

[Print](#)[Close Window](#)

RIVERDALE - Spinal injury center expands facilities

(by Leslie Scott - Staff Writer - November 12, 2008)



Staff photo by Joe Sarno

Physical therapists Eric Prol (looking up) and Mark Sprague work with Darren Templeton, a young man who sustained a spinal injury a few years ago by diving into shallow water.

RIVERDALE - Push to Walk is helping more and more people with spinal cord injuries and now has a new location to meet this challenge.

Push to Walk is a non-profit organization that offers specialized exercise training programs for people with spinal cord injuries.

"People come to us and we design a program that is individualized and we will work with them to regain strength, independence and function," said owner and Kinnelon resident Cynthia Templeton.

Push to Walk first opened in Bloomingdale in 2007. The company has grown over the last two years and recently moved to a larger facility in Riverdale.

Cynthia said the new location is wonderful.

"It is great to have so much space. Now we have additional equipment that we could not fit in the other space. Our clients are very happy now that there is more room to maneuver and have a better workout."

Cynthia started Push to Walk a few years after her son Darren sustained a spinal cord injury as a result of diving into shallow water.

The family took Darren to California to receive physical therapy from a San Diego-based group called Project Walk, which helps provide an improved quality of life for people with spinal cord injuries through intense exercise-based recovery programs, education, support and encouragement.

After three visits to California, Cynthia thought that there should be a place like Project Walk in New Jersey.

The specialized therapy offered through Push to Walk is beneficial once a person has completed the medical model of therapy because there is nothing else for them out there, said Cynthia.

"People might be interested in doing more on their own or going to a gym. But most gyms are not accessible for people in wheelchairs and even if they were, there is no staff on hand that has knowledge about spinal cord injuries to really help them in a beneficial way," said Cynthia.

The programs offered through Push to Walk not only strengthen muscles but they can also be designed to meet an individual's specific need.

Cynthia explained how one client wanted to be able to stand at his wedding and another wanted to drive, "so basic skills helped him with his balance and positioning."

Her son Darren wanted to go skiing, so he practiced routines designed to strengthen functional muscles that would be useful to him.

Pompton Lakes resident Mark Sprague has been a therapist with Push to Walk since June of 2007. He said putting together individualized programs is not difficult.

"We follow a program designed by Project Walk. We are trying to re-stimulate everything and there are certain things that have been shown to work," said Sprague.

"Some of the programs you have to modify for certain people but most of the things just carry over from client to client," said Sprague.

These methods have proven effective. Darren said when he first started working out he had no strength or function, but now he can do more.

Progress times can vary. Darren said weeks would go by and he saw few changes, but then suddenly he found himself doing things he couldn't do before.

Darren sustained injury to his body from the trunk down. During therapy sessions, his trainer had placed him on a leg machine, he explained. At first he was not able to do anything then suddenly he had some movement to his lower extremities.

"Like out of nowhere something sparks and that one single thing you can do is a big deal. So that can bring a whole new set of exercises," said Darren.

Wayne resident Martin Kupetz has seen great improvement since he first sought therapy with Push to Walk. Kupetz injured his spine after falling from a ladder. He has noticed a significant change with his body since getting treatment with Push to Walk.

"They helped me loosen up. When I came here I wasn't able to sit up or move around. It's much better now," said Kupetz.

"Our trainers are really good at recognizing what they need to target and what they need to work on because there are so many different kinds of spinal cord injuries," said Darren.

Darren said seeking this type of treatment is important because the exercises stimulate all the muscles in the body.

"The most basic reason why this treatment is important is to see what you might be able to do that you don't know about," said Darren.

Stem cell research is another reason why keeping strong is important.

"With stem cell research or any kind of cure, when these things do become available, they are going to take the people that are in the best shape and who took good care of their bodies to get the best results," said Darren.

For more information about Push to Walk, visit pushtowalknj.org or call 862-200-5848.

^ [back to top](#)