

Dedicated Care Leads to Surprising Improvements and a Return Home



A Rehab Triumph

Two months before discharge, Charlotte stands aided by members of her therapy team.

How It All Began

Gregarious Charlotte Mitchell loves interacting with people. At 66, full of life and energy, she enjoyed riding on the back of her husband's motorcycle as much as gifting friends and relatives with the signature beaded bracelets she makes.

Late on the evening of October 27, 2007, all that changed. A significant drop in blood pressure caused Charlotte to pass out, fall, and hit her head, losing consciousness. Unfortunately, her husband, already asleep, didn't hear her fall, so Charlotte lay motionless on the floor for eight hours. That caused severe swelling in her right arm and cut off circulation to her legs, resulting in acute compartment syndrome. Then she had a stroke.

The Right Team Makes a Difference

After five surgeries at Baystate Medical Center in Springfield, Charlotte arrived at Charlene Manor in Greenfield, Massachusetts, in need of complete, 24-hour-a-day nursing care—and with the looming specter of amputation of her left leg from the knee down. But soon, with the constant

care of the dedicated staff at Charlene Manor, Charlotte showed some surprising improvements, and when Charlotte went back to the hospital in late November for her final procedure, the surgeon only removed a portion of her left foot.

"They saved my leg," Charlotte said about the staff at Charlene. "I was so happy they didn't remove my leg. I'm very lucky."

A Multifaceted Rehab Plan Yields Results

Still, with no movement in her legs and paralysis in her right arm and portions of her face, Charlotte had a long way to go at Charlene Manor before she could get back to her home and her active life.

Charlotte took part in physical therapy five days a week—sometimes six—working on strengthening her legs, standing, and transferring (for example, from bed to a chair). Although she will continue to use a wheelchair, Charlotte can now stand with assistance and transfer on her own.

During occupational therapy sessions, Charlotte practiced performing self-care tasks—tasks that are considerably more challenging when done with one arm from a wheelchair. While Charlotte has regained gross movement in her right arm, she will not likely regain functional movement. Unfazed, Charlotte has learned to write with her left hand. She can also cook light meals, get dressed, and perform other tasks essential to regaining her independence.

Three-days-a-week speech therapy, including facial and swallowing exercises, has also paid dividends. Not only have her speech and swallowing improved but also, she reports, "Now I can whistle again."

Charlotte gives credit to the staff at Charlene Manor. "They are just an incredible group of people," she said. "They wouldn't be here if they didn't really want to be here. They want to take care of people. It's so obvious. They take care of everyone the same. They're fun." So is Charlotte.

Ready to Enjoy Summer

Known around the facility for her thoughtful gestures (she's working on 60 beaded bracelets to give to residents and staff as a way to say thank you), her positive attitude, and her

sense of humor, everyone already misses Charlotte, who was discharged home to South Deerfield on August 1. But she won't be a stranger: She plans to visit her new friends often.

"They won't get rid of me that easily," she says with a smile. Nonetheless,

she couldn't wait to get back to her crafts, her home, and riding on the back of her husband's Honda Gold Wing GL1500, while there was still plenty of summer left to enjoy ▲

