



# Northeast Center for Special Care

[www.ventilatorcare.com](http://www.ventilatorcare.com)

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## Neighbor Spotlight: Patricia G.

"Roady" on a New Road

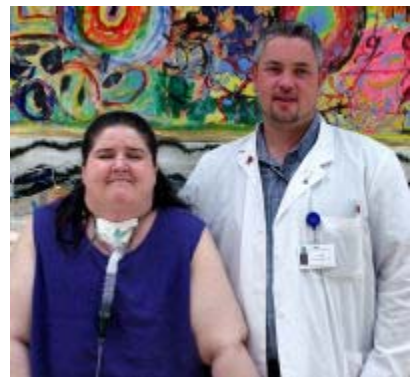
Patricia G. was a "Roady" whose road came to a halt when she began having respiratory problems which eventually caused her to be placed on a mechanical ventilator. Patricia tells us in her own words about her journey and the new road she travels:

My name is Patricia and I am grateful to be able to tell you my story. I was born in Boston and my family moved to upstate New York when I was four - I'm in my thirties now. Our family is very close-knit and always has been. I have three brothers and we all help take care of my mother.

Before I became disabled I was the night manager in a Pizzeria. I was also a Roady - that is someone who travels with bands to performances. A Roady helps transport the band, carries equipment, sets up the performance. I did all of that and I was the person who did the sound checks. I worked with "hair bands" and "heavy metal groups." I have a degree in music production and management and I really liked working with groups.

I am also artistic and I like to work with my hands and I made jewelry and did leather beading. I am an active person I did a lot of hiking and I traveled a lot because of my Roady work. I also volunteered and worked with local Girl Scouts troops.

Patricia G. and Tom Harvie, RRT, CPFT



My problems started a few years ago when I contracted blood poisoning and that led to emergency surgery where I flat-lined on the operating table and was given a tracheostomy. Over the years I had recurrent bronchitis as well as sleep apnea.

In the past year my sleep apnea got worse and I was diagnosed with COPD. I started to have more frequent hospital admissions and my condition became so severe that I was placed on a mechanical ventilator at the hospital and remained there for two months.

I never thought it could happen to me - I kept thinking 'you're so young.' I was scared that I would have to be on the ventilator for the rest of my life.

While in the hospital my physicians told me that I needed more rehabilitation. One doctor told me that I would have to be on a ventilator for the rest of my life - another doctor told me that if I worked hard and lost weight that there was a chance that I could be weaned from the vent. I wasn't keen on going to get more rehabilitation because I wanted to go home, but I knew I needed the help. I didn't want to have to live life on a ventilator.

The hospital suggested Northeast Center for Special Care and I came here. It was tough the first few days. When I first came here I didn't know what to think. I was grumpy and I cried but then I started to get to know my staff and they started to work with me to get off the ventilator and to lose weight and take care of myself.



"I was scared that I would have to be on the ventilator for the rest of my life."

Tom Harvie, RRT, CPFT, Northeast Center ventilator care program director told us:

When she arrived Patricia was on the vent twenty-four hours a day. We worked with Patricia as soon as she came to us helping her to understand that she had an excellent chance of coming off the ventilator and improving her health. It didn't take

her long to become motivated. She also began working closely with Trish, our dietician who developed a weight-loss regime with Patricia that has been very successful. Patricia also joined our "Nutrition Club," which is facilitated by Trish our Dietician. Patricia is an active member of that group and is a great support to the other members.

Once her self-confidence was up Patricia quickly went to work:

I started to push myself and I worked hard. I listened to my therapists and the things I learned in therapy I began doing for myself so I could get off the vent. I also have a weight-loss program in place and I've lost a significant amount of weight. A month and a half after I came to Northeast Center I was able to be weaned from the ventilator!

I felt free - once I was weaned I was able to become more active. Every day I would get up, get dressed and go do activities. I met other Resident-Neighbors here and have made many friends. As I said I did jewelry-making before I came here and I was pleased to discover they had that activity here at Northeast Center. I also play cards, I go to Mass and participate in the other things they have here.

The respiratory therapists here are great. The first thing they taught me was about the ventilator and what it does. When I had questions about my breathing and what it meant on the ventilator they explained it to me so I developed a good understanding.

The physical therapists are also excellent. They walked with me every day and were took the time to go slower when I needed to and were patient with me when I needed to stop and rest.

Another thing I learned was how to take care of my trach. In the hospital they always did that for me - here I learned to care for myself and the respiratory staff was always willing to teach me.

L to R: Thomas Harvie, RRT, CPFT, Andrea Napolitano, CNA, Patricia G., and Karen Beneway, LPN.



Being weaned from a ventilator and improving her health has given Patricia a second

chance and she is not going to sit idly by as she told us:

Right now my mother and my brothers are looking for a bigger place for me to live as soon as that happens I'll be able to go home. I plan to keep on a weight-loss program and my goal is to lose what I need to to remain healthy and to be able to have my trach removed.

I also want to go back to school. I really want to go to nursing school. When you go through health problems like I have you develop a lot of insight and I want to be able to help people, especially people with weight issues.

Northeast Center has been a great help to me. The nurses, respiratory therapists and all of the staff have always treated me with respect. When I was in the hospital I had to stay in bed all day - here they always encouraged me to get out of bed and have as normal a day as possible that made me think that maybe there is hope and that I can have my life back again. This is a wonderful place, the staff is terrific and they have really helped me to have another chance at an independent life.

Tom Harvie reflected:

Patricia worked diligently - she really took advantage of the programs and activities we offer here and has made a lot of friends. She has been joy to work with and we will miss her but its great when we get to say goodbye and know that another person will be able to live a productive life.

Our ventilator weaning program and our dedicated clinical staff have helped hundreds of people like Patricia to wean from mechanical ventilators and learn to live healthy lives. The mission at Northeast Center for Special Care drives our philosophy and treatment programs.