

## **Getting Back to Health, Back to Work**

Tammy Laframboise delivers mail on a rural route in Jericho, a job she's done for three decades and one she loves. When she was hit by another car head-on this last fall, she feared the resulting injury would mean she'd have to give up her job, and maybe that she'd never drive without anxiety again. After work with Physical Therapist Lori Deering, Laframboise got back to work quicker than she thought possible, feeling stronger and more confident than she ever had.

"It's been my godsend," Laframboise said of the work rehabilitation program she participated in with Northwestern Occupational Health (NOH) – a subsidiary of NMC that focuses on keeping workers healthy.

Laframboise was hit head on by a car that she never saw coming as she delivered along her route. She broke her sternum, suffered neck and shoulder trauma as well as other cuts and bruises. She also developed a fear of driving, and found herself reacting badly to sudden stops and unexpected loud noises. For three months she didn't even get into a car.

Laframboise said she participated in other rehabilitation programs for job-related injuries before, but she said that the NOH program was far more effective at getting her back on her feet quickly.

The program structure was appealing to her. She worked with a multidisciplinary team that included a physician, a physical therapist and a psychologist. Five days each week she spent four hours at the NOH gym, working one-on-one with Lori Deering, PT on activities specifically designed to mimic her work activities: Lifting mail bins, twisting to pick up and place mail, reaching to sort envelopes, etc.

"It covers everything that I do at work," she said as she worked with Deering in the gym to safely lift weighted bins from a low shelf to a higher one.

She started slowly, gradually working up to greater levels of strength and fitness. Meeting regularly with Deering kept Laframboise on track. "I don't want to let her down," she said with a smiling Deering nearby, armed with a hand-held timer and a printout of Laframboise's exercise circuit. "It keeps you motivated."

She also likes that all the components of the program are in one site at Cobblestone Health Commons. She was able to see the doctor there, do her exercise regimen in the first-floor gym, and meet with the therapist there as well. The comprehensive hands-on approach, the consistency and convenience were keys to her success, and have given Laframboise greater confidence and a different outlook on her wellness. Having suffered other accidents, and dealing with daily repetitive motions, she had become accustomed to regular aches and pains.

"I wondered if I had a choice," she said about dealing with the discomfort she thought might be unavoidable. "Now I see that I do."

After just six weeks in the program, Laframboise was ready to get back to work part time. She's now back behind the wheel full time. She feels better than she ever has before, and plans to continue her regular exercise at a gym in her hometown of Fairfax.

"It's made my life so much happier, knowing that I wasn't going to have to give up what I loved doing."

*For more information about the Northwestern Occupational Health work rehabilitation program, call 802-524-1223.*