



By Carolyn Lee

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A year ago, at 7:30 a.m. on Jan. 8, 2008, Chase County Schools Secondary Guidance Counselor Marcie Yaw was entering an attendance meeting at school when she felt a terrific headache.

That headache, and accompanying nausea, was the beginning of a year of change for the Imperial resident, who will be 60 years old next month.

Yaw had suffered the first of two aneurisms in her brain. She was flown to the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha, where it was determined that a weak spot on a vein in the middle of her brain had burst.

That aneurism “re-bled,” and a platinum coil was surgically placed on the vein. Her brain then swelled, and a shunt was positioned on the other side of her head.

During this time, she evidently also had a second aneurism, Yaw said.

After a month of a drug-induced coma, Yaw was both an inpatient and outpatient at Madonna Rehab Center in Lincoln.

She relearned how to cook, do laundry, organize her day and remember things.

She had short-term memory loss, but was thankful that she could speak and walk. Some of her fellow “bleeds,” or aneurism survivors, couldn’t.

Her short-term memory eventually returned as she utilized intense strategy-type games such as Brain Twister, cribbage and Sudoku.

Yaw still does “a lot” of Sudoku and crossword puzzles. “I feel I’m not thinking as quickly when I stop doing Sudoku,” she explained.

“I think I’m pretty much back to normal,” she added, although sometimes she searches for the right word to use in a phrase. She also remembers all of her students’ names, but comes up blank once in awhile on an adult name.

Yaw had to regain her driver’s license, also. She was tested on her ability to “multi task” while driving, and last summer was only given a license for a 50-mile radius at first. “They thought I was too easily distracted,” Yaw said, pointing out that she was only waving at people around town as she usually did.

Later on, she received a regular license, but still waves to people.

As the high school counselor, Yaw has always been very involved in the students’ curriculum, search for schools after graduation, and graduation itself. She missed all of that last spring.

Teachers and administrators stepped in to take over her duties. Several of last year’s seniors said they missed her guidance in the scholarship application process and school selection.

Yaw credits Secondary Principal Mike Sorensen, Superintendent Matt Fisher, secretaries Kay Dean and Ann Miller, and teacher Cathy Hanna for keeping students on track.

“It was wonderful because everybody bit off a part of my job,” she pointed out.

Yaw returned to Imperial last April and impatiently waited to be cleared by her doctors for work.

It was well known that she usually worked until 12 midnight or 1 a.m. at school. Not any more.

The latest she's worked since resuming her position this fall is 6 p.m.

"Part of my therapy was how to get enjoyment from things other than my job and family," she said. Therapists didn't care what that was, as long as she found something. "I think I've done somewhat better on that," she laughed.

Although she enjoys gardening, she cut back on that last summer when it was too hot. She makes more opportunities to slow down.

She still gets tired at work.

But, looking back at where she was a year ago, Yaw said there's so much to be thankful for—"Being alive, having my health, and I'm grateful to all of the people who made it possible for me to come back."

Yaw also credits her family for her recovery. Husband Kent and children spent a lot of time "parenting her" in a role-reversal type situation. They also spent a lot of time with each other, which Yaw said was also something for which to be thankful.