

SCI News

A publication by the Spinal Cord Injury Program at Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital.

Issue #3; Spring/Summer 2007



"This is my favorite thing to do in the Intense Therapy Program," says Vicky Schmidt about peddling the Giger. "I feel a real mind/body connection when I'm doing this. I feel more in control of my body."

New Intense Therapy Program Challenges the Limits of Recovery for Spinal Cord Injury Patients

Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital launched its Intense Therapy for Motor Recovery Program for spinal cord injury (SCI) patients last fall. The newly developed program extends therapy beyond traditional rehabilitation by using state-of-the-art equipment and therapy approaches based on current advances in science. High-intensity exercise and activity-based therapies are the primary focus of the program with a goal of motor recovery and functional improvements. The Intense Therapy Program also provides hope and freedom by challenging the limits of what an individual may be able to accomplish.

Intense Therapy Explained

The Intense Therapy Program offers patients innovative therapy methods that are aimed at stimulating the damaged nervous system and enhancing motor recovery following spinal cord injury. According to Tim Lesch, lead physical therapist for the program who has more than 20 years of experience with spinal cord injury, much of the theory behind the therapeutic interventions is based on bombarding the central nervous system with movement related sensory input

from below the injury level. The sensory input is repeated over and over again, often thousands of repetitions during a session. The intention of the mass amounts of sensory input is to assist with the body's own attempt to repair and reorganize the damaged nervous system.

Tim is excited about the opportunity to be offering SCI patients treatments that are focused on recovery. Currently, two patients are participating in the therapy program and one patient just completed her treatment.

"We're still trialing the program," Tim said. "But I'm hopeful that advances in research and therapy interventions will lead to more promising and consistent outcomes. One of the greatest rewards, personally, will be if I am able to offer many of my previous patients significant functional gains."

Treatment and Services

After a comprehensive therapy evaluation and biofeedback evaluation, a patient begins an individualized intense therapy program. The program requires a minimum of three hours of therapy per day, three to five times per week. Individual programs are designed and reviewed weekly by an interdisciplinary team, which is led by the patient's Mary Free Bed SCI physician. The Intense Therapy team always takes into account an individual's goals and needs when designing a treatment plan.

Whenever possible, exercises and activities are performed out of the wheelchair to stimulate the central nervous system. Common treatment interventions include the following approaches:

- Body-weight supported treadmill training
- Giger MD (a medical device and treatment approach)
- Functional electrical stimulation
- Core strengthening and weight-bearing activities
- Resistance training and cardiovascular conditioning
- Aquatic therapy

continued on next page



Carrie King found new strength and energy in the Intense Therapy Program. Her hard work on the body-weight supported treadmill and with other activities has increased her confidence and independence. Best of all, for Carrie, she's better able to manage her one-year-old baby at home.

An Evidence-Based Program

Intense therapy is receiving a lot of support from the SCI community, leaders, and researchers. When developing the program, the staff at Mary Free Bed found that research on intense therapy was compelling enough to support more aggressive efforts to recover any additional motor function. Many researchers have documented the advantages of using body-weight supported treadmill training, functional electrical stimulation, and high-intensity exercise as valuable treatment methods. Even for those who have been long paralyzed due to spinal cord injury, research shows that intensive training and exercise may enhance motor recovery or even restore motor function.

According to Tim, Mary Free Bed's Intense Therapy for Motor Recovery Program will always be a developing program. "It's an exciting time to be working with SCI patients when advances in science and research are resulting in new therapy approaches. There is a lot of promise for the future of the program. Mary Free Bed continues to be committed to offering programs that are based on current advances in medicine and science."

Who Can Participate

"It's important to be clear about who may benefit from participation in the Intense Therapy Program," Tim said. "We make every attempt to advise realistically on the likelihood of motor recovery." Acceptance into the specialized program is based on fulfilling the medical and functional admission criteria and on the results of a comprehensive therapy evaluation.

Medical and functional criteria include:

- Complete or incomplete spinal cord injury (candidates with incomplete lesions are more likely to achieve the desired results; candidates with complete lesions will be considered on an individual basis)
- Three months post injury
- Successful completion of an acute inpatient rehabilitation program
- Referral by a Mary Free Bed attending physician
- Bone strength adequate to meet physical demands
- Satisfactory results on therapy evaluations
- Insurance coverage or self-payment
- Personal motivation and a desire to push the limits of recovery

Patients would only continue in intense therapy after three months if they experience significant functional gains that warrant additional time in the program. To move to the next phase of the program, there must be motor recovery or functional gains.

Vicky Schmidt, a current patient of the Intense Therapy Program who sustained a spinal cord injury five and a half years ago, is already experiencing improvements in her balance and ability to move after only a couple of weeks in the program. Vicky comes to Mary Free Bed three days a week for four hours of therapy at each visit. "I can't wait to be re-evaluated," Vicky said. "I've only been doing this a short time and I already see improvements."

Other Intense Therapy Program Benefits

With the goal of optimizing motor recovery and functional abilities, the Intense Therapy Program is not a fitness program. However, improved fitness is an expected result. A couple of the program's patients have reported improvements in strength. Patients are also experiencing increased self-confidence and quality of life.

With a one-year-old at home, Mary Free Bed patient, Carrie King, finds that she's better able to manage her daughter. "The program was definitely beneficial and I would recommend it," Carrie said. (Carrie was injured when the horse she was riding was hit by a car. She was thrown from the horse and fell over the side of a highway overpass onto the median below.) "I have a lot more energy during the day. I feel stronger and healthier, and I can accomplish more. Now, I can transfer out of my chair and onto the floor so I can play with my daughter. I wanted to participate in this program before it was even up and running. I wanted to be – and was – the first one Mary Free Bed called."

Ashley Larimer, OTR and Athletic Trainer, reports that review of current literature supports the claim that intense therapy reduces secondary complications, improves psychological adjustment, and enhances an individual's confidence to perform activities of daily living. "Persons with spinal cord injuries should set aside time to engage in intensive training and exercise not only because of the benefits of exercise on the cardiovascular system, but it may also reduce spasticity and skin breakdown related to their injury. Therefore, engaging in physical activity is imperative for persons with spinal cord injuries to promote health and wellness."

Restoring Hope

Vicky finds that being in the Intense Therapy Program pushes her to do more and more. "It's thrilling," Vicky



"The Intense Therapy Program has given me back my hope," says Vicky Schmidt.

said as she worked the hand and foot peddles on the Giger MD. "I have a new attitude. I'm back to hoping again, I feel really hopeful. It's hard work and there's no miracle cure. But, I had nothing to lose by participating in the program; there are only gains to be had. I have all this knowledge and expertise around me. All I have to do is work really hard...I don't mind the hard work at all. I've gained a lot emotionally, and I have renewed energy. [The Intense Therapy Program] has given me back my hope. In the beginning, after the accident, you hope beyond what anyone tells you you should. You can't help it. But that hope can diminish over time. Now, I have it back." ■

For more information or to ask questions, please call the Spinal Cord Injury Program at 616.493.9568 or 800.528.8989.

Program Staff

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Ask the Doctor

By Sam Ho, MD
*Spinal Cord Injury Program
Medical Director*

In this column, I usually address frequently asked questions. But quite often I know you wonder when, or even if, you should call with a medical question about your spinal cord injury care. If you have questions, I encourage you to “ask the nurse.” In this column I’ll devote some time to reviewing the role of the person I jokingly refer to as “my brain,” Amy Arends.

Most of you are familiar with Amy through our Spinal Cord Injury Clinic. But now Amy has an expanded role and new title as our Nurse Care Coordinator for the Spinal Cord Injury Program. This means Amy coordinates service delivery for our Spinal Cord Injury Program patients on a life-long basis, beginning at any point of entry into the Mary Free Bed Spinal Cord Injury Program system of care. Amy’s specific duties include:

Serving as an internal case manager by coordinating services and advising patients throughout their life-long course of care at Mary Free Bed.

Amy touches base with the SCI inpatients before they are discharged. She introduces herself, explains her role, and gives patients her contact information. She encourages them to call her if they have any questions or need for assistance after their discharge. Amy also routinely calls patients within the first several days after their discharge from the inpatient program to see if things are going smoothly.

Giving input into patients’ inpatient SCI education and developing and providing the patients’ outpatient educational plan.

Amy works closely with the SCI inpatient nurses. If, for example, there are any concerns that the nurses have regarding an inpatient’s ongoing care needs, such as monitoring skin integrity or trouble-shooting bladder or bowel problems post-discharge, they alert Amy so she can follow up with specific patients and monitor how things are going for them after they are discharged.

Providing patients and families with information and referral assistance.

Amy works closely with all members of the Spinal Cord Injury Program, including all of the SCI physicians. If she cannot obtain information or answer a question herself, she will ensure that individuals are referred to another team member or resource person.

Collaborating with insurance case managers and other external service providers. Amy makes certain that key people involved in our patients’ care get the information they require to provide needed services.

Monitoring discharge from inpatient to outpatient services, as well as other service transition points.

Amy often attends inpatient and outpatient team conferences so she can be aware of what is going on with each patient and closely monitor their care needs and progress.

Serving as a resource for patients, families, team members, and community. Questions or concerns? Contact Amy!



Amy also screens new patients who are referred to our SCI physicians through the Spinal Cord Injury Clinic.

Her clinical duties include:

- Preparing charts before a patient is seen by one of our doctors
- Completing a preliminary screen of the patient’s level of functioning and

communicating these findings to the physician and other team members who may assess the patient (PT, OT, Social Work, etc.)

- Obtaining and communicating any lab test results such as X-rays and MRI’s
- Arranging medication, lab work, medical evaluations, or other orders prescribed by our doctors
- Coordinating referrals for therapy, social work, or other community resources
- Answering calls or other inquiries from patients, evaluating problems, and developing care plans
- Overseeing the Spasticity Clinic
- Assisting with Baclofen Pump refills

I am very pleased to have Amy as a member of our Spinal Cord Injury Program, and to work closely with her in managing the care of our patients. If you have had the opportunity to meet Amy, I’m sure you’ll agree she does a wonderful job. ■

Please remember if you have any questions regarding your spinal cord injury, call Amy. She can be reached at 616.242.9216 or 800.528.8989 and ask to be transferred.



Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital is excited to announce the opening of

The *inn* at Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital

The Inn Welcomes:

Patients and families of patients involved in a Mary Free Bed inpatient or outpatient program or service who live more than 40 miles from Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital.

The Inn Features:

- Six spacious, accessible guest rooms. Each room has a telephone, flat screen TV, wireless internet access, individual temperature controls, and a small refrigerator. The bathroom features a roll-in shower.
- There are two lounges, one for breakfast service, and another sitting area which includes a computer workstation.
- A continental breakfast is served each day, including coffee, juice, bread/bagels, fruit, and yogurt. Guests are also welcome to use the microwave in the lounge.
- Reserved parking is available outside The Inn entrance on the 4th level of the parking ramp.

Reservations or Information

You may make reservations or get additional information by calling 616.493.9798 or 616.242.0360. You may also e-mail InnatMFB@maryfreebed.com.

The cost to stay at The Inn is \$35 per night.

Hours

- The Inn is staffed Monday – Friday:
6:30 am -10:30 am *and* 1:00 pm - 8:00 pm
Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays:
6:30 am - 10:30 am *and* 1:00 pm - 5:00 pm
Security staff are available to assist 24 hours a day; other support services staff are available until 1:00 am, Monday-Friday.

Ms. Wheelchair Michigan Competition

Shelly Loose, former Mary Free Bed patient, was recently crowned Ms. Wheelchair Michigan 2007. Shelly was born and raised in Grand Rapids, MI. During her elementary school years she fell in love with instrumental music. Her passion for music drove her to earn her bachelor's degree in music education from Aquinas College and become a music teacher at Mason County Eastern Public School. In 1987, during her first year of teaching, Shelly suffered a C 5-6 incomplete spinal cord injury when she swerved her vehicle to avoid a deer. After more than a year of rehabilitation, she returned to teach from her wheelchair.

Shelly followed her dreams from her wheelchair – that is until her husband left her. Shelly moved back to Grand Rapids to live with her parents. This setback didn't stop Shelly. She soon met Ken Loose, another SCI patient at Mary Free Bed, who encouraged her to find a new dream. Shelly returned to Aquinas where she earned a master's degree in teaching. During this time, Ken proposed.

In 1993, Shelly and Ken married and started their life together, working to raise Ken's children. It wasn't long before Shelly had a new dream – she wanted a baby. Shelly and Ken went to the University of Michigan to seek fertility treatments through the Spinal Cord Fertility Program. In October 1996, after a miscarriage and several unsuccessful attempts, Shelly conceived and went through a high-risk pregnancy. She delivered a beautiful daughter, Katherine Jane. Katherine turns 10 this year.

As Ms. Wheelchair Michigan, Shelly will continue motivational speaking regarding living with disability and encouraging others to persevere through their own struggles.



Hear what our
guests are
saying...

*"You guys are
wonderful,
Thanks so much!
Keep up the
good work!"*

"Fantastic!"

"Fabulous!"



*"This facility is by far the BEST,
MOST COMFORTABLE accommodations
we've had the pleasure to be in.
Wheelchair/handicap access #1!"*

The *inn* at
Mary Free Bed
Rehabilitation Hospital

Staff News

Congratulations!

Nichole Andres, RN, and **Cherie Bates, RN,** both passed their board certification exams in August 2006 and are now working as RNs for the Spinal Cord Injury Program.

Stephanie Ferguson, RN, MSN, received her CRRN certification (rehabilitation nursing specialty).

Welcome new Mary Free Bed staff!



Amy Douazale, RN, joined the Mary Free Bed staff in July 2006. Amy graduated from Grand Rapids Community College with an associate degree in nursing. Amy has been an LPN since 1998. Outside of work, Amy enjoys tennis, bike riding, basketball, and volleyball. Amy and her husband, Frank, are also busy with their three

children, Aaron, Alysea, and Aiden. Welcome!

Amy Koorndyk, LPN, graduated from Grand Rapids Community College's LPN program; she plans to return to school for her RN degree. Previously, Amy worked at Spectrum Health Urgent Care as a registration specialist and also as a medical secretary at West Michigan Heart. When not working or busy with her two daughters and son, Amy enjoys reading, shopping, baking, and spending time with her family.



Tracy Oostema, DPT, began working at Mary Free Bed in January 2007. Tracy graduated in December with her Doctorate in Physical Therapy from Northwestern University. Tracy is married to Andrew and enjoys running and "lots of other things" now that she is done studying.



Babies are born!

Kristin Duthler, RN, gave birth to Drew Christopher on September 15, 2006. Kristin's new bundle of joy weighed in at 8 pounds, 8 ounces, and was 20.5 inches long. Drew also has an older sister, Elyse, who is 21 months old.

Shannon Goggins, COTA, gave birth to Halle Faith on September 18, 2006. She weighed 8 pounds, 2 ounces, and was 20 inches long. Halle has a big brother named Ryan who is 2 and a half years old; Ryan is very nice to his baby sister.



Heidie Snyder, CTRS, PTA, gave birth to Owen William on August 5, 2006. He weighed 8 pounds, 9 ounces, and was 19 inches long. Owen is full of giggles and loves to be social!

Staff News

Interviews and presentations

Chris Potter, DPT, along with **Amy Korn, MSPT**, **Jackie Madsen, DPT**, and **Kristy Simpson, MSPT**, provided instruction in SCI neurology to Andrews University PT students. The class was held at Mary Free Bed in November and provided students the opportunity to work with people with spinal cord injuries.

Kristy Simpson, MSPT, was interviewed for an adaptive sports article that appeared in the October 2006 edition of the *ADVANCE for Physical Therapists and PT Assistants*. Visit www.maryfreebed.com and click on the link under *New Items* to read the article.



Heidie Snyder, CTRS, PTA, presented *Partnerships: Do They Really Work?* at the February 6, 2007 Michigan Recreation and Park Association Annual Conference and Trade Show.

Stay in Touch

Send your personal news and updates to:
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Alumni News



*All it took
was that one
practice –
he was hooked!*

Curt Bender (1989) has been playing wheelchair tennis since 1992. As a player for the Men's A Division, he holds a current United States Tennis Association (USTA) ranking in the top 20 of the division. Curt sustained his spinal cord injury 17 years ago in a motor vehicle accident and became involved with wheelchair tennis when a friend took him to a Grand Rapids Wheelchair Sports Association (GRWSA) practice 14 years ago. All it took was that one practice – he was hooked!

Curt loves the physical activity of the sport, and he really enjoys socializing with other fellow wheelchair athletes, both on tour and locally through GRWSA. He also participates locally in the one-up/one-down doubles league that made USTA history last winter as the nation's first official league. Curt enjoys playing with able-bodied partners in local competitions without having to travel out of state to play.

Curt has enjoyed watching the game of wheelchair tennis grow throughout the world and even contributes to its popularity. Last year, Curt was named vice chair on the USTA Midwest Wheelchair Tennis Committee, which promotes the growth of wheelchair tennis in the midwest states and helps others start grassroots programs. He also was recently selected to serve on the USTA national committee.

When Curt is not on the court, he works as an electrical engineer at Tennant Company in Holland and is a graduate of Ferris State University. Curt and his wife, Lynn, are actively involved in the GRWSA wheelchair tennis program. Lynn is the head coach and tournament director for the Midwest Wheelchair Tennis Tournament. They have a son, Jaden, who is 3 years old.

Jocelyn Dettloff, Matt Strugar-Fritsch, and Ryan Williams, along with Mary Free Bed therapists Kelly Merz, Kristy Simpson, and Jim Vugteveen, conducted the panel presentation *Roads Traveled* at the 2006 SCI Symposium *Life with a Spinal Cord Injury – A Journey Toward Independence* last September. More than 200 people attended this successful event.

"Motivation, moving, and trying are the keys. I never gave up trying."



Rex Kessler (2000) expanded his shop (Kessler Woodworking) to more than 4,500 square feet. Rex started his own woodworking business in 2002 after "getting tired of sitting around."

"It was harder on me to sit and do nothing than to get moving," Rex said.

Now, Rex spends his days in his shop, working on everything from custom hardwood flooring to wood fireplaces to custom cabinetry. "Motivation, moving, and trying are the keys," Rex states. "I never gave up trying."

Congratulations!

Shelly Loose (1987) and **Ken Loose** (1989) celebrated 14 years of marriage on February 11.



Some of you may recall that they were married on the *Regis and Kathy Lee Show*. Shelly celebrated her 20-year anniversary of being in a wheelchair by entering and winning the Ms. Wheelchair Michigan pageant! Congratulations and best wishes to both Shelly and Ken! (See related article on next page.)

Chuck Pierson (1977) was interviewed and filmed at Mary Free Bed for a Fox 17 News Tech Trends Report on the iBOT™ Mobility System. Also featured was Mary Free Bed therapist, Bindu Thamman, PT.

Matt Strugar-Fritsch (2003) recently wrote an article on the value of adaptive recreation, which was published in the *My Spin* column in the January 2007 issue of *New Mobility* magazine. To read the article, go to www.maryfreebed.com and click on "The Value of Adaptive Recreation" in the *News Items* category near the bottom of the page.



Matt also reports that he has qualified for the Boston Marathon. Congratulations, Matt!

"Adapted sports and recreational opportunities at Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital helped me stay positive throughout my recovery."

Tom Weaver (2005) was one of nine Mary Free Bed patients and staff members featured in a new TV spot that began airing November 2006. Tom rode his handcycle in the commercial. A pod cast of Tom's story, along with SCI alum **Rich Hamill** (1992), can be found at www.choosemaryfreebed.com.

See next page for continuation of Alumni News.



"Love life and live it!"

Matt Clements (2005) sustained injuries to his spinal cord in June 2005. Though he missed his July wedding, it was rescheduled for that December. He reports that "this time the wedding went great, and now my wife, Kristin, and I are happily married."

Matt began playing wheelchair tennis last March and fell in love with the sport. "I never thought it was possible until I tried it, and since then I have never missed a practice," Matt said. "I competed in two tournaments in 2006. Going out to check out the sport was one of the best decisions I have made in my life!"

Matt also spends time volunteering at the Youth Christ Donation Center in Holland where he sets up and runs their Internet auctions. The organization sells most everything people donate either at www.biddingatauction.com, which is located in Grand Rapids, or on eBay. Matt helped the center turn in close to \$100,000 in 2006; he plans to help raise more for Youth for Christ of Ottawa and Allegan counties in 2007.

"I still drive a pickup, and don't want to imagine having to drive anything else," Matt states. "I am looking to go back to school and finish my degree to pursue a well-paying job. I try to live life with no regrets. My accident may have been one small setback, but now looking ahead I believe I am going to be going places above and beyond where I would have been if it had never happened. My encouragement to others: Love life and live it!"

Event Calendar

- **Bikes for the Rest of Us / April 28, 2007**
Sponsored By: Mary Free Bed and BlazeSports: Kentwood
- **Fifth Third River Bank Run / May 12, 2007**
Wheelchair and Handcycle Divisions
Sponsored By: Mary Free Bed Guild
- **Adapted Golf Clinic / June**
Sponsored By: Mary Free Bed and BlazeSports: Kentwood
- **Adapted Water Ski Clinic / July 13 and August 10, 2007**
Sponsored By: Mary Free Bed and BlazeSports: Kentwood
- **Adapted Canoe and Kayak Clinic / August**
Sponsored By: Mary Free Bed and BlazeSports: Kentwood

For more information on any of these programs, please call 616.356.1861 or visit www.maryfreebed.com.

Event Information

Mary Free Bed Sponsors Prize Money for Wheelchair Tennis Tournament

The Midwest Indoor Wheelchair Tennis Tournament will be held again this year at Champion Health & Fitness in Rockford, MI, July 27-29. More than 70 wheelchair tennis athletes are expected to compete in a United States Tennis Association/International Tennis Federation sanctioned tournament for \$9,000 in prize money that has been donated by Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital. The tournament will run all day Friday 8 am - 8pm; Saturday 8 am - 6 pm; and the finals will be held Sunday, 9 am - 1 pm.

Wheelchair players come from all over the midwest, the U.S., Canada, France, and Japan. All levels of play from open players down to beginner/novice players may participate; however, players must be USTA members. Most athletes are either spinal cord injured (paras, quads) or amputees (single or double).

Some great athletes are expected this year as many top notch players will be earning their ranking points throughout the summer in preparation for the 2008 Paralympics, which will be held in Beijing, China.

A kick-off registration and social night is scheduled for Thursday, July 26. Former patients or others interested in checking out the competition should feel free to attend any part of the tennis tournament! It is free and fun for the whole family. ■

For more information, visit www.grwsa.com or email lynncurt10s@yahoo.com.





30th Annual Fifth Third River Bank Run – Wheelchair and Handcycle Divisions

Mary Free Bed Guild & Mary Free Bed SCI Program are happy to again sponsor the wheelchair portion of the 30th Annual Fifth Third River Bank Run! We are adding a division this year – the Handcycle Division. We look forward to another safe and exciting road racing event!

May 12, 2007 – Race Start:

- Wheelers Division begins at 7:50 am
- Handcycle Division begins at 7:55 am

World Record Challenge:

- \$5,000 world record bonus to the first male and/or first female Wheelchair Racing Division athlete to set a new confirmed world record.
- Current world records include:
 - 25K Wheelchair Male: Krige Schabort (51:30); 2002 River Bank Run
 - 25K Wheelchair Female: Jean Driscoll (1:02:33); 1995 River Bank Run

Comparison Road Racing and Handcycling –

Road Racing:

- The push rim is the critical link between a wheelchair athlete
- Rubber coated gloves are used to achieve maximum propulsion and hand protection.
- Frame structure & seating are specially designed for optimum stability, aerodynamics and maximum traction

Handcycles:

- Equipped with 7 - 27 speeds with smooth shifting and cycling with arms
- Frame structure & features have simple geometry for maximum stiffness, easy cornering, power and control
- Seat and back can be custom adjusted
- Coaster brakes and narrow rear-end enhances aerodynamics ■

For More Information Visit www.maryfreebed.com

For hotel, transportation and course information, please call 616.356.1861 or 800.528.8989 ext. 4861 or email heidie.snyder@maryfreebed.com.

Welcoming

Our new on-site hotel

The *inn* at
Mary Free Bed
Rehabilitation Hospital

Mary Free Bed patients or their families may need an affordable place to stay that's nearby. The Inn at Mary Free Bed, located on the Mary Free Bed campus, offers guests spacious accessible rooms with many amenities.

For more information about The Inn at Mary Free Bed, there is an inside story complete with pictures.

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