

Burks works to ‘get people better’



Putnam Physical Therapy celebrates 35 years serving Putnam County area

BY JIM HERRIN
HERALD-CITIZEN

For more than 35 years, Larry Burks has been helping people address their aches and pains and achieve their rehabilitation goals.

As the owner of Putnam Physical Therapy, he has seen a wide variety of patients and conditions through the years.

“The first time a patient comes in, we do a list of goals on their program, both short term and long term,” he said. “For instance, if someone comes in with total knee replacement, their short term goal is to get some of the pain down and to get their knee mov-

ing. Their long term goal would be to be able to walk without a limp. To do their grocery shopping or play with their grandkids.”

Setting goals and clearly communicating expectations are key, he said.

“You want make it very clear to the patient what to expect,” he said, noting that some patients try to rush rehab unwisely.

“So you have to hold them back,” he said. “You have to go by protocols.”

Burks got his degree in physical therapy at UT Memphis, graduating in 1979 and moving to Cookeville to take a job as a physical therapist at

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Physical therapist Larry Burks works on the shoulder of Chelsea Spivey.

Staff members of Putnam Physical Therapy include, front row from left, Peyton Boren, Maddie Johnson and Linzi Vetter; back row, Chelsea Spivey, Melinda Johnson, Larry Burks, Ashley Chadwell, and Erin Masters.

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what was then Cookeville General Hospital.

“It was a really good situation at the hospital because I got to see such a variety of things,” he said. “You’d have some stroke patients, you’d have some burn patients, and then there were outpatients that came in, so it was a good learning experience for me.”

He went into private practice in 1985, opening offices at first in the basement of Upper Cumberland Orthopedic Surgery and then spending 20 years at a location one block from the hospital. In 2008, he moved to 1140 Perimeter Park Drive.

“It was a great move. The accessibility here is so good, there’s fewer traffic problems, and most of our patients say it’s easier to get to,” he said.

Those patients also praise the work of Burks and his staff in testimonials posted on the office wall and online at their website.

Jack Rice, who injured his leg in “a pretty serious motorcycle accident,” is one of them.

“I didn’t think that I would be able to walk normal again, but the professionals at Putnam Physical Therapy knew the right things to do to make that happen,” he said.

Burks has been inducted into the Tennessee Physical Therapy Association Hall of Fame — an honor given to a TPTA member who has “a minimum of 25 years of continuous contribution to the TPTA in a role as a clinician, educator, clinical educator,



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or combination of the above; a history of service to the TPTA Board of Directors; contributions to the growth of the profession through formal state, national, or international presentations; and demonstrated exceptional contributions to the TPTA and the profession.”

The nomination form also noted that Burks is “leaving a legacy of Physical Therapy with two of his children and his son-in-law, who all have doctorate degrees in physical therapy.”

“Most younger folks are DPTs, which I think is a good thing for our profession,” he said. “My son, Nathan Burks, practices in Saint Augustine, Florida. My daughter, Rachel Grubb, and her husband, Matt, are physical therapists and both teach at UT-Chatanooga.”

The Putnam Physical Therapy website emphasizes Burks’ approach.

“The number one priority of our practice is to eliminate your pain and get you back to doing the activities you love,” it reads. “We get people better.”

For more information, visit the website putnampt.com.

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