

COVID SURVIVOR FEELS THE LOVE



STEVEN VALENTI/REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN

Joe Goldman of Wolcott, surrounded by his 11 grandchildren, leaves Sheriden Woods nursing home Thursday in Bristol. Goldman, who spent 59 days on a ventilator last spring, has been rehabbing at Sheriden Woods since July.

Wolcott man walks out of rehab center, hugs 11 grandkids

BY STEVE BARLOW
REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN

BRISTOL — With a warm sun beaming down, Joe Goldman walked out of Sheriden Woods Health Care Center on Thursday morning into a gauntlet of family and friends cheering his return back home.

But first Goldman had

some important business to take care of: hugging his 11 grandchildren.

Ranging in age from 13 to only 7 months, they crowded around their grandfather, who wore the shirt bearing all of their handprints that had been a gift on his 68th birthday.

"Thank you, everybody," the Wolcott resident told the

nearly 40 people who crowded the sidewalk.

It had been 325 days since he was taken to Saint Mary's Hospital in Waterbury last April after catching COVID. He was on a ventilator for 59 days while his family and caregivers anxiously wondered if he'd survive.

"There were times we didn't think he'd make it, but he

pulled through. He's a fighter. He's a miracle," said Michelle Collazo, his "lifesaver" nurse from Saint Mary's, who was on hand Thursday to give Goldman a hug.

Still on a ventilator, he was sent at the end of May from the hospital to Gaylord Rehab

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Center in Wallingford, where he regained the ability to breathe on his own.

In early July, he arrived at Sheriden Woods, where he has been receiving physical therapy.

"He's walking with a walker now. He'll be getting therapy at the house from now on," said Goldman's daughter, Sharon DelCioppo.

Goldman, known as "Papa Joe," got to hold for the first time his newest grandchild, 7-month-old Nelson DelCioppo, who was born after

he went into the hospital.

While he has talked regularly with his wife, Roselyn; children Sharon DelCioppo, Kelly Goldman and Joe Jr., and the rest of his family throughout the ordeal, it had been through a window or on Zoom before Thursday.

"It's been a long haul. He just needs time," Roselyn. "I am so grateful for all of the love we have seen. It's been a flood of love and a lot of prayers."

After walking out the front door shortly after 11 a.m., it took Goldman nearly 25 minutes to navigate the throng of well-wishers and



STEVEN VALENTI RA
Joe Goldman of Wolcott.

reach his wife's white SUV for the trip home to Wolcott. His message to anyone else battling the coronavirus?

"You can pull through," he said. "I did it. You can, too."