

19.09.2009

## How a dolphin gives fresh courage to Martina

A patient with a persistent vegetative state has again experienced small improvements through a second special therapy in Turkey.



*Martina Brunner completes arduous exercises in the water with „Phrosia“ the dolphin. (Foto: red)*

*Von Gerhard Huber*

**Peterskirchen.** It is another stone in the mosaic of the long road back to health, but a very important one: Martina Brunner (34), a patient in a persistent vegetative state, underwent a second 2-week dolphin therapy in Marmaris in Turkey – and has made further improvements. It was on the 1st of March 2003 that Martina's life and that of her family seriously changed. She was supposed to host a sportsmen's carnival ball when she complained of a splitting headache. Shortly afterwards she collapsed and suffered a brain haemorrhage. She had an operation the same night in a hospital in Deggendorf. She lived, but now is in a persistent vegetative state. This is like sleeping with one's eyes open: the patient is awake but cannot speak, only stare, can hear voices and words but suffers often of lack of orientation.



**Martina and her family with the dolphin park team**

Martina's condition in the meantime has considerably improved. „Apart from her right arm her whole body is still paralysed, has to sit in a wheel chair, but is wide awake and mentally fit“ says Monika Aman, her best friend and chairman of the Coma Patient charity, grounded 6 years ago in Peterskirchen. Martina can now swallow on her own, shows

feelings and can communicate using an alphabet table which she uses with the fingers of her right hand. „The improvements are gradual but in very small steps“, says Aman. Without the help of the charity, which is able to help Martina and her family through the many donations from the population, these improvements would not have been realised. Her parent's house was renovated to include installations necessary for disabled persons so that she could in 2004 live at home again. Also help with the costs of speech therapy, Physio-, Ergo- and Music therapy was given. Aman: „That gave Martina possibilities that she never would have had.“ After the success of the first dolphin therapy the member's committee decided to finance a further 2-week dolphin therapy in Marmaris.



And so Martina travelled to Marmaris accompanied by her daughter Elina (7), brother Wolfgang and two care assistants. She coped with the flight with no problems, was able to take a normal seat for the disabled. Only the transfer from Dalaman airport to Marmaris was considered too dangerous using a normal transport for the disabled so an ambulance was used.

At her destination she enjoyed 10 sessions with Phrosia the dolphin who she knew from last time in 2007. „She has made further small improvements“ said Monika Aman happily. The spasticity in her legs has so much improved that when she sits in her wheelchair she can easily bend her legs, this enabled her to cope much more easily with the return journey.

„It was a holiday for Martina. Although working with the dolphins in the water was very strenuous

for her she recovered splendidly.“ said Aman. She persevered with all the exercises and at the end even showed her daughter a few small acrobatics. The stay was also very important for Martina's motivation: „Her fighting spirit was awakened during the twelve days, one could see that she had not given up hope and that she found her life, which some people would think of as not worth living, well worth fighting for“, said Aman.

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