darcy had been riding where one of the girls was killed.

Ramona said that she got

a phone call from the University of Cincinnati Hospital in Ohio. "My first thought was that it was my other daughter (Dana) who lives in Cincinnati. I had no idea she (Darcy) was down there," Ramona said.

Ramona said she and husband Darrel got a change of clothing and headed for Cincinnati. "When we got there we talked with the emergency room doctor. He gave us all of her vital information and he said his prognosis was that she would live," Ramona said.

Ramona said doctors said they did not know what kind of condition Darcy would be in when she came out of the coma. "She had a closed head injury, she had hit the front and the left side of her head in the accident," Ramona said.

On Sept. 14 Darcy was moved into the critical care unit in the hospital. Ramona said Darcy stayed there until Sept. 25. "She was in the coma six days. It wasn't like all of the sudden she woke

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up, but she started to be more conscious the following Wednesday. She started opening her eyes. She could respond," Ramona said.

Darcy says when she first awoke she remembers not having the use of her right arm or leg and remembers tubes being put into her nose because it hurt.

When Darcy left University Hospital she was taken by ambulance to Hook Rehabilitation Center at Community East Hospital in Indianapolis.

Darcy says that she does not remember much about her first few days at Hook but says she wasn't herself. "They (the doctors and nurses) said I cried at the drop of a hat," Darcy said.

"Her endurance was very poor. She was always tired. It was a state of exhaustion," Ramona said.

Darcy said she received three types of therapy at Hook including: occupational therapy, speech therapy, and physical therapy. "Occupational therapy deals with sequencing, cooking, working with my memory. I used a memory book from school (BSU), a calendar book, to try to remember things.

"Speech therapy was after occupational therapy and it dealt more with how much I could remember. I would read a story and write a paragraph on it or tell her (the therapist) how much I remembered. Some of it was deductive reasoning," Darcy said.

"After speech (therapy) I had physical therapy. At first they worked with me on maintaining my balance, and reaching (for things) to work on my (arm) span," Darcy said.

"One of the first things they worked on was just to be able to get her out of the wheel chair and get her to sit up for a few seconds unsupported where she didn't wobble. As she progressed they had her stand, she was supported by a belt. After she got her balance then they worked with her on walking

a few steps. Then they had her hold on to a shopping cart and push it," Ramona said.

Ramona says Darcy's progress came along real fast. "They (the therapists) have family conferences every two weeks. In the first conference, they told us they were projecting that she would be at Hook until between Thanksgiving and Christmas. Two weeks later, when we went back, they said Darcy was progressing so rapidly that they were going to release her Nov. 7," Ramona said.

Darcy said Hook's original diagnosis was that she would be walking with a cane. "If I would have known they projected me with a cane, I would have said 'I'm not leaving with a cane, I'm leaving on my own two feet.' I was determined that I was going to get better, Darcy said.

"I want to walk and I want to run, I want to lead a normal life just like everyone else. I want to be an independent woman, like I was before the accident. I don't think that is too much to ask," Darcy said.

Darcy says that the nurses at Hook were amazed at how fast she recovered. "An example would be, on Monday I tried jumping rope and I couldn't jump it. Tuesday I could get six or seven jumps in. I can see myself improving and I get excited that I am improving," Darcy said.

Darcy says that she is continuing her therapy three days a week for four hours a day at St. Vincent's Rehabilitation Center in Indianapolis but says she attributes most of her progress to the staff at Hook.

Darcy says she will continue her rehabilitation and is working part-time. She plans to re-enroll as a senior at Ball State in the fall of 1992. "It really makes you appreciate what you have," Darcy said.

Ramona Wilkinson says she believes Darcy's recovery was sped along by the support and prayers of friends and family.