**Yvonne Bice and Greg Crabtree**

**Yvonne is a retired healthcare advocate and her son, Greg, is a retired truck driver.**

**Mt. Juliet, TN**

Yvonne Bice and her son, Greg Crabtree, live in Mt. Juliet now, but Bice has lived all over the country through her work as a healthcare advocate for The Tennessee Primary Care Association, The National Association of Community Health Centers and in California. She was living in California when she got the call that changed their lives. Crabtree, who worked as a truck driver, had been in an accident at age 45 on July 5, 2014. (Bice was 65 years old at the time.) “He was changing a flat tire on I-65 North,” Bice said. “He got safely on the shoulder, got out to change the tire and got hit by a motorcycle. He was severely injured. The primary impact point was on his face.” A nurse was the first person to stop and help. She and an off-duty fireman opened an airway so Crabtree could breathe. He was taken to TriStar Summit Hospital. He was in a coma for 15 days and intensive care for three weeks. He required multiple surgeries on his face. But that was just the beginning of their healthcare journey. They spoke with Communications Coordinator Lacey Lyons about navigating healthcare services while living with a TBI.

YB: “There are two things. There’s getting the healthcare and getting it paid for. The hospital bill alone was over half a million dollars. The hospital was out of network. Greg was dying, and fortunately, the ambulance took him to the first-available trauma care. He didn’t exactly choose to go out of network. After a year, we got it down to a little more than $1,000.”

Crabtree spent 15 weeks recuperating at Shepherd Center in Atlanta. Shepherd Center is a rehab facility that specializes in acquired and traumatic brain injuries and spinal-cord injuries. He was approved for a financial-aid package because it was unlikely he would return to work at that point.

YB: “They have a family residence adjacent to the hospital. They do therapy every day. They work you up to five or six hours a day. It’s physical therapy; speech therapy; occupational therapy; behavior therapy; music therapy. The second day, they had a hoist and got him in a wheelchair and did his first three hours of therapy. We were there five weeks for inpatient care and 10 weeks for outpatient. He moved into the apartment with me adjacent to the hospital. I took him to the outpatient center every day.

In that time, he went from being in a coma to being able to walk with a walker; talk; eat and drink. They gave him his life back. It’s as simple as that. And we never saw a bill.”

After Crabtree finished his stay at the Shepherd Center, Bice decided to move with him back to the Nashville area to continue his care at Vanderbilt. Crabtree had spent most of his adult life in Nashville. Bice thought he’d be happier close to his friends and their family in the Southeast. He qualified for Medicare in 2015. That year, he was accepted into Tennessee’s vocational rehabilitation program.

“A person with the extent of Greg’s issues needs ongoing therapy. I knew there would be more services available in California. The big need is for some kind of residential situation because I’m aging, and we don’t have other family members who could fill my role. He’s going to need more than just housing.”

Bice said Crabtree’s situation is unique because his needs are “funny things that you don’t think about” unless a person is a caregiver. In addition to reminders to take his medications to control seizures, Crabtree doesn’t drive and needs help with his finances. (Bice has a conservatorship.) Because both his short-term and long-term memory are affected by his TBI, he has trouble shopping in a grocery store independently or doing leisure activities around their home, like using the remote on the TV or reading.

GC: “I was like a sergeant at work. I was a boss. But in terms of how I operate now, I could not even be a private. I’m proud of myself for learning how to adapt. It took a long time for me to get used to the concept of not working. Now, it’s a question of, ‘What am I supposed to do with my time?’”

When asked what she was proudest of Crabtree for accomplishing since his accident, Bice listed his work ethic and his attitude, qualities that previously served him well as a truck driver. Doctors initially thought Crabtree would be bedridden for the rest of his life, but he relearned how to perform daily tasks. They are both looking for ways to be more social after the isolation of the early days of COVID-19. They visit Bice’s sister, Crabtree’s friends and support groups, but they say more of those opportunities were available before the pandemic.

YB: “Since Mom is the caregiver, it’s a balance between being Mom and letting him be independent. But there’s more time that I need to do my healthcare and rest a little more often. At the beginning, all I thought about was being a caregiver. I didn’t think about myself or take care of myself. Those first six months were the hardest thing I have ever done in my life. I had the advantage of having worked in the industry. But I got to the point where I said, ‘I don’t know how to do this, but I cannot just run a rehab facility. We both have to have a home.’ Like the rest of the world, we are a work in progress.”