

Small victories help Vaughn on road to recovery

By Marc Morency

Life is a series of small victories these days for Batavia High School teacher Joy Vaughn and her mother Jo.

The 25-year-old Vaughn continues to improve a year after being seriously injured in a whitewater rafting accident in Costa Rica. Vaughn was an adult chaperone of an independent student trip for spring break sponsored by the American Council for International Studies (ACIS), based in Boston. She was accompanied by fellow foreign language teacher Julie Johnson and nine students.

The incident left her in a coma-like state, which she recovered from, only to face exasperating physical therapy at MarionJoy Rehabilitation Center.

For months, Joy had limited use of her arms and legs, but her extensive therapy has allowed her to walk on her own. She now also is able to perform what most people consider routine tasks. With some assistance, she now is able to help set the dinner table in her family's home and do laundry.

"Every day goes pretty slow, but one little sign of improvement makes us happy for a week," Jo Vaughn said Tuesday.

Since the rehabilitation provided by MarionJoy is no longer covered by Vaughn's insurance, the family is seeking alternative means of therapy, such as swim classes at the YWCA in Naperville.

Vaughn was scheduled to start the classes Wednesday, something which she is looking forward to, since swimming is one her favorite activities.

When asked if she is looking forward to the swimming classes, Vaughn answered in a barely audible whisper, "Yes, sir, I am."

Speech therapy is another big part of Vaughn's recovery and something that her family is beginning to focus on, according to Jo.

"It takes her longer to process informa-



Jo Vaughn, left, is grateful for all the support the community has shown for her daughter, Joy, right. Photo by Brian Hill

tion, but she enjoys reading and can still speak Spanish, which she taught at the high school. Often times the family spends time reading magazine articles about current events and talking about them afterwards. This helps Vaughn by stimulating more complex thought processes, her mother said.

Yet another exciting opportunity for Vaughn, is the chance of returning to one of her pastimes, country line dancing. Her mother hopes to enroll her in a DuPage County Park District special needs line

dancing class. She says the program is designed for people like Joy who are recovering from life-threatening injuries or who have other disabilities.

"A lot of tasks we take for granted Joy has to work at doing," Jo said. "Yet there are times she amazes us."

Numerous fundraisers have been held for Joy, and a great deal of money has been raised to support her medical treatment, which the family appreciates, Vaughn said. Any kind of assistance always is welcomed,

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she said, since there is much more progress that can be made towards her recovery.

"I cannot express in words how thankful I am of the generosity the Batavia community has shown towards Joy," Jo said.