

# Foundation Supports Physical Rehabilitation

By Skip Silvestrini, medical director of Essentia East Rehabilitation Services

I began my career in physical medicine and rehabilitation in Duluth more than 25 years ago. At that time, Polinsky Medical Rehabilitation Center and the Miller-Dwan Rehabilitation Center were independent organizations. Neither had much capital and both eventually had to merge into the larger system that is now part of Essentia Health East.

Physical rehabilitation services are dependent on human skill. In the early days, we relied heavily on funding from the Van Gorden Foundation, which is now merged with the Miller-Dwan Foundation, to help train our therapists. I had trained at Mayo and was accustomed to a highly trained therapy staff. Thanks to the Foundation's help, I continued to enjoy a similar if not even greater commitment to the emphasis on the human skill sets that rehabilitation demands to be effective.

I met Pat Burns of the Miller-Dwan Foundation about two years after I joined Polinsky. I had been struggling to obtain equipment that could measure bladder function in persons with spinal cord injury and multiple sclerosis. Bladder continence is not only important medically, but most would agree it's important socially. I hoped the Miller-Dwan Foundation could help. I don't even remember writing a grant; after simply writing a letter explaining the equipment's importance, the Foundation bought the machine.

Since that time, I've lost count of all the times we've received the Miller-Dwan Foundation's help. I also can't recall ever being denied any purchase that would enhance our ability to provide new rehabilitation services to the people of Duluth and the region. With the support of the Miller-Dwan Foundation, we introduced Robomedica to the region to help people regain strength through sensory feedback in their lower extremities; we added Vital Stim and Fiber Optic Esophageal Evaluation for swallowing; we built a state-of-the-art balance center; and with the recent purchase of the Armeo Spring (see photo above), we can now re-educate the upper extremity with sensory feedback like we can the lower extremity. Saebotex gloves, also purchased with funding from the Miller-Dwan Foundation, allow people to work on upper extremity reeducation at home. We've trained our staff in Pilates and purchased the Reformer equipment needed to build the Pilates program. Because



of the Foundation, our staff has been trained in such areas as lymphedema, proprioceptive neurofacilitation (PNF) and Kinesio Taping, to name a few.

Equipment and education aside, we created Access to Fitness to help persons with disability work out in our Fitness Center. And through the Miller Dwan Foundation, we were able to develop the Abilities First Fund. This fund helps individuals obtain needed equipment their insurance won't cover to maintain continence or mobility, as well as their dignity.

Because of space, I can only scratch the surface of the support we've received and this short list is only intended to emphasize the wide range of support we've received. The direct benefit of the Miller-Dwan Foundation to those of us practicing rehabilitation has been enormous. But the indirect benefit to the people we serve is immeasurable. I have continued to practice physical medicine and rehabilitation here in Duluth for 25 years because I am impressed with the outcomes we achieve. Those outcomes are obtained because of the dedication and talents of therapists, nurses and managers working in our programs. But we are state-of-the-art because of the grants provided by the Miller-Dwan Foundation.

502 East Second Street ❖ Duluth, Minnesota 55805 ❖ 218-786-5829  
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# Abilities First

Celebrating resources and opportunities for Polinsky, Essentia Health/Miller-Dwan Rehabilitation Services and our community by the Miller-Dwan Foundation

## Polinsky Family Recognized



Throughout their adult lives, Nat and Viola Polinsky were passionate about ensuring that quality physical rehabilitation care existed for the people in our area. Nat served as the vice president of the historical Duluth Rehabilitation Center for many years, working tirelessly to grow the organization into a national leader in rehab care. In 1964, Lois made a wonderful gift in Nat's memory to the Center in honor of his commitment to patients. The center was then renamed Polinsky Medical Rehabilitation Center.

On November 18, 2011 the Lake Superior Fundraising Executives

recognized Nat and Viola Polinsky with the "Outstanding Legacy Award" at their annual Celebrating Community Giving Day awards luncheon. The award is presented posthumously to an individual or family who provides a significant estate gift and demonstrates the true spirit of philanthropy through their support of a community non-profit.

Polinsky family members traveled from as far away as Florida to attend the luncheon and witness the community's appreciation for the legacy Nat and Viola left for our region so many years ago.

Nat and Viola's passion for rehab services continues to be lived out today at Polinsky Rehab Center. Caring and skilled staff work with more than 56,000 adults and children each year helping them to maximize their abilities. Miracles happen every day at Polinsky. We believe Nat and Viola would be proud.

Viola Polinsky said of the gift in honor of her husband, "I could see him with a great big smile on his face. Nothing could have made him happier than starting Polinsky. He had a lot of pride in it."

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# Creative Dance for Children with Physical and Developmental Challenges



For 18 years, the Miller-Dwan Foundation has provided funding from its Van Gorden Fund to support the Minnesota Ballet's Creative Dance program for children with physical and developmental challenges. Since that time, the Ballet has offered a weekly class. Children usually considered outside the experience of dance have been drawn into its warm circle, experiencing improved flexibility and strength all while having the fundamental human experience of moving in rhythm to music. "It's essentially physical therapy all wrapped up in the pure joy of dance," says artistic director, Robert Gardener. And they have had the excitement of performing before an audience in the School of the Minnesota Ballet's annual Student Performance. They provide input into choreography and many have performed in *The Nutcracker*, enjoying

the challenge and thrill of being a part of a professional production with all its color costumes, lush set, live music and huge audiences.

"They are just joyful about dance, and sometimes they are so joyful that I have to get them to stand still for a bit, but it's a wonderful energy," says Suzie Baer, creative dance instructor.

The Miller-Dwan Foundation is committed to supporting community non-profit organizations that are making a difference in the lives of people with physical disabilities. Pat Burns, Miller-Dwan Foundation president, says, "We believe in using our resources to help people overcome barriers and capture the possibility in all of us. The work of the Ballet truly exemplifies that goal."



## Miller-Dwan Foundation Pet Therapy Fund

For years, specially trained therapy dogs have helped Polinsky and Essentia Health Medical Rehabilitation patients reach their rehabilitation goals. From helping people mobilize to improving motor skills, dogs move physical therapy beyond the realm of painful hard work and into a more manageable play time. And for children with autism, dogs offer a doorway into a whole new world. And their roles are expanding. From the hospice program and radiation oncology to physical rehabilitation or mental health and beyond, dog-assisted therapy is valuable in nearly any health care setting.

Designate your donation to the Miller-Dwan Foundation's Pet Therapy Fund and help our furry friends deliver motivational, educational and recreational interactions that enhance recovery, treatment and quality of life for children, adults and seniors in our region.

Visit [www.mdfoundation.org](http://www.mdfoundation.org) or call 218-786-5829 to donate.

## Giving Thanks

"This is a long overdue letter of appreciation for the care my daughter received at Polinsky Medical Rehabilitation Center after her stroke.

During her stay, and later as a day patient, [my daughter] received intensive occupational, physical, speech and psychological therapy. Each therapist built a close working relationship with her, and the progress she made was incredible. Her weekly care meetings allowed her therapists to share her progress with each other and also with her family; because of this she was able to constantly reach for and set new goals.

Although leaving her inpatient therapists was difficult, she soon realized that her outpatient therapists had their own areas of expertise that would help her advance to the next step of her recovery. Dr. Skip Silvestrini was her physician throughout her treatment and her advocate the whole way; he always pushed for the goal of 'perfect,' and it was a goal we all embraced.



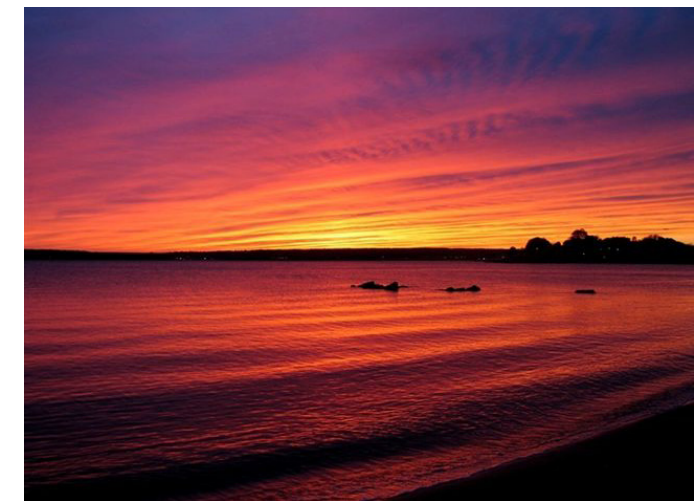
While self-motivation and lots of love from family and friends are important parts of recovery, it was the skill and expertise of the staff at Polinsky that truly brought her back. Within a year of her stroke, she returned full time to her job.

I take this opportunity to share our experience at Polinsky with others. Somehow, 'thank you' doesn't seem enough for helping our daughter regain her life."

## Leaving a Legacy

Creating a legacy is both a financial and emotional decision. That's why the Miller-Dwan Foundation takes time to get to know you, your objectives and how they can best be achieved. Whether you leave a gift to the Foundation in your will or as part of a gift annuity or trust, whether your gift is big or small, you can count on the Miller-Dwan Foundation for long-lasting commitment to your dreams and goals.

When you give to Polinsky and Essentia Health / Miller-Dwan Rehabilitation Services, you make real change happen. Your gifts help people walk again, talk again, eat and live. You renew hope; you purchase courage and you buy resilience. It takes people like you who are willing to act on the knowledge that doing whatever you can, no matter how big or small, makes a difference.



If you'd like to hear more about giving to the rehabilitation programs at Polinsky and Essentia Health / Miller-Dwan or the many ways you can create your legacy, contact Joan Oswald, donor relations at (218) 786-1504 or at [joswald@mefoundation.org](mailto:joswald@mefoundation.org).