

Volunteers

Volunteer Profile Mike Morin, Peterborough

From near death to helping hand

Veteran of Iraq war battling injuries from accident while making time to assist his community

By ANNIE CARD

Special to the Monadnock Ledger-Transcript

Mike Morin, 27, catches a ride to work twice a week. His driver parks the van near the front door of Summerhill Assisted Living in Peterborough. After the driver unloads a wheelchair and pushes it around to the passenger seat, the two make the necessary maneuvers to land Morin safely in his seat. He fastens his seat belt and propels himself into the lobby and up and down the hallways with his feet — just his feet.

On Mondays and Thursdays, "Mico" as he's been called since he was a small boy in Maine, reports for duty at his volunteer job created in collaboration with Summerhill and Robin Hill Farm, where Morin lives.

Mondays it's Morin's job to deliver the mail — a bundle of letters, newspapers, bills and church bulletins.

Some he sorts and puts in the proper cubbies of a central mailbox. But he likes the room deliveries best, "because I get to interact with the people. There's one resident I also see at church — Saint Peter's. I make sure to use my walker at church, so when I see her at the door with her walker, she says 'Come on, let's race.'"

"I let her go ahead of me," Morin said with a smile.

Since 2006, Morin has been living at Robin Hill Farm in Peterborough, a residential facility for adults with acquired brain injuries. It was a car accident while on leave from the Army that left him with numerous injuries and forever changed his life.

On Sept. 11, 2001, Morin was a senior at Leavitt Area High School in Maine, where he pitched for his baseball team and played center for the basketball team.

"It was 9/11 that made me want to join the Army," he said.

Morin enlisted right after graduation in June 2002.

"Basic training was difficult for me," he said. "I was bowlegged so had a hard time running. They almost didn't pass me. But I worked hard and they decided to keep me."

After advanced training at

Fort Bragg in North Carolina, Morin went on to California, for desert training to learn survival skills and also to see how sand would affect the vehicles his 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment would be charged with servicing.

Morin said his unit shipped out in October 2003.

"Iraq was hot and sometimes very scary. They usually waited 'til night to send their ordinance in. The Iraqis were using abandoned vehicles as markers so they knew where to send their mortars."

Morin got to work. He found an old starter and rebuilt it, put it in an abandoned bulldozer, and got it running.

"I pushed all the vehicles — all those targets right back at the Iraqis with that bulldozer. I was the 'tool guy,'" he said with a half smile. "I love fixing things. Making things work."

After 13 months in Iraq, Morin shipped home with his unit. From base, he was just a few days and a plane ride away from Thanksgiving with his family.

But on the way to the airport, there was an accident. Morin was ejected through the rear window of the car and he suffered internal bleeding, a broken back and more. That was in November 2004.

At one point after the accident, Morin said, "I was without air for 20 minutes. The doctors did not want to revive me. They told my parents I would be a vegetable. My father made them put in a tube."

Doctors told Morin's family he would never speak again, there was too much brain damage.

Morin is happy his father fought for the tube and believed in his will to live.

"I've always had that will, a drive to get things done. I want to do so much."

When not delivering the mail, or working on Summerhill's recycling program, Morin is taking care of life.

He said he loves living at Robin Hill Farm. From his home on Summer Street, he has easy access to the Laundromat, grocery store, Job Lot, which he really likes, and his workouts at the Bond Wellness Center.

Golf is one of Morin's great loves. He started playing with



PHOTOS BY ANNIE CARD

While in his room at Robin Hill Farm on Summer Street in Peterborough, Mike Morin holds the Army Commendation Medal awarded to him for outstanding service in the Iraq war. Morin also wears a dogtag that hangs with a cross and a medal "my Uncle gave me after my accident. It's the patron saint of healing. I kiss it every morning and every night."

his father when he was 12. His clubs rest in a corner of his room and he takes them out as often as he can.

"My swing's getting better. I'm working on it."

Morin said he looks forward to every day. He's learning how to do things for himself again, but he's doing much more.

"If you can find a few minutes to do something for someone else, do it," he said. And of his work at Summerhill, he said, "I do it for my own spirit."

A big day on Morin's calendar is his twin sister's wedding, which is coming up in August. Touching his neat mustache and goatee, he said, "This is coming off. I'm shaving it for Nancy's wedding."

Morin has a MySpace page and welcomes e-mail at mainemike82@yahoo.com.



Morin shares a laugh with Summerhill resident Gabby Pepin after he delivers her mail. He says he likes the room deliveries best "because I get to interact with the people. There's one resident I also see at church — Saint Peter's. I make sure to use my walker at church, so when I see her at the door with her walker, she says 'Come on, let's race.'"

Help Out

Items to donate

Big Brothers Big Sisters needs plastic beads, games (Candy Land, Scrabble, Monopoly), markers, pencils, pens, stamping supplies (ink pads and stamps). Call Rachel at 352-9536. The Harrisville Children's Center needs two filing cabinets: 2-drawer lateral or 4-drawer tower. Call Linda at 827-3905.

Assisted Living Assistance

The Scott-Farrar Home in Peterborough needs volunteers wanted for gardening, reading, crafts, entertainment, play cards, boardgames or bridge. 924-3691.

FixIt Program

Volunteers are needed to do minor repairs for elderly persons, and elderly persons needing assistance. 1-800-322-1073, ext. 6168.

Kitty Rescue

Volunteers needed to help care for cats/kittens; also clerical, transportation, fostering, fundraising, publicity help needed. No offer of help too small. 532-9444.

Samaritans Hotline

Samaritans of the Monadnock Region are seeking volunteers to help staff their 24-hour hotline in both the Keene and Peterborough areas, offering telephone support to individuals who are in need of someone to talk to about their feeling depressed, lonely, anxious or suicidal. 357-5510.

Tutors/Students needed

For Project LIFT, an adult education program assisting with study for GED exam, math, English. 464-5285.

HOW TO SUBMIT

Send us an e-mail with your organization's needs and upcoming volunteer opportunities at volunteers@ledgertranscript.com

LOOKING TO HELP?

If you want to volunteer, but are unsure where you fit in, you can call the Monadnock Retired & Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) and the Monadnock Volunteer Center at 924-7350.

Hard at Work

Stories of volunteer work in the Monadnock region



STAFF PHOTO BY JOSH BOND

Meaghan Farrell, 9, sold many of her childhood toys and books to raise more than \$400 for the town library in Frankestown. "You're an amazing kid," said Library Director Carol Brock in thanking Farrell.

One girl's drive to give back to library

By JOSH BOND

Monadnock Ledger-Transcript

FRANKESTOWN — A recent yard sale organized by 9-year-old Meaghan Farrell of Frankestown raised more than \$400 for the children's room at the George Holmes Bixby Memorial Library. "I did it because I like reading books and I thought it would be nice to do something for the library because a lot of kids go there," said Meaghan. "If you really care about the library, you should give something."

At the stables in front of the meeting house, Meaghan and her mother, Children's Librarian Mary Farrell, set up a collection of some of the books Meaghan has already read, as well as an assort-

ment of her toys. Other families filled adjacent stalls with their goods, the proceeds from which also went to the library.

In February, Meaghan and her mother were cleaning the basement when they found a bunch of toys she had outgrown. Farrell described the process of watching a particularly community-minded light bulb go on above her daughter's head.

"She said, 'if we had a yard sale to sell this stuff, nobody would come all the way to our house, but if we had a yard sale at the library, everyone would come and we could get something new for the children's room at the library,'" said Farrell.

Due to construction at the library, the yard sale was moved to the town stables,

where it was still a huge success. At the end of the day, when the proceeds added up to \$407.75, Meaghan went back to her piggy bank for the extra quarter to make it \$408 even. She said she hopes to use the money to buy some creative seating for the children's room, including a ceiling-mounted, hanging "bird's nest" chair or some puffy building block-style chairs and couches.

"You're an amazing kid," said Library Director Carol Brock, who also thanked Farrell. "The two of them together are an amazing force, and we're lucky to have them."

The library's summer reading program kickoff will begin June 25 with a mime performance at 6:30 p.m. at the Town Hall.

The work is fun, the rewards are endless!

www.monadnockmountaineers.com

The Monadnock Mountaineer Youth Football and Spirit Association is a youth football program serving the Monadnock Region of Southern New Hampshire. It is open to boys and girls from 18 surrounding towns including: the Conval, Conant, Mascenic, and Hillsboro school districts.

We're looking for Coaches, assistant Coaches, and helpers for football and cheer. If you'd like to volunteer, please call 603-533-3857. No experience necessary.

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in Greenfield, NH

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