“Back in 1997, I was run over by a truck,” Linda Erickson begins, recalling the incident that left her with nearly two decades of pain. “It happened while I was working at the assembly line putting together trucks at Ford Motor Company in St. Paul. It took 16 guys to get that truck off of me.”

Nearly a month after the incident, Erickson went to see her doctor in Apple Valley complaining of continued knee pain and learned that her right knee was broken. At the time, she says doctors told her she shouldn’t have surgery on her knee because she was too young. She developed arthritis and tried getting steroid injections into her knees to help with the pain. However, despite her best attempts at moving on, the pain continued and she was forced to medically retire just two years later.

Erickson, who now lives just outside of Perham with her husband Bob, says the pain never got any better in her knees. Instead of noticing an improvement over the years, she started dragging her leg and found many simple activities either extremely painful or impossible to complete. “I waited until I couldn’t take it anymore and I came to see Dr. Nelsen,” she says.

Now age 63, Erickson had her first appointment this past June with Dr. Matt Nelsen, an orthopedic surgeon at Perham Health. “Dr. Nelsen looked at my x-rays and asked if I would be willing to do a double knee surgery,” she recalls. “I remember him telling me that he couldn’t even believe that I was walking.”

The double knee surgery was scheduled for June 28 at Sanford in Fargo. Erickson recovered in Fargo for a week after surgery and was then transported to Transitions, Perham Living’s acute care rehabilitation unit. Following her surgery, Erickson used a wheelchair to move around until her knees healed and she regained use of her legs.

“At first I was kind of scared because I remember thinking that I wouldn’t know anybody at Transitions. But everybody was so nice to me and they all made me feel very safe,” Erickson recalls. “It was a wonderful experience staying there. The people at Transitions are so great. I couldn’t have asked for a better place to go to for rehab.”

While at Transitions, Erickson had a rigorous rehabilitation schedule to help her knees heal as quickly as possible. Twice a day, five days a week, she had physical therapy appointments, in addition to a daily occupational therapy appointment. Having such an intensive therapy schedule is one of the benefits of staying in Transitions.

From July 5 through the 18, Erickson worked with Perham Health physical therapist Matt Johnson. Early on in her treatment, the primary focus was working on restoring her knee range of motion. Significant time was spent working on bending and straightening her knees. “We also focused on trying to regain her strength,” Johnson explains. “As Linda’s strength improved, she progressed to standing exercises. After several days of working on regaining motion, we also worked on trying to restore normal walking patterns. Due to her severe arthritis, Linda had developed significant gait deviations.”

“You can’t even imagine what it felt like when I started walking with my walker. I hadn’t walked without dragging my legs for years,” Erickson says. “I put in all of the effort. You just have to do it. In particular, steps were always hard for me. I would ask Matt...”

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if he thought I could do something and he
would say, ‘I know you can.’”
She continues, “Matt treated me really well.
Physical therapy with him was phenomenal.
I feel like it was one hundred percent
successful. I can’t say one thing bad about it.
Matt didn’t cut me any slack and I really liked
that about him. No pain, no gain. He helped
me recover so quickly.”
While at Transitions, Erickson also
benefitted from regular appointments with
occupational therapy staff. “Each day they
would work with me on activities to prepare
me for returning home. For example, they
showed me how to make supper, wash
the dishes, and taught me how to stand
without hurting my knees. They also had
me working with weights for my arms.”
“Linda had lots of swelling so we were able
to address the pain that is associated with
swelling after surgery and we performed
a technique called lymphatic massage,”
explains Mindy Zimmerman OTR/L who
worked with Erickson during her stay at
Transitions.
“One day one of my knees was hurting
really bad,” Erickson recalls. “Mindy came
in my room, helped me using lymphatic
massage, and the pain went away. I couldn’t
believe it! Once the swelling in her knees
went down, Erickson found herself able to
bend her knees and practice completing
more household tasks. She mentions how just
being able to shower again felt like such an
accomplishment.
“She was a very hard worker who always had a
smile and thanked us for helping her even when
she was in a lot of pain. It was a joy to work with
her,” Zimmerman adds.
In addition to finding
her individual therapy
appointments extremely
beneficial, Erickson also
says she appreciated how
all of the Transitions team
members worked together
to provide her with
excellent care. Physical
therapy, occupational
therapy, speech therapy,
and nursing staff all work
together to help patients
achieve their maximum
level of independence as
quickly as possible.
In order to offer patients
the highest quality
rehab experience, a new
rehabilitation center was
recently constructed at
Perham Living. The new center offers an
expanded therapy space with separate
areas for speech therapy, physical therapy,
and occupational therapy.
“The entire Transitions team is phenomenal.
They treated me so well. Two weeks after
my surgery Matt had me already out of my
wheelchair and using a walker. My primary
care physician, Dr. Mark Paulson, came to
Transitions to discharge me and to make
sure I could do everything I needed to
do before I could go home. After just two
weeks in Transitions he okayed me to go
home and I never used my walker again.”
After returning home, Erickson returned
for physical therapy appointments twice
a week, for a few additional weeks. She
was also given stretching exercises to
do at home that help her with restoring
motion and gentle strengthening. She
is now completely finished with therapy
appointments and has just one follow-up
appointment remaining with Dr. Nelsen.
“I can walk. I can clean my house. I can go to
the grocery store or go shopping without
having to ride in one of those little carts.
Everything is totally different,” Erickson
reports.
The way she sees it, her newfound mobility
is an extra good thing because her husband
is currently recovering from a knee surgery
of his own. On November 28, Dr. Nelsen
performed surgery on Bob Erickson’s
right knee. Bob is now meeting with Matt
Johnson in Perham for physical therapy.
Linda Erickson says she is able to use her
rehab experience and knowledge to help
her husband out with his recovery process.
Twice a day she still makes sure to do her
own exercises at home.
“Now that Bob is laid up, I am only five
months out from my surgery and I was able
to plow snow this winter. I had fun doing
it because it’s something I could never do
before,” she says with pride.
Perham Health Earns Patient Safety and Quality Care Awards

Four separate awards were recently presented to Perham Health recognizing a commitment to patient satisfaction and excellence in health care.

“Ensuring patients and families receive the best quality of care is a well-coordinated effort throughout the entire hospital,” explains Mary Mayer, Director of Quality Management at Perham Health. “From housekeeping to leadership, everyone is a critical part of our team. The way we communicate and our culture of safety help to prevent errors and improve our patients’ outcome of care.”

Perham Health’s Partners in Care Council, which includes patients, community members, and families, also plays an important role in helping the hospital maintain the highest level of care. Patients and families are members of the hospital’s internal quality and patient safety committees, as well as other committees throughout the hospital where they provide feedback and recommendations to improve care.

“We are very proud to receive these awards,” Mayer remarks. “Everyone throughout our organization is committed to quality care and patient safety. They demonstrate that commitment each day.”

**Partnership for Excellence Award**
Awarded by the Minnesota Hospital Association
This is awarded to hospitals reaching the superior level of performance in the Medicare Hospital Engagement Network (HEN) 2.0 for quality.

“Our low infection rates, readmission rates, as well as many other quality and patient safety initiatives have shown how a team effort can lead to success and our patients’ satisfaction,” says Mayer. “Staff members’ willingness to share patient safety concerns with leadership has been instrumental in reducing errors.”

**Patient Safety Excellence Award**
Awarded by the Minnesota Hospital Association
Hospitals that achieve outstanding performance in MHA’s Partnership for Patients Campaign by achieving six or more patient safety criteria and three or more patient engagement criteria are awarded the Patient Safety Excellence Award.

The Minnesota Hospital Association HEN 2.0 is working to reduce hospital-acquired conditions by 40 percent and readmissions by 20 percent. MHA created this award to acknowledge the hard work and resources being devoted by hospitals to improve patient safety.

**Top Performing Rural Health Hospital**
Awarded by the National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health
Top performing rural hospitals are awarded this distinction based on four criteria: excellence in quality, excellence in outcomes, excellence in patient satisfaction, and excellence in financial strength. The results have been determined through the Hospital Strength INDEX, the industry’s most objective and comprehensive assessment of rural hospital performance.

Perham Health was recognized for Excellence in Outcomes. The award reflects Perham Health’s commitment to providing high-quality, affordable health care to patients in a rural community.

**Women’s Choice Award – America’s Best Hospitals**
This award is given to hospitals that combine top scores in clinical experience and patient satisfaction rated solely by women patients. As the leading referral source for women, the Women’s Choice Award was created with a purpose to ensure that every woman has the tools to make better health care choices. Award recipients exhibit a commitment to meet the unique needs and preferences of their female patients, elevating the patient experience for all. This is the second year in a row that Perham Health has received the award.

Perham Health was recognized as one of 2017 America’s Best Hospitals for both Obstetrics and Emergency Care. The America’s Best Hospitals for Obstetrics scoring process is unique in that it is the only national list that is evidence-based and focuses on female patient satisfaction. Awarded hospitals ranked above the national average for patient recommendations, as indicated by the data reported by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) surveys.

The America’s Best Hospitals for Emergency Care are hospitals that consistently rank among the best of the 3,500 hospitals reporting on the performance of their respective Emergency Departments. They are judged on Emergency Department performance measures reported by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

“At Perham Health, we have a solid focus on quality, patient safety and patient satisfaction,” says Chuck Hofius, Perham Health CEO. “For years now we have partnered with patients and families in a very meaningful way. It is very exciting to see the results of our work pay off.”
Assessment aims to improve community health
Health starts where we live, learn, work, and play

In 2012, Perham Health, in collaboration with community partners and stakeholders, completed its first Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA). The assessment was prompted by the Affordable Care Act which requires non-profit hospitals to conduct a CHNA every three years to identify critical health issues in their service areas.

This past year, Perham Health partnered again with community agencies and members to complete a second CHNA to identify health status, trends and needs of the Perham Health service area. Information collected shows stakeholders identified access for affordable health insurance and health care, mental health, and obesity as key healthcare issues impacting their communities. Perham Health will now undertake health initiatives with partnering agencies to address these issues to promote healthy lifestyle choices into the patterns of daily life.

There is sincere hope the information presented in the new assessment will further motivate overall health changes for individuals and community.

The 2016 Community Health Needs Assessment report is viewable at www.perhamhealth.org under the resources tab.