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## Outpouring of support for Moraga CVS accident victim

By Sora O'Doherty



Photo Sora O'Doherty

Inge Olson, a resident of Moraga for 34 years, works two local jobs: she is a classroom aide at Donald Rheem Elementary School, where she is known as Ms. Inge, and at the local CVS. After a van was accidentally driven into the store on July 13, Olson was pinned between the two-ton safe and the register. Her pelvis was broken in three places.

The only thing she can't remember about the accident are the faces of the couple she was serving at the time the van jumped the curb, crossed the sidewalk, and rammed into the store. But she does remember noticing that she still had their receipt in her hand. When she was told to just toss it, she exclaimed, "But they might have coupons!" That pretty much comports with her friend Lori Moon's assessment of Olson's personality: "She's always thinking of others, putting their needs before her own."

Olson contacted Moon's husband at their home immediately after the accident. She needed him to go to the store and retrieve her phone from her locker because she wanted to make sure that her parents, who live in Richmond, heard from her before they saw the news of the accident in the media. She also was concerned about a dog she was petsitting and a neighbor whose plants she was supposed to start watering the next day.

One thing that Olson is grateful for is that she was looking the other way when the van was heading into the store, so she did not see it approaching. "I heard a tremendous boom, she says, and I felt the building shake; I heard screaming." She realized she was pinned between the safe and her register, register No. 2.

"As horrible as this was," Olson says, she attributes her ability to remain calm to a customer in the store at the time of the accident who stepped forward and said, "Hi, my name is Marie and I'm a nurse." Olson felt immediately that her hips weren't right, and Marie helped her out from between the safe and the register and got her onto the floor. Marie stayed with her until the EMTs arrived to take over. Movement was excruciating, but when she was lying down her pain was at level 1, she recalls. Then in the ambulance, the EMTs administered medication for the pain.

Olson recounted that she has been super-healthy all her life, enjoying outdoor activities such as hiking. Her only previous hospital stay was for the birth of her son, who recently moved to San Diego with his wife and their toddler. They are expecting another child soon, and Olson thought she would go down to help them next February after the birth. However, that is now in doubt.

But Olson believes that things happen for a reason. "I'm a part of the special needs club now," she says, referring to the children with special needs whom she helps at Rheem School. "I have new empathy now; I feel what they are going through." Olson has been astonished and moved by the outpouring of love from the Moraga community, her customers and coworkers at CVS, and all the students and staff at Rheem School. The principal has visited her twice, and her room is papered with Get Well cards made by students, who are not even in school at this time.

Olson came to tears when she heard that a GoFundMe campaign had been started for her, which raised over \$13,000 within the first 14 days of the accident to help her with her ongoing expenses, since she will not be able to return to either of her two jobs anytime soon. But, with Olson's sense of humor she reflected, "I'll get to miss the chaos of the Rheem remodel!"

She is facing the future with determination. "I'm going to get through this and then I'll get through my bucket list," she proclaimed. She is making progress every day and she's taking it one day at a time. She has both occupational therapy, which focuses on upper body strength, as well as physical therapy. She has a "hip kit," which includes her new best friend, a reacher that enables her to grab things without excessive bending or stretching. She is working on basic skills for living, such as climbing up stairs, pivoting, and coming back down. Part of her therapy involves a video game, sort of like a Wii, where she throws balls at animal targets and makes a little fox jump up to catch grapes and chickens. "It's fun," Olson says with her characteristic good humor.

Rheem will be getting a substitute for Olsen at the beginning of the school year, but she may be able to return with modified duties.

Olson says that through this incident she has learned the depth of how much she is loved here. "To learn how much people love you before you are dead is wonderful," she exclaimed.

The GoFundMe page for Olson can be found at [www.gofundme.com/f/ms-inge-healing-fund](http://www.gofundme.com/f/ms-inge-healing-fund)

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[back](#)

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