

Bryce Latimer's Journey with a Brain Injury

by intern Lindsey Kennell

Six and a half years ago Bryce was driving a familiar route on his motorcycle when he hit a newly built median in the road. He was going 50 MPH and did not have the protection of a helmet. Luckily, a couple also enjoying a motorcycle ride that day saw Bryce immediately after his accident. They called for help right away. Within forty minutes of the accident Bryce was in surgery at Rocky Mountain Medical Center. He was given less than a 1% chance of making it through the night and only a .5% chance of making it past that. The doctors did not know exactly how long Bryce would be in a coma after he made it through his surgery but they expected at least several weeks to months. Bryce not only defied the incredibly small odds of making it through his surgery but he gave his brother the ultimate birthday gift by opening his eyes just three days later on his brother's birthday.

Bryce and his family quickly learned that their lives have been changed forever. Bryce was not able to speak or walk after his accident. Despite the challenges they were facing, they remained optimistic of the road to recovery. After beating all odds and surviving the impossible, he could achieve anything.

Bryce was in a wheelchair for two years after his accident. He was heavily involved in physical therapy but nothing seemed to be working at the time. He ultimately withdrew from the therapy because his progress seemed to plateau. When Bryce first started his road to recovery he heard something that really stuck with him. He remembered one of his doctors saying that the best way to learn how to walk again was to use a shopping cart. You can balance holding onto the handle and support yourself by leaning onto the cart. After he was no longer in physical therapy Bryce took it upon himself to learn to walk again. He got a shopping cart and did just that. Working with his friends and family he gained balance and strength. He went from using the cart to making small steps to making circles around his block in no time! He now walks independently.

Not only was walking an obstacle Bryce needed to overcome, but he also faced the challenge of talking again. He attends the ***Dream Catcher Direct Instruction Center*** twice a week where he is regaining his ability to talk as well as read and recognize letters again. He has recording on his phone of himself saying phrases such as, "I am so happy to be here" and "how are you doing", that he can use as a mirror to practice talking. He has also found it helpful to use the emoji icons on his phone to text and communicate with others.

Bryce's mother first introduced him to the idea of trying the adaptive water skiing program through Journeys two summers ago. She was walking through the North Boulder Recreation Center when the brochure with a picture of the program grabbed her attention. He has always had an adventurous spirit and waterskiing was something he enjoyed before his accident, so she thought this seemed like a perfect fit for him. She told Bryce about the program and he was on board from the beginning. It is now something that he looks forward to every summer.

Other ways Bryce has found healing is through his passion for photography and painting. Currently, he is working on putting a collection of his pictures together to be displayed at the North Boulder Recreation Center. He has a creative mind and follows his own vision when he paints. He also enjoys bowling and working out. He is looking forward to a trip to Vietnam with his family and family friend this coming December.

Through his determination and optimistic attitude Bryce continues to consistently defy the odds on his road to recovery. As soon as he is told that he will not be able to do something, he makes up his mind that he will do it. The most positive things he has experienced in his life after his injury have been the relationships he holds with his friends and family. They have been there since day one and continue to support and encourage him throughout his entire journey.

When I asked Bryce and his mother what is the best piece of advice you can give, they both agreed it was, "to celebrate the small things, don't give up, those little things will add up and you wouldn't believe the progress they add up to be!"

