

The Inter-Mountain

Recovering Strength

Simmons working his way back after ATV accident



Gretchen Price, MA, CCC-SLP, left, and ERCC Rehabilitation Clinical Manager Lona Markley discuss menu options with Grant Simmons before he prepares a meal in the facility's rehab kitchen.

PLACING Grant Simmons had a long-time dream of becoming a pilot. That dream is now a reality as he becomes a fully resident after a serious ATV

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accident if it had not been for the personalized care he received at Elkins Rehabilitation & Care Center.

On Memorial Day weekend, Simmons was riding a side-by-side a few miles from his home when he had the accident — one he doesn't remember. As a result, he suffered a fractured vertebrae, 10 broken ribs, a broken collarbone, optic nerve damage and a traumatic brain injury.

He was transported to Ruby Memorial Hospital where he remained a patient for 12 days. Doctors were concerned about the extent of his recovery and the length of time it could take. His mother, Julie Simmons, decided ERCC was the right place for his therapy.

“He wasn’t comprehensive, so I needed to make the decision,” she said. “I knew he wanted to be close to home. I’ve heard great things about ERCC and I just had a gut feeling that this was where he needed to be and I was right.”

For Grant Simmons, starting a rehabilitative program was scary and his confidence level was low. A 2019 graduate of Elkins High School, he was a member of the Air National Guard, where he worked as a crew chief helping maintain aircrafts. His hopes for a future career in aviation seemed distant.



Submitted Photo Grant Simmons puts some of his recovery skills to the test with a shopping trip to Walmart.

“I was really worried because at first I couldn’t talk right or walk right,” he said. “I also felt anti-social.”

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Taking his concerns to heart, the clinical staff at ERCC took extra measures to make sure Simmons was comfortable with his therapy. They explained that because of his decreased physical and cognitive abilities, his recovery

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each issue tackled one at a time.

For three and a half weeks, Simmons participated in physical therapy focusing mostly on regaining balance coupled with leg strengthening exercises. For occupational therapy he encountered a lot of practice with activities of daily living to improve his functional life skills.

“The people here are like the nicest people ever,” Simmons said. *“All of a sudden, one day it was like I knew what I was doing again.”*

Next came speech therapy, where Simmons was given simulated real life cognitive exercises such as being presented with a certain dollar amount and asked to make change with bills and coins of various denominations. Although that seems simple enough, it’s difficult for a person with Simmons’ injuries. Gretchen Price, MA, CCC-SLP added an extra day to his therapy by coming in on Saturdays.



Submitted Photo Doctor of Physical Therapy Kristina Heitz, left, and Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant Jolena Rhodes assist Grant Simmons in a physical therapy session.

“The first day he wasn’t able to do it,” Price said. *“We kept working and
id he was able to do more and*

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more. The way it works is once something became easy for him, we had to move on.”

Once Simmons mastered some of the skills, he had to put them into practice in the real world. Armed with a grocery list, Simmons, Price and Rehabilitation Clinical Manager Lona Markley headed to Walmart, where he had the task of comparison shopping, locating items and paying for his purchase. In the coming days, he cooked a quick, nutritious meal with staff supervision in the facility’s rehab kitchen.

In between his therapy sessions, Simmons’ parents and friends visited regularly, took him out to lunch and for rides around the area.

“I think the key to his fast recovery was because of his family visiting every day and the support system he had,” Markley said.

After reaching certain recovery goals, Simmons was released and completed two more weeks of outpatient therapy.

“Grant was super motivated and we knew he could make a full recovery,” Price said. *“We were determined to give him what he needed. Together, our staff has multiple years of experience and this is one of the best teams I’ve ever worked with. We’re really happy that we could do this for him and all our patients.”*

Now fully recovered, Simmons is a student in The Bill Noe Flight School in the Marshall University Division of Aviation, where he will obtain his degree in aviation and earn his commercial pilot license.

“I recommend ERCC for patients with these types of injuries and other various rehabilitation needs,” Julie Simmons said.

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