

Around South County: Co-workers collect funds on behalf of injured colleague

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The phone call that Brad and Debra Kesler got in the middle of the night in June is the kind every parent dreads. On the phone, their son Mike's friend told them that their son was being flown to the shock trauma unit in Baltimore after the 25-year-old fell off of an inflatable waterslide at a party in Edgewater.

A little while later, a surgeon from the University of Maryland Medical Center's Shock Trauma unit was urging them to come to the hospital as soon as possible.

At the hospital, emergency surgery confirmed a broken C5 vertebra and fractures in C2, 3, 4, 6 and 7.

The prognosis for survival was the immediate focus, but after Mike made it through the procedure, the first thing he wanted to know was if he would walk again.

He stayed at the hospital for weeks, where he eventually underwent another surgery and separately suffered cardiac arrest.

Then he was released to an inpatient rehabilitation center in Baltimore where he stayed for several more weeks.

Prior to the accident, Mike was in charge of the site division at Colonial Electric. He was also remodeling a home he had bought a few months earlier.

Upon his release from rehab earlier this month, Mike moved back in with his parents. Brad, friends and Harkins Builders recently made wheelchair modifications to their home.

Colleagues at Colonial Electric came up with a program to donate money from consecutive paychecks to help Mike purchase a kind of stationary bicycle that will help him in his recovery.

South county's Old South Country Club also promised a donation to the cause.

At Colonial Electric's company picnic last Thursday, company CEO Travis Katski presented the collected money to Mike, who arrived at the party in his wheelchair.

The check totaled nearly \$4,000.

Mike has made great progress. Doctors initially told him that he had a one in four chance of walking again, but he is now able to briefly stand with support.

It was the first time that many of his co-workers had seen him since the accident.

Debra said that her son's sense of humor throughout the process has helped the entire family to cope.

For Mike, he's focused on his recovery, determined to work his way out of the wheelchair and back to his home and job.