

COMMUNITY REHAB CARE



LISA BULL/The Patriot Ledger

■ Community Rehab Care co-owners Eileen Chernoff, vice president, Ann Gillespie, chief operating office, and Virginia Mills, president, at their Quincy location. The company has three locations.

CENTERS HELP SMOOTH THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

3 who met in Braintree work with traumatic brain injury

By BRAD KELLY
The Patriot Ledger

Helping victims of traumatic brain injuries often can be a frustrating process. But the owners of Community Rehab Care have been able to build a rewarding career guiding those with such disabilities to recovery.

Ann Gillespie of Marshfield, Eileen Chernoff of Ashland and Virginia Mills of Wellesley started their first Community Rehab Care center in 1996 in Newton. The business, which opened a Medford location in 1997 and a Quincy center in 2001, specializes in treating people with neurological disorders, and traumatic brain injury victims in particular.

The three met while working for the Braintree Rehabilitation Hospital and decided to start their own business to help meet a need in the region for outpatient rehab centers.

The three centers treat more than 80 patients in their neurological rehab program.

"Most of our patients have injuries resulting from accidents inflicted in motor vehicles and at job sites as well as assaults and gunshots," said Gillespie, chief operating officer and a therapeutic rehab specialist.

Mills said the centers treat memory and concentration loss,

disorientation, slowness of thought and speech, fatigue, visual and hearing impairment and other ailments.

The centers are in busy areas where patients can take the physical therapy into public spaces. Mills said it is important to get patients comfortable with everyday life activities like crossing the street.

"Our purpose is to try and restore some semblance of their life prior to (the patient's) accident," said Mills, president of Community Rehab Care and a physical therapist at the center. Chernoff said getting patients into a routine is the best way to

get them back to daily life and a little more independent.

"We teach them everyday activities that you and I take for granted," said Chernoff, a vice president and nurse. "Grocery shopping, paying the bills and cooking are difficult tasks for people with a traumatic brain injury."

Most patients will never fully recover and always need some kind of supervision, Gillespie said. But many still can make noticeable progress as they recover from trauma.

"The majority of the patients' families were told their loved ones might not make it," Gillespie said. "This rehabilitation is life-altering for everyone involved."

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