Zachary Short gets to enjoy life

back on the farm with

his wife Jodi

Short and

daughter

Brynlee

Short at

outside

Assaria.

their farm

Miracle

• From page A6

the shovel. He hooked it on Zach's shoulder and pulled him off the cart. Zach fell to the ground.

"I thought he was dead right here," Ferm said, adding that Zach wasn't breathing. "Then I dragged him away from it. Then he started breathing.'

Ferm put out the fire on Zach with his hands.

"He's Zach's guardian angel," Jodi said of Ferm.

"He saved my life," Zach said. "The wooden shovel - we were so lucky we had that. I think it is kind of a sign that it was there.

Close calls

There are plenty of reminders of that October day. Zach can still hear the snapping from the electrical surges. The charred spot at the field still won't grow anything. And there are the scars from the accident – which he's not bashful about showing – as well as his amputated legs.

He remembers a split second of pain and seeing a white light. Then, for weeks, everything went dark.

In an induced coma in a Wichita hospital, he dreamed a lot – about the people who came in and out of the hospital room. He recalls talking to his deceased grandfather in one dream.

For Jodi, however, the first days were tense. Zach was in critical condition. Doctors weren't encouraging.

"The doctor came out and said, 'We have done all we can today, and we will move forward tomorrow if he makes it through the night," said Jodi. "I said, 'What do you mean if he makes it through the night?' He said he was very sick, and I lost it.'

It seemed like the end was near again on day three when Zach coded for nine minutes, his heart stopping and his kidneys not functioning.

'He couldn't breathe, and they were using a bag to pump air and keep him alive," Jodi said of Zach, who was on a ventilator: "They made me make a decision. I told them, 'Don't shut him off. His brain is still there."

Doctors called everyone into the room to say their last goodbyes.

'God must have done some work that night," Zach said.

The medical staff started taking water off his lungs. As the night progressed, his kidneys began working and his levels began to go back to normal.

"The next morning, his lungs were half empty and the doctor said he hadn't seen anything like this," Jodi said.

Prayers

The Short family always lends a hand when folks need it, said Gypsum-area farmer Justin Knopf.

"Everyone in the community thinks so highly of the Short family, just all they do for neighbors and their approach to farming and being a part of the community," Knopf said.

Knopf said that when he heard about the accident, his first thoughts were of a Scripture passage from Matthew, "Where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I among them.'

Using the CB call signal 10-4 to make it easy to remember, he and his family set their clocks for 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., stopping wherever they were to pray. Other farmers across the area joined in at the same times.

"We all stopped the combines and tractors and prayed for Zach, that the Lord's will be done and He perform a miracle and leave Zach here to be with his wife and daughter," Knopf said.

"Harvest is a busy, intense time; you hardly stop and eat," he added. "But here was a community of folks who believe in prayer - who care enough about family to stop their harvest operations, stop whatever they were doing in the field ... for several moments and pray. For me, that is a powerful testament to people's faith and also the care that everyone has for this family.'

That's just what folks around here do: When someone is in need, they lend a hand and they pray. They prayed the night Zach coded. They prayed for his countless surgeries and every other step along the way.

"The night he was dying, the whole hallway inside the burn unit was filled with family and friends praying," Jodi



Zachary Short visits with Les Ferm, Short Farm Machanic Worker, and close family friend in the

Com There's more to the machine shop outside of Assaria. story. See video at said, adding, "People were hutchnews.com. waiting for the call the next

morning (that Zach had died),

Donations pour in

Fundraisers were orga-

which encompasses Assaria,

Gypsum and a few other ru-

ral towns in southeast Saline

A bucket passed around

at a home football game just

\$650. Food benefits brought

in thousands, as well as a

GoFundMe support page,

which is up to \$63,000.

along with Alex Weller,

auction at the school.

days after the accident raised

Assaria's Lori Blake, who

is on the local school board,

owner of Exit 14 restaurant

in Gypsum, and a few other

school district residents, or-

ganized a spaghetti feed and

Green Bay Packer Jordy

Nelson signed items to be

auctioned off at the event.

from their hearts, as well,

other auctions, there were

said, adding that someone

even auctioned off an hour-

and-a-half of hay grinding.

than 700 meals that night.

In all, with a donation from

a hospital foundation, they

Weller, a lifelong friend

"He is the only reason I

passed my freshman year of

college," he said, explaining

with a chuckle, "He made me

Prayerful homecoming

For months, the extended

Southeast of Saline commu-

nity sought news of Zach's

recovery. Zach's mom, Lisa. along with Jodi, kept fellow

That includes his continu-

ing journey back to health.

He underwent about 20 sur-

Zach spent 20 days in a coma.

geries, which included one to

partially amputate both legs.

arm and worked to heal the

Doctors battled to save his left

It had been a long journey

from hospital beds in Wichita

and St. Louis. Finally, on

Valentine's Day, Zach came

home to a crowd of family

and friends, many holding

'Welcome home" signs. Hundreds lined the street

leading to the farmhouse,

praying for, said Blake.

It was what they had been

"Zach is a testament of

what can happen through

that collective prayer," she

whether providing meals,

or, of course, praying, has

'We are just thankful

been amazing, Jodi said.

we are in the community

we are in," she said. "In a

everyone is close family.

community like this, it's like

Long row to hoe

Zach's journey is far from

over, Jodi said. He continues

to do physical therapy. Five

days a week, they travel to

Newton, where he goes into a

It's been a rough journey,

hyperbaric chamber to heal

stubborn wounds from the

"Even when we came

home, it was like bringing

home a newborn baby for

the first time," she said. "You

self, the things the nurses did

But through every step, "I

just stuck with God, kept my

days where he gets more

have to do everything your-

skin grafting.

Jodi admitted.

all the time.

faith." Jodi said. There are bad days –

helping with the farm work

The support through it all,

prayer warriors updated

daily on Facebook.

burn wounds.

Zach said.

said.

of Zach's, said he rented

a house with Zach while

attending Hutchinson

Community College.

go to class."

raised about \$70,000.

Weller said he served more

real ag-centered items," she

Blake said.

But residents donated items

"What was different from

nized across the Southeast

of Saline school district,

County.

and they never got it."

frustrated, Zach said. He can see, from the farmhouse window, his family rebuilding used Case combines, one of the farm's businesses.

'God, what am I going to be able to do?" Zach said he has asked. "Why did this happen to me?""

His family is always there to bring him back up, he said. And there are plenty of good days.

In August, Zach was fitted for new legs. On his first attempt, he stood up and, largely without help, walked. As the days go by and his skin gets thicker, he hopes to wear the prostheses longer.

"He is doing amazing," said Jodi. "Nothing is stopping him. God is so good."

"I know I still have a long way to go," said Zach.

However, he said he has been told that while he will have some limitations, he should be able to again climb into a tractor.

That's the ultimate goal, he said, reflecting that's saying a lot "when you're not supposed to live."



"They said I was supposed to be on dialysis the rest of my life, too," he said.

Incredibly, his internal organs are fine, Jodi said, adding that, as T-shirts worn by community members point out, Zach is nothing "short of a miracle.'

Kansas Agland Editor Amy Bickel's agriculture roots started in Gypsum. She has been covering Kansas agriculture for more than 15 years. Email her with news, photos and other information at abickel@hutchnews.com or by calling (800) 766-3311, ext. 320.





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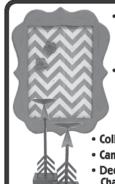
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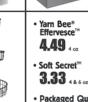
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