



FILE PHOTO BY CHAD PEYERL/THE KANSAS CITY STAR
"I will teach again," said Rosa Adams-Bussard, shown here in a recent photo with her husband, John Bussard.

Popular school band leader injured in fall

Olathe Northwest's Rosa Adams-Bussard faces rehab to regain movement after emergency spinal surgery.

By LEE HILL KAVANAUGH
 The Kansas City Star

It happened in a second. Saturday night while visiting friends in Brookfield, Mo., Rosa Adams-Bussard thought she was entering an unlit bathroom. Her next step toppled her down a stairwell. That fall changed, perhaps forever, the life of the 55-year-old dynamo band director at Olathe Northwest High School. At the bottom of the steps, she didn't feel pain. She didn't feel any-

thing — she couldn't move her arms or legs.

A life flight helicopter took her to St. Luke's Hospital in Kansas City, where she underwent 10 hours of surgery to her spine early Sunday. Two vertebrae were removed to prevent deeper damage from swelling.

The high school band director who the last 30 years has tapped her foot in time struggled to twitch one finger or toe.

Rosa and drummer John Bussard, her percussion-instrument-inventing husband, were featured in Star Magazine two weeks ago. They're a couple who love all things music, but espe-

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 cially drumming. They are dedicated to teaching, encouraging and helping young players.

Tuesday evening, Olathe Northwest's principal, Gwen Poss, composed an email to students, teachers and parents about the accident. It didn't look good. Rosa's family asked for prayers, lots of them.

But Wednesday afternoon, during therapy, an exhausted Rosa was able to lift each leg and arm a tiny bit — and the hopes of everyone who loves her.

The teacher has been sad and angry at herself for falling, as well as worried about her recovery and how her students will take it. In the hospital Tuesday night, she said, "Tell people I'm determined. I will do this."

Go to KansasCity.com to read the Star Magazine story on the Bussards.

The drummer who played at her own wedding knows her rehabilitation will now be measured in inches and minutes.

Not soon enough for the Brass Impact Drum Corps International show July 16. It's the second year in a row she has organized the national event held at Olathe Northwest. It will go on with groups from six states competing, just as she planned it.

The next days, weeks and months will reveal her body's limitations. Or rather, the work necessary for her recovery.

"Please tell everyone that right now, I shouldn't have visitors. But cards and letters would be great," she said. Already one vase of bright mums and daisies were perched beside her bed. A nurse said balloons would be good too.

Sometime soon visits will be welcome. The Bussards have no biological children of their own. Their kids are their hundreds of band students, past and present, from throughout the area.

Poss struggled with her own emotions Wednesday.

"This is very difficult and an unknown place for a 15- or 16-year-old to understand. It's hard for me to understand," she said. "Rosa is an awesome band director who puts kids first, always. Her life is about making a difference to them through music."

For now, Rosa lies prone under white sheets. Every few seconds a pump squeezes her limbs for blood circulation, as she pushes away her fears.