

Too young for health care



SUN PHOTO BY JEFF TAVARES, jtavares@venicegondolier.com

Venice resident David Ursel stands in front of Venice Regional Medical Center. Emergency workers helped save the 41-year-old after he had a stroke, but he claims VRMC denied rehabilitation services because it wasn't profitable.

Stroke turns rehabilitation speech therapist into a patient

BY J.J. ANDREWS
AND JEREMY ROTTGEN
STAFF WRITERS

"I awoke to my husband clinging to our bedpost and telling me, in a strange and largely unintelligible voice, 'I think I had a stroke.'"

That was how Shari Valencic-Ursel remembers the night in February she watched her 41-year-old husband, David Ursel, experiencing an ischemic stroke, which left him partially and temporarily paralyzed.

The Ursel family's story is one of strength, hope and recovery, and how a professional speech therapist had to be taught how to talk again.

Looking back to three months ago, all Shari can remember are those frantic moments spent trying to get David to a hospital.

"David lay down next to our

"All the (rehabilitation) places in Venice said I was too young, and that was when Shari called Pinebrook and said it was me."

— David Ursel, a 41-year-old Venice resident who had a stroke Feb. 20

youngest, Mariska, who is 4, who had been in our bed because she was sick. I frantically called 9-1-1, listened to instructions while yelling through our back door to my mother, who lives behind us. I ran back to the bedroom, pulled on jeans and a sweatshirt, locked the dog in our mud room, opened the

front door and waited for the ambulance."

An MRI later showed the blockage was in David's left brainstem. He was sent to Venice Regional Medical Center, where he received emergency care.

Emergency treatment showed David would survive. The blockage had already resolved itself by the time the MRI was administered.

David's stroke appeared on the MRI to be a quarter of the size of a pinky fingernail. If the stroke had happened just to the left or right of where it did, he would not have had his movement impaired.

A little up or down and it would have killed him.

"There was no pain whatsoever," David said of that night, Feb. 20. "The first symptoms were numbness, and I couldn't move my

Please see **STROKE, 6**