

## Epileptic's hopes brighten after brain surgery

It has been more than 30 years since Todd VanDenBerg had a break from his constant epileptic seizures.

Medication treatments weren't working and they left VanDenBerg with little energy as a result, he said.

"The medication, it makes you tired," he said. "I feel tired all the time."

Driving, getting a job or even living a normal life were not an option for the 46-year-old, but hope is on the way, said Dr. George Morris, epileptologist and medical director of the regional epilepsy program at Aurora BayCare Medical Center.

Dr. Steven Weinshel, neurological surgeon at Aurora BayCare, and Morris performed the first brain surgery for epilepsy in Northeastern Wisconsin on VanDenBerg in December, Morris said.

"It's an exciting time for Aurora BayCare because of their opportunity to now provide to Todd and his family a deviation of years of having seizures and not having them stopped through the medications he takes," Morris said.

The procedure, called a temporal lobectomy, will hopefully cure VanDenBerg of all uncontrolled seizures, Morris said.

Doctors monitored VanDenBerg's brain while he was in the midst of a seizure in order to pinpoint the cause. They performed a four-hour surgery Dec. 21 that included removing that portion of the brain while VanDenBerg was awake.

"Todd had a situation where the temporal lobe, which is the part of the brain just behind and inside the ear, was not functioning properly," Weinshel said. "The surface of the brain never developed properly ... and that's the part of the brain that was causing the seizures to occur."

It will be an ongoing process, and medication still will be needed for VanDenBerg until he has completely recovered, Morris said.

For now, VanDenBerg hopes he'll have his life back again.

"I'll get a driver's license," he said, "and a part-time job."

Before the surgery was offered in the Green Bay area, patients would have to go to Milwaukee or Marshfield for the treatment, Morris said.

Every year, 380 people in Brown County will develop epilepsy, he said, making this option for treatment an asset for the area.