

## University of Iowa pre-med student checks out air ambulance after one rescues her after crash



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Isabella Sellers (second from left) looks around the cabin of an air ambulance Wednesday while flight nurse Nate Johnson (right) talks about caring for a patient while in-flight to Isabella's father, John, (second from right) as they tour a LifeGuard Air Ambulance helicopter at UnityPoint Health-St. Luke's Hospital in northeast Cedar Rapids. Flight paramedic Christopher Barkalow is at left. Sellers, of Lithia, Fla., is recovering at the hospital after a fatal, two-vehicle crash east Feb. 11 in Black Hawk County. Sellers is a University of Iowa student studying pre-med. (Jim Slosiarek/The Gazette)



Lisa Sellers (right) takes a photo as her daughter, Isabella, tours a LifeGuard Air Ambulance helicopter at UnityPoint Health-St. Luke's Hospital in northeast Cedar Rapids. Isabella Sellers, of Lithia, Fla., is recovering at the hospital after a fatal, two-vehicle crash Feb. 11 in Black Hawk County. The pre-med student was flown to the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics aboard in an air ambulance after the crash. (Jim Slosiarek/The Gazette)

CEDAR RAPIDS — Isabella Sellers, an 18-year-old premed student at the University of Iowa, sat in a medical transport helicopter Wednesday for the second time in her life.

This time, she climbed in with help from her parents and her physical therapist as a guest — rather than as an emergency patient.

On Feb. 11, Sellers, of Lithia, Fla., was a passenger in one of two cars involved on a fatal crash in Black Hawk County. The crash killed [Quincy Friedrich](#), 19, of Cedar Falls, and injured Sellers and two others. Sellers' injuries were severe and she was flown by a LifeGuard air ambulance — unconscious — to the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics in Iowa City from the UnityPoint Health-Allen Hospital in Waterloo.

Sellers said she doesn't remember much about the crash, but she's grateful for everyone who worked to help her survive it.

"I never thought that I would experience this in my life, and look at me now!" Sellers said while sitting Thursday in a LifeGuard Air Ambulance at UnityPoint Health-St. Luke's Hospital in Cedar Rapids.

About six weeks after the crash, Sellers was moved from the UI Hospitals to St. Luke's to start physical therapy. She got to take a break from her therapy to tour the hospital's emergency helicopter, which is part of the LifeGuard's fleet that transported her after the crash, and get to know some of its staff.



Isabella Sellers smiles Wednesday as she listens to flight nurse Nate Johnson as she tours a LifeGuard Air Ambulance helicopter at UnityPoint Health- St. Luke's Hospital in northeast Cedar Rapids. (Jim Slosiarek/The Gazette)

Sellers, fascinated by the helicopter and all things hospital related, asked the pilots and paramedics several questions about their training and their jobs.

Being a premed student, Sellers said she's enjoyed interacting with doctors and physical therapists and asking about what they do. She excitedly shared that one of the best parts of the experience so far was watching the doctor's remove a tracheostomy that had been placed in her throat to help her breathe.

"It's like firsthand experience," Sellers said.



Isabella Sellers smiles Wednesday as she listens to flight nurse Nate Johnson as she tours a LifeGuard Air Ambulance helicopter at UnityPoint Health-St. Luke's Hospital in northeast Cedar Rapids. (Jim Slosiarek/The Gazette)

Walking out to and climbing into the helicopter Thursday was a huge feat for Sellers, considering that just a couple of months ago she was struggling to sit up on her own, talk and remember names of people she met, according to Katie DeBower, a physical therapist assistant who has worked with Sellers since she arrived at St. Luke's.

Through physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy and recreational therapy, Sellers has made huge progress, especially in her memory. She knows the names now of all her regular nurses, doctors and physical therapists, and greets them each day.

"We are extremely proud of Bella and the progress she's made," DeBower said.

Throughout the whole ordeal, Sellers has had a lot of support from her family. Her parents, Lisa and John Sellers, came up from Florida to be with their daughter, and have been staying in hotels and AirBnBs. She's also had visits from her five siblings, and said one of her first memories after the crash is of her brother visiting her in the hospital.

"We do what we have to do," Lisa Sellers said. "She wasn't ready to go back to Florida when she left the university."

But she's almost ready now. Sellers is scheduled to be discharged from St. Luke's in just over a week, and after a short follow up visit at the UI Hospitals, she'll be heading home to Florida with her parents for now.

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Isabella Sellers (left) gets a high-five from her father, John, after successfully getting into the cabin of an air ambulance Wednesday as she tours a LifeGuard Air Ambulance helicopter at UnityPoint Health-St. Luke's Hospital in northeast Cedar Rapids. Sellers, of Lithia, Fla., is recovering at the hospital after a fatal, two-vehicle crash Feb. 11 in Black Hawk County. (Jim Slosiarek/The Gazette)