http://www.ozaukeepress.com/images/101812/hopkinsSM.png**Paralyzed in a motocross accident, Grafton man finds strength in family, friends**

It took only a second. A chain that broke while he was midair on his motocross cycle, and Matt Hopkins' life changed forever.

The 25-year-old man was paralyzed from the neck down in a May 16 accident on his parents' Town of Grafton property and has spent much of the time since then in hospitals and rehabilitation centers.

Hopkins, who worked at the family business, Port Yamaha in Port Washington, has moved into his parents' home, taking over the sunroom. An addition is being built to the house so Hopkins can have his own place. His girlfriend Danielle Bruggink stays with him and helps provide the round-the-clock care he needs.

Hopkins, who has been racing motorized cycles since he was 7 and once dreamed of being a professional motocross racer, is still overwhelmed by the changes in his body, but said he is learning there can be life after the accident.

That's something he saw at the Shepherd Center in Atlanta, where he met people with injuries similar to his who have successful careers.

"I was really inspired by the people who have lived so long and are lending hands to help those who are new to this," Hopkins said.

"One man ran a million-dollar company. Everyone is in a wheelchair. Everyone is dealing with the same things. My doctor was in a wheelchair."

Hopkins is considering going to school to be trained for a new career.

His body is still considered to be in shock from the trauma. He is starting to have some movement in his right arm, which is promising, his mother Margaret Eidenberger said.

"He's still at the point where he's trying to get himself healthy again," she said.

Hopkins was recently hospitalized with pneumonia, but hopes to stay away from hospitals for a while.

After the accident, Hopkins was flown by a Flight for Life helicopter to Froedtert Hospital in Wauwatosa, where he had two surgeries in 2-1/2 weeks.

He then went to the Shepherd Center, where he had surgery on his vocal cords to enable him

to speak and was trained to use the latest in assistive technology.

At the center, he got a motorized wheelchair that he controls by puffing or sipping on a tube. Now he can spin around and wheel up to a table or to his bed by himself.

“I was hitting walls the first couple of weeks,” Hopkins said.

Eidenberger said her son’s sense of humor and determination have helped the family deal with the change and inspired the staff at the Shepherd Center.

She says a prayer of thanks every time she thinks about how close her son came to not having medical insurance.

Eidenberger, who operates Port Yamaha with her brother Mike, signed her son up for a good medical plan in March.

But insurance doesn’t cover the full cost of the equipment Hopkins needs. To prevent bed sores, he must be turned every four hours, which means someone has to get up in the middle of the night to do that.

There are beds that do that automatically, but they cost $48,000. His insurance carrier agreed the bed was medically necessary but determined it was not covered by his plan.

His wheelchair cost $45,000.

He would have preferred to spend that money on a car or motocross cycle.

Hopkins won numerous awards for his cycling and placed eighth nationwide as a junior competitor.

Eight years ago, he moved to Florida with the goal of becoming a professional motocross racer. However, two knee injuries ended that dream.

Hopkins returned to Port Washington five years ago to work for the family business.

He has a 4-year-old daughter who lives in Florida. She visited him when he was in Atlanta.

Hopkins’ friends and family have organized the Matt Hopkins 724 Benefit on Saturday, Oct. 20, at the Railroad Station, 200 S. Railroad St., Saukville. His race number was 724.

The event will run from 3 p.m. to 1 a.m. with live and silent auctions, raffles and music by D.J. Skeeter and Family Traditions. Free beer will be served.

Admission is $20.

For more information or to make a donation, call 284-5995 or e-mail hopkins724@wi.rr.com. Auction items can be found at www.facebook.com/MattHopkins724.