

Ackley World Journal

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Penny Anderson is still recuperating from an accident which took place just over a year ago. While she is back at it at Anderson's Flowers and Greenhouse, she takes on a smaller role, counting on her employees and dear friends to assist her in keeping the business running smoothly.



The healing journey of Penny Anderson

PHOTO AND STORY BY BECKY SCHIPPER
EDITOR

On June 19, 2022, Father's Day, Penny Anderson's world changed. On that fateful day, for whatever reason, she blacked out while driving to Mason City. She was on her way there to finalize her plans for a trip to Alaska that she'd wanted to take for many years. Instead of enjoying that trip, she's been on another journey, one which has challenged her very being.

"I blacked out in my Buick, went through a stop sign and struck another vehicle," Penny began. "I remember nothing of the accident." Penny owns Anderson Flowers and Greenhouse in Ackley and has counted on friends and treasured employees to keep her business going through her recuperation which continues to this day.

According to an accident report from the Iowa State Patrol, Penny was northbound on S56. At the same time, an Appleton woman was traveling east on Highway 3 when the two vehicles collided.

Emergency crews responding to the scene used the jaws of life to remove Penny from her mangled vehicle and she was airlifted to the hospital in Hampton. There, emergency physicians took a better look at her injuries only to load her back onto the helicopter and send her on to the hospital in Mason City.

A witness to the accident visited Penny months afterwards and told her that the other driver spent the night in the hospital with injuries of her own. A mild concussion and a broken ankle. Penny had known little about the other driver until that time.

She remains grateful the driver's in-

juries were not more serious.

Her Buick was taken to a junk yard in Dumont, where a steady stream of gawkers – those wishing to see its mangled remains, wondered how she made it out alive.

"My first memory is waking up in the intensive care unit in Mason City," Penny said. "I was on so many drugs for pain and was hallucinating...I saw big, black bugs crawling up the walls and woke up alone. I didn't know where I was and was very afraid."

The nurses in the emergency room were attired in dark navy uniforms – Penny says she learned later that the color is chosen so the blood doesn't show. The staff was on the other side of large glass panels, making notes in charts as Penny came to.

"I called out for help," Penny began. "I tried to lift my head but was unable

to. And I drifted into unconsciousness again."

Unbeknownst to her at the time, she was in a halo brace to keep her neck and spine from moving.

When next she woke up, she discovered a doctor at her side. He asked if she knew what had happened, and then explained to her where she was. Her memory of the next few days remains limited. Penny says she was on "happy drugs" and feeling no pain at all.

Her long-time friend, Mary Smith, had been coming to see her and doing her best to keep the business going. On one visit, Penny told Mary she was "pulling a Phyllis" by hiding pills under the blanket covers. Phyllis was Penny's mother. She passed away in 2011.

"You better take that pill, hon-

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All that and MORE

Ackley Library provides added benefits and materials thanks to grants

BECKY SCHIPPER
EDITOR

There's a lot happening at the Ackley Public Library, thanks to several donations and grants provided over the past few weeks. Library Director, Marjean Clemons, is excited to share the changes brought about as a result.

Through Henry's Heroes program, offered through the Deb and Jeff Hansen Foundation, the library has received a STEM cart for children to develop their skills in science, technology, engineering and math while visiting the library. The cart includes a

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BECKY SCHIPPER/ACKLEY WORLD JOURNAL

New books, provided through a literacy program of Iowa Total Care, are nearly ready for checkout. Library Director, Marjean Clemons, and her assistant, Stephanie Buhman, begin setting up the display of the new selections.

Help AGWSR determine core values

BECKY SCHIPPER
EDITOR

The AGWSR Community School District announced on July 10 through the district social media account asking stakeholders to share their input as the district begins establishing core values for the district.

"The purpose of these core values is to ensure that we are operating as a district with a clear set of guiding principles that reflect our commitment to excellence in education, life-long learning, and our goal of producing self-respecting, contributing adult members of society," the post reads. The post closely resembles the district's Mission Statement which was created by the board serving under Robert Weber.

Defined core values will help the district make decisions, allocate resources and create an improved culture for students, staff

and community, according to the post.

All stakeholders – those with interest in the district, are invited to take part in the process by visiting <https://tinyurl.com/2vwrwf4m6>. An email is required to indicate value choices.

Those choices include:

Accountability: We hold ourselves accountable for our own actions, admit when we failed our own standards, and always strive to be our best selves.

Critical Thinking: We embrace and encourage thinking critically about the world's problems. We teach students how to learn and be analytical so they can go out into the world as lifelong learners to solve the problems of

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variety of toys and kits which encourage and promote critical thinking, reasoning, innovation and creativity. STEM activities can also teach cognitive, social and emotional development.

"We'll be using the cart for special events until the library can be rearranged which will provide an area for the items to be out," Clemons said. She noted that many of the library programs offer STEM activities and have done so even before the gift from the Foundation.

The cart will be out for use and learning today, June 21, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The library has also been chosen to be part of 100 Libraries in Iowa Literacy Program provided through Iowa Total Care. ITC provides Medicaid healthcare coverage to eligible Iowans and whose initiative to develop childhood literacy is benefiting the young patrons of the library.

ITC provided a \$500 gift card along with tote bags which will be used during the library's Summer Reading program. Clemons has used the funds to purchase titles which will capture the interest of patrons up to young adults. They are currently being processed and will be available for checkout in a short time.

"We were chosen for the ITC award due to the high number of free and/or reduced lunches provided through the school," Clemons explained. Many times, grants and awards are provided to communities based on that rate which is an indicator of need in a school



BECKY SCHIPPER/ACKLEY WORLD JOURNAL

Ackley Public Library volunteer Ella Diemer shares the STEM cart from the Ackley Library, provided as a gift through Henry's Heroes, a program of the Deb and Jeff Hansen Foundation.

district and a community.

Clemons explained that another big change is one which may not be quite as noticeable for library patrons, though it is one of the biggest changes taking place there. After years of waiting, the facility now boasts new lighting throughout, thanks in part to a grant provided through the Hardin County Community Foundation.

"We were provided with \$1,125 for the LED lighting which really brightens our facility," Clemons said. "Forge Electric of Ackley donated their labor and installed the lights in May."

Be sure to stop by the library to check out all the changes and take advantage of the opportunities provided there. ●

VALUES > CONT'D

the 21st Century.

Do Unto Others: We acknowledge the universal rule of "do unto others as we would have done to ourselves". We actively think about how we would like to be treated if we were in the other person's situation.

Doing your Best: We always strive to work on ourselves and achieve our personal best in the classroom.

Excellence: We are a school that strives to excellence in academic, sporting, and artistic pursuits.

Gratitude: We practice gratitude for our parents, our teachers, our free country and our beautiful school.

Growth: We have growth mindsets. We always believe we can improve and work every day to learn something new.

Here to Learn: School is a place for learning. We turn up every day prepared to listen, think, practice and act on our new knowledge.

High Expectations: We have high expectations of ourselves and believe that we are capable of achieving more than we set out to.

Integrity: We are both honest and driven by a clear moral compass. Students with integrity strive to do the right thing at all times.

Leadership: We strive to become the leaders of tomorrow by practicing leadership in our school community today.

Participation: We participate in all academic and sporting activities regardless of skill level. We create an at-

mosphere where participation is encouraged, and we support one another to do our best regardless of skill level.

Perseverance: We recognize that learning is hard, but we can reach our learning goals with the guidance of our teachers and the support of our friends.

Respect: We respect one another's right to safety and dignity at school. We will speak to each other with calmness, politeness and civility.

Teamwork: All of us are one team. We work together because we know that we can achieve more as a team than as individuals.

Willingness to Fail: Success doesn't occur without failure. Our teachers create an atmosphere where failure is acceptable so long as we do our best. We have the courage to have a go and accept failure as an opportunity to learn rather than a negative reflection on ourselves.

Commitment: We are committed to our studies and to the promises we make to our teachers, parents, and friends. We commit to doing our best and always striving to improve.

The survey will be open from July 10 to Aug. 10.

Those interested in knowing more about the three-phase process which will end with a selection of values and their presentation to the students, staff, and community at a later date should plan to take part. The selection of three to five of the above options is, according to the form, Phase 2, Stakeholder Groups. ●

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ey," Mary told her friend. The memory of those words and her friend's thrice-weekly visits were a bright spot in all the scariness that had become Penny's day-to-day life while she remained in the hospital. The memory still makes Penny smile.

"I'm extremely grateful to Mary and Kenny (Mary's husband), for all they did for me during that time," Penny said. Mary, along with Wanda Meyer, did their best to keep the greenhouse open. They stepped up to create patio planters for funerals and did a great job to meet customers' needs as Penny continued on her journey of healing.

"It was stressful for everyone," Penny says. "Mary would visit, keep me updated on the business, and everyone had a lot going on in their own lives too."

Mary, Wanda and other employees, including Emily Ubben, did their best to keep the business afloat until they simply couldn't.

Eventually the doors had to be closed. Still, plants and flowers needed to be watered, the yards needed mowing, the answering machine checked, and Penny's beloved cats fed. It was a tough job, but that's what friends do for friends.

The friends, along with volunteers from local churches, took care of yard work and helped with other tasks to winterize the greenhouses at the end of the season. Friends also worked together to get Penny's home ready for a hospital bed from the Ackley Lions Club, so everything was ready for the time that she would be released.

While her friends prepared for her return, Penny was finally healthy enough to move to an extended care facility. A few days in, she was taken for x-rays to see how her injuries were healing. It was discovered there were more broken bones, meaning another surgery for Penny and leaving her with two plates in her neck and rods along her back.

Her long list of injuries included a cervical spine fracture, a fractured clavicle, fractured ribs, and sternum, chronic atrial fibrillation, incisional in-

fection, a scalp laceration (which resulted in 40 staples), and bilateral retinal hemorrhage which has resulted in diminished vision.

"After one of my surgeries, doctors told me 'some of your bone was taken off, but you won't miss it,'" Penny said. "What I didn't know was that my spine was left exposed in two areas," she explained.

The opening on the back of her neck was eventually covered with new skin, but it was stretched very tight. The other opening did not heal because of an exposed bone which stood almost a half inch above the skin.

"I'd spent eight months on intravenous antibiotics and pills, trying to keep the infection at bay," she said.

Eventually she was taken to Iowa City where doctors cut the bones back so the skin wasn't stretched so tightly. To provide some cushioning, muscle tissue was stretched and moved to that area of her wound to cushion her spine. Her friend Emily took her to the appointments leading up to the surgery, approximately 10 of them, and stood by during the six-hour surgery, waiting

until Penny was in recovery, and finally to her room before leaving.

"Up to this point, that particular injury was infected continuously," Penny explained. "I'd had so many surgeries, I lost count." Along with surgeries, there were treatments for the infections, including a type of vacuum which was placed on her wound to suck out the infected tissues. The process continued for several days until all the loose tissue and skin was removed.

"This was the lowest point for me," Penny said. "It had been months since I'd been home. I barely got outside. My days were spent walking up and down a hallway, waiting for my IV twice a day."

Though her friends from Ackley were very good about visiting her, she was still very down - she'd been hospitalized and in rehabilitation and physical therapy for so long. All she wanted to do was to go home.

One of her faithful friends began a card campaign, taking out an ad in the Ackley World Journal, hoping that the community would respond and send more cards to brighten Penny's

very long days. Those cards, while she couldn't always read them, brightened her spirits. She enjoyed the pictures on them while she waited for her visitors to read them to her. She appreciates each and every one sent.

Still, being away from home was difficult, and not being able to be outside was even more so.

"I remember during one of my friends' visits, we were allowed to sit outside in a gazebo," Penny said. "Oh! It was so nice to be outdoors!" A nurse saw to it that she could get outside more frequently after that.

Along her journey, Penny was also dealing with issues relating to her eyes and a major change in her vision. Her glasses had been destroyed in the accident, and while Mary had ordered her new ones, her vision wasn't improving. When she finally could, she visited a local ophthalmologist who began her on injections for her previous ocular hemorrhage. Despite the effort, her vision has never improved.

It wasn't until five months following the accident - on Nov. 3, 2022, that Penny was finally al-

lowed to go home. For the next five months, more friends - Kathy Heetland, Linda Brass and Emily, would take turns transporting her to Iowa Falls for wound care. Another, Janet Abbas, sat with her during one of her many surgeries/procedures and continues to check on Penny to see how she is doing.

"I would have ended up recuperating in a nursing home, if it hadn't been for my friends," Penny says. "I am alive today because of all the prayers that everyone said for me, of that I have no doubt. I still have pain in my back and continued issues with my vision, but I am hopeful things will improve," she said. "I lost my spirit for a while and I'm still trying to get it back to some extent."

She is thankful for each and every act of kindness shown during her extended journey toward being healthy and whole again.

"I'm so very touched to know that so many care about me," she said. "I wouldn't have minded dying in that accident... I know I'd have gone to a better place and been with my family again, but that isn't His plan. My journey isn't over." ●

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SHOWING JULY 21-27
BARBIE
 RATED PG-13
 TUES. - FRI. 7 p.m.
 SAT. & SUN. 3 & 7 p.m.

MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE - DEAD RECKONING PART 1
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 SAT. & SUN. 3 & 7 p.m.

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Congratulations!

Congratulations on your retirement, PAULA!

Paula Palmersheim, RN retired from Hansen Family Hospital June 30th after serving our patients and community for 31.5 years!

We appreciate all she's done for our organization and wish her the best in her retirement!

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"Here Comes Smiley"

Happy 90th Birthday to Roland Mehmen

"Smiley" will be turning 90 on July 21, 2023.

His family is honoring him with a card shower.

Cards may be sent to:
**714 Conn Street
 Parkersburg, IA 50665**