



*Providing care with
promptness, sensitivity,
respect compassion, and
integrity.*



**Susan & Louis Chalifoux at
Williamstown Commons’
rehab “graduation ceremony”
with Administrator Michelle
Wuest and Admissions Dir.
Judy Bombardier**



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“The Miracle Happened Here”

They were less than a half-mile away from home when it happened. After their direct flight from Paris to New York City, Louis and Susan Chalifoux decided to make the trip home in the early hours of the morning, leaving from New York just after midnight. Following a long vacation in Europe the couple just did not want to stay another night at a hotel.

It was during what should have been the very final minutes of the trip when their lives would be forever changed.

After an eight and half hour flight, then several hours on the road, Louis just couldn’t make it, and he fell asleep at the wheel. Their car slammed into a tree. The vehicle was totaled and the injuries were critical. If it wasn’t for a happenstance passerby at 3:30 a.m. who called 911, they never could have survived. After being extricated from the vehicle, the couple was rushed to the trauma center at **Berkshire Medical Center** with an endless list of critical injuries for each – including serious internal bleeding and injuries to the lungs, liver, countless broken bones, and more.

After their respective surgeries, both Louis and Susan remained in the critical care unit in induced comas undergoing emergency surgeries. Louis would remarkably begin to recover soon after surgery and he was transferred to the ICU, and then a few weeks later, began rehabilitation at BMC. He would then go to **Mount Greylock Extended Care Facility** for further rehabilitation in its specialized nursing environment, where he thrived and recovered.

After extensive surgeries at BMC led by **Joseph L. Pfeifer, MD**, Susan remained on life-support for several weeks. **Paula Aucoin, MD**, a top specialist in the area of infectious diseases, served an important role as Susan was extremely vulnerable to infections in her condition. After spending 10 weeks in a coma from late November through January, Susan’s condition had begun to improve. However, when she was woken from her coma, she was extremely weakened with muscle atrophy, unable to move much at all, let alone stand. Susan needed a skilled nursing environment, and in particular, one that could provide hands-on care while allowing her to transition back to independence with a short-term rehab program once she was ready.

As a former director of nursing in the area of long-term care, Susan’s would make a well-thought out and reasoned decision on where she would receive her next level of care. After considering many possibilities, there was one clear choice – **Williamstown Commons Nursing & Rehabilitation Center**.

“I wanted Williamstown Commons because there is not a facility that can parallel their quality of rehabilitation services,” Susan said. “They have a wonderful reputation.”

Physical therapy included working on strength training in her legs with progressive, resisted exercises, working on high level balance training with and without assisted devices, improving coordination to improve postural awareness and to sharpen abilities to react, and finally, work on community re-entry, including independent transfers in and out of motor vehicles, in the home, walking on uneven surfaces, curbs, ramps and stairs. Occupational therapy included exercises to improve activities of daily living (ADLs) to gradually regain a greater level of independence for potential home living. It was Susan’s faith and determination that allowed her to progress, and to ultimately return home on April 30 – more than five months after the accident. She also credited the professional, dedicated and caring staff at Williamstown Commons.

“The facility, the quality of care, the empathy, humor and kindness – it was way beyond anything you would experience anywhere,” Susan said. “They’re always willing to go the extra mile. I’d recommend it to anyone and everyone. The miracle happened here.” 

