



THE ONLY ADULT STUDENT of Chanda's Dance Illusions Studio in Norton, Linda (Bean) Beagley (above) tapped to one of her original songs, "Kick It." She is a survivor of West Nile virus and encephalitis. Dancing is difficult because of her short-term memory loss.

—Herald photo by Carolyn Plotts

Morland woman celebrates recovery from West Nile

By CAROLYN PLOTTS

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Linda (Bean) Beagley of Moreland may be a medical miracle.

In 2000, Ms. Beagley, now 52, recalls, she became extremely ill, though doctors had a tough time figuring out what was wrong. As her condition got worse, she said, she reverted back to the level of a 2-year-old. She couldn't walk or talk and she was blind.

"Doctors didn't know what to do with me," she said, "so they did nothing."

Her pain level was excruciating, she said, but she never received any medication. Finally, she was referred to a doctor in Colby who prescribed a drug that at least let her begin to walk and talk again. Her vision also returned.

During her quest to find out what was wrong, Ms. Beagley went to the famous Mayo Clinic. Unfortunately, she said, while she was there, she contracted a virulent Mersa infection in her skull. For years she had to cut her hair next to the scalp so medications could be applied to her skin. She couldn't shave her head, however, for fear of a "nick" which would prolong the infection.

Many years after her initial symptoms appeared, Ms. Beagley, doctors decided that she had West Nile virus.

"To put it in simple terms," she said, "a 'gate' in my brain got stuck open."

When she asked if there was a support group for West Nile survivors, she was told, "There isn't one. Nobody ever survived that had it as bad as you did."

During this time, she said, her muscles began to atrophy. Ms. Beagley devised her own physical therapy: playing scales on the piano. She said that even though she had never written music before, beautiful music just came out.

Next, she started dancing to her own music and then singing.

In 2008, she once again became ill. She fell, breaking bones, burned herself badly, and suffered short-term memory loss. She began to think she was going crazy and sought psychiatric help.

During her initial visit with a psychiatrist, he told her he couldn't treat someone with encephalitis, a brain inflammation. That diagnosis had been in her medical records for years, but she had never been told about it.

Today, Ms. Beagley takes lots of medications to control her condition, but she says, but she is balanced. She works with a team of health-care professionals: a psychologist; a general practitioner; a specialist; a neurologist; and a personal care attendant. She also benefits from the help of LINK, Living Independently in Northwest Kansas.

She lives with her father, Robert Bean, writes her music and sings.

She says she's making plans to record her original songs.

An adult student at Chanda's Dance Illusions Studio in Norton, Ms. Beagley has a pragmatic outlook on her situation.

"This could come back on me anytime, so I wanted to do this (dancing) while I could," she said. "I've learned you can't take any moment for granted."

Getting ready to perform in her first public recital, Ms. Beagley was nervous about remembering her steps. Her short-term memory loss makes it difficult.

"I'm nervous, but I'm doing it anyway," she said.

Ms. Beagley credits her faith with a tremendous part of her recovery and her ability to cope with her condition.

"I wouldn't wish this on anyone," she said. "I just wish there was a support group for people who have been through the same thing I've gone through."

Even though her children say her personality is different than the mother they grew up with, her family has stood behind her. She has three children, Clinton Yoder, Clayton Yoder and Caroline Lewis, and 12 grandchildren.

Ms. Beagley said she is a stronger person for having gone through her medical ordeal, and now knows real joy in her life.

"If I could ever help anybody else, I would," she said.

Young girl's essay takes top honors

Callie Uehlin, a fourth grader at Golden Plains Elementary School, was one of 12 entrants who received an award for her "Everyday Hero" essay, taking first place among elementary students. Her parents are Paul "Doc" and Tracy Uehlin of Oberlin.



Callie Uehlin

The contest, sponsored by the Northwest Kansas Educational Service Center in Oakley, asked for entries such as short fiction, essays, poetry or art from students in all grades. Winning entries will be published in "The Medallion" by the center.

As a winner, Callie was invited to a reception in honor of all the winners where she got to read her

essay aloud to administrators from 19 school districts, the center staff and the other 11 winners. She also won a \$100 savings bond.

"It was fun listening to everyone read their stories," she said.

Her story focused on her great-grandma Bea, who she said she admires for her strength.

My Everyday Hero

A very important person to me is my great-grandma Bea. Her real name is Leora Maxine. She is called Bea because when she was a baby, she would point to the mirror and say, "Bea."

I admire great-grandma Bea. When she was 5, she had to help

her family by getting a job. Her job was to work at the sale barn for five cents a day. Out of that five cents, she had to pay one cent back to the government for taxes.

Another reason I admire great-grandma is that she's a great golfer. She is 80 years old and still plays golf almost every day. This summer when I learned how to play golf, I got to play with her. She was patient with me and gave me good advice.

Three summers ago, she had a heart attack. Great-grandma showed her strength and survived that heart attack. She couldn't wait until she could take care of her house and yard and... of course, play golf.

Great-grandma Bea is special to me because she has helped many people and especially herself.

Man named candidate for student of the year

John Meitl, son of Mark and Leta Meitl, has been named as a candidate for Student of the Year at the Northwest Kansas Technical College in Goodland.

He graduated from Decatur Community High in 2009 and is a student in the welding program at Northwest Tech. He was nominated by this instructor as the April Student of the Month. Mr. Meitl is a member of

Skills USA and the college Student Government and was one of six ambassador leaders for the year.

Dr. Ed Mills, president of the college, congratulated all of the Student of the Year nominees, one from each department, at a banquet in their honor at Sugar Hills Golf Club.



John Meitl

"Each one of these students are very deserving of this honor," he said.

The winner will be announced at the college graduation at 2:30 p.m. (Central Time) at Max Jones Fieldhouse on Friday, May 21.



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Activities: Games, Prizes, Music, Survivor & Team Walk throughout the evening

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