

# Accident becomes chance to help others get lives back

BY SARA REED

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Nate Jorgenson's life changed in an instant when he was hit by a drunken driver more than three years ago, fracturing vertebrae in his neck and causing a deep brain hemorrhage.

Jorgenson, 29, had to relearn how to walk and talk following the Oct. 1, 2004, accident. Now he and his family are using their experiences with his recovery to help those who have suffered similar injuries.

Earlier this year, Debbie Jorgenson, Nate's mother, launched the Shared Journeys Foundation, a non-profit geared to helping people who've suffered traumatic brain injuries walk their path to independence.

"I'm just out there to help everyone and help them do anything," Nate said during a recent inter-

## On the Internet

To learn more about the Shared Journeys Foundation, visit [www.sharedjourneysfoundation.org](http://www.sharedjourneysfoundation.org).

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Nate Jorgenson

day-rehabilitation program that would help with skills including personal care, meal preparation, money management and socialization.

Nate will use his experiences to help clients through their recovery, and he is working on his physical training certificate so he can further help clients.

"I want to help people with everyday life," he said. "I know it's hard. I'm there for them. I want to embrace their future."

Nate is still probably two years from being able to live on his own, something he's looking forward to doing again.

"I'm ready," he said.

The foundation is still in its infancy, but Debbie Jorgenson plans to launch a community-wide fundraiser in March, which is brain injury awareness month.

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V. Richard Haro/The Coloradoan

Nate Jorgenson, of Fort Collins, does squats Thursday at the Fort Collins Club with the help of Lauren Sheehan, a senior sports medicine major at Colorado State University. Jorgenson suffered major brain damage when he was hit by a car about three years ago.

view at the Fort Collins home he shares with his mother and stepfather.

Debbie Jorgenson's goal is to establish a transitional living facility as well as a

Photos by V. Richard Haro/The Coloradoan

Nate Jorgenson works out at the Fort Collins Club with Lauren Sheehan, a senior sports medicine major at Colorado State University.

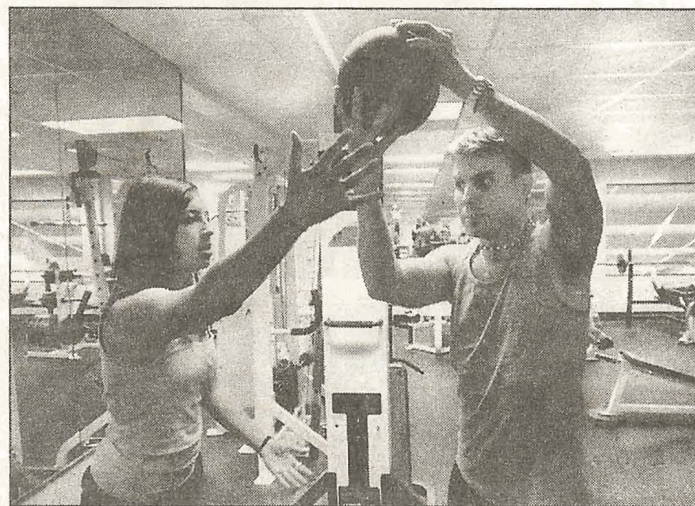
## Accident

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That monthlong fundraiser will culminate in an awards banquet in April, something the man who hit Nate is working with the family to put together.

Shawn Turner, 35, was sentenced to 10 years of probation for the accident, but from the time of his April 5, 2005, sentencing, Turner has said he wants to help the family.

Under the settlement of a civil suit reached earlier this year, Turner must hold two fundraisers a year for the foundation, something he said he would have done anyway. Turner said he is also planning a dance-a-thon in January to raise money for the



foundation.

"I told (Debbie Jorgenson) from day one that anything she needs, she's got it," Turner said.

Turner said he is deeply humbled and privileged to be working with the family on the foundation. "This is a family that could

look at me and wish me to burn in hell," he said. "I will work for her family for the rest of my life."

There are resources available in the community to help people recovering from traumatic brain injuries, but there are gaps, said Christy Dittmar, clinical director for the Center for Neurorehabilitation Services in Fort Collins.

The center provides services to about 600 clients a year, about half of whom have suffered traumatic brain injuries.

It takes years to recover from such injuries, and continuing care is extremely important after the acute care has ended, Dittmar said. That care helps to transition people back to living independently, the final goal for many patients.

"If they're not able to transition to independent living, they flounder," Dittmar said.