

cal science major remembers only bits and pieces of that day.

While lying on the ground, the former women's rugby player thought she was on a rugby field and had been tackled. She heard her friend, who received a concussion in the accident, tell her to stay down. She did because she couldn't get up.

The ride to the hospital wasn't easy either. While in the ambulance, the girl next to Tozer kept "screaming her head off."

"I was actually quite humorous," Tozer said with a big smile. "I turned to the ambulance driver and said, 'Would you please shut her up.'"

But that is typical Tozer — making the best of a bad situation.

And nearly two years after the accident, Tozer continues to turn the life-threatening ordeal into a positive outlet.

Taking time out of her busy schedule, Tozer travels the state with MADD telling the starfish story and her own story.

"She's very dedicated to getting across to her peers about the tragedy drinking and driving can bring," said Charlie Durrant, office manager of the Eugene chapter of MADD.

Tozer has been traveling the state since December 1988 with Durrant's husband, Donny, 36, who was paralyzed in a single-car accident caused by his own drinking and driving negligence 13 years ago.

"I really enjoy it. You don't reach all the kids, but you reach some of them, and that makes a difference," Tozer said, reflecting on the starfish principle.

And at times Tozer's intensity has placed her in the limelight.

She was selected to take part in a Blue Cross/Blue Shield awareness campaign, focusing on the evils of drinking and driving. The campaign resulted in two commercials and a 10-minute educational video featuring her.

The commercials have aired nationally, and the video is available through Blue Cross/Blue Shield for schools to use.

A 30-minute television documentary titled "Tiana's Story" is also scheduled to air this fall through an NBC-affiliate station in Medford. The piece features the Tozer and two other MADD speakers examining the struggle she had to endure.

Tozer's ordeal would make even the not-so-squeamish grimace.

She spent 3½ months in Sacred Heart General Hospital following the accident. Thirty-six days were spent in the intensive care unit.

"The last thing I remember on the day of the accident was being in this big, white room, and somebody



File Photo

Tozer gave University President Myles Brand a wheelchair tour of the campus for disabled access awareness.

kept on screaming. 'Please, please put me to sleep. You've got to put me asleep. I don't want to be awake for this.' And then I realized that I was the one who was hurt and screaming as I drifted unconscious," Tozer said.

Every day seven machines pumped her full of nutrients and pain medicine. And she vividly remembers the day she first saw her leg after the accident.

"He cut the (temporary) cast off, and what he revealed didn't even look like my leg," she said. "It just didn't look like a leg."

But the crushing event on May 14 was only the first in a continuing chain of traumatic events.

During the first two weeks in the hospital, Tozer was in surgery every other day. She described herself as a "doctor's child," meaning there was always something wrong with her.

At one point it looked as if her right leg would have to be amputated, Tozer said. But she was determined to keep her leg. It was her decision, and she fought hard for it.

As Tozer entered her third week in the hospital, she seemed to hit bottom.

"That's when I decided I didn't want to live. I had just had enough," she said. "I didn't think that I was going to be able to walk again. I thought I was going to have to have a fake leg. I didn't think I could go through life not being able to walk and not being able to play sports."

But she fought on. Yet not without further hardships.

With 40 percent of the muscle dying in her right leg, doctors had trouble covering the exposed bone. They first took a piece of fat and meat from her shoulder flap and transplanted it to her leg.

Her leg rejected the transplant, and Tozer feared she lost her best chance at walking.

Doctors pursued "Plan B." After ruling out a transplant from her other shoulder flap, doctors proceeded to transplant some interior muscles.

This time it worked. But Tozer's tendon in her foot had to be cut, resulting in a lack of extension movement of her right foot.

More than two dozen surgeries later, Tozer has made a lot of friends at Sacred Heart General Hospital.

"I know almost everyone at the hospital," she said. "I used to be able to come in the front door and say, 'Where's Tiana's room?' and they could tell you right off without looking it up."

Tozer's team of 15 doctors from Eugene to Seattle are like grandfathers, and she is really close to the nurses at Sacred Heart, she said.

Just now beginning to walk again, Tozer has spent most of the last two years in a wheelchair. And her accident has turned her into an advocate for disabled access. Most notable is the November wheelchair tour

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