

Paralyzed woman wants to help others

By **CLAUDE ROSE**
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COOPERSTOWN — Conni Laymon knows she'll probably never walk again, but she's picking up the pieces of her young life and hopes one day to help others facing similar circumstances.



CONNIE LAYMON

She'd like to attend college and

study psychology, "so that I can help people who are going through what I have gone through."

Conni fell off a 75-foot cliff near Cherry Valley last June 1 during a teen party. She was a senior at Cooperstown Central. She suffered a broken neck, a broken arm, bruised liver, two collapsed lungs and a torn spleen.

Now she is paralyzed from the waist down and is confined to a wheelchair. She returned Dec. 12 to her home in nearby Index after undergoing therapy since July 26 at Sunnyview Hospital and Rehabilitation Center in Schenectady.

"It was discouraging at first, especially being so far away from home," she said. "I didn't think I could ever do all that I can do now.

"I can hold most things, like the phone or a book, but not small things like earrings. I can move my arms, and my upper body, but not my legs, and can feed myself.

"I can take care of myself, comb my hair, like that. I read a lot, and I go to the movies in Oneonta. I've been to the supermarket with my mother."

She said she received two hours of therapy a day, five days a week, at Sunnyview.

"They show you a technique," for doing certain chores, but "a lot you really have to work out yourself," she said.

Other patients were very helpful in teaching her how to hold a fork or hold an object or perform a certain task.

"They've learned a certain way to do something and they'll show you. I learned a lot more from them than I did from a therapist, because they could understand how I felt about mobility and everything."

Conni said that "contrary to rumors that were going around (after

the accident), I did not have brain damage, and I was not injured over the cliff, and I didn't just fall."

Conni had planned to enter the Army Reserve after graduation, to become a military police officer. She said her thoughts turned to collecting psychology during her rehabilitation.

"That is in my mind for the future, but it definitely will not be this year," she said. "I haven't taken any entrance exams."

Meanwhile, she plans to be active with family and friends for the time being, and expects to undergo extensive therapy in a year or