

Grantee Spotlight Hector Bruno

Imagine the joy of returning home from a two and a half year tour with the Army to a family get together. Now imagine that joy shattered by the violence of being shot by a drive by shooter. This is the hell Hector Bruno experienced in 1980, which left him a paraplegic. At first he thought his life was over, but with the support of his family and friends, he made the choice to accept his disability and live life to the fullest.



Even though Hector wasn't an athlete prior to the injury, involvement in sports helped him reclaim his life and find new meaning. He became involved in virtually all the sports offered at the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago (RIC), including sled hockey, softball, basketball, handcycling and wheelchair racing. Sports brought purpose back into his life. Now he believes that if you seek a goal earnestly and work hard achieve it, a reward will follow.

"Once I got involved in sports, my life was changed for the better. Because of sports, I feel good about myself. I feel like a completely different person. Through sports I have been able to meet and mentor other individuals who might think that life is over after acquiring a disability," explained Hector.

Hector's attitude, mentoring and message have impacted the lives of countless individuals living with a disability in Chicago. His involvement in peer mentoring at RIC, Schwab Rehab and kids' clinics throughout the city, is invaluable. He brings a positive outlook and information to those who recently acquired their injuries, and helps children see that you have the opportunity to be successful in all walks of life.

In 2006, the Challenged Athletes Foundation (CAF) was more than happy to grant Hector a handcycle to continue to pursue his athletic goals. This year, thanks to the Men's Health Urbanathlon, Presented by Dodge Avenger, Hector was selected as the recipient of a brand new 2008 Dodge Grand Caravan. Typically using all public transportation to get all his athletic, mentoring and work responsibilities, much of Hector's time was eaten up by travel. Now, upon receipt of the Dodge Grand Caravan, he'll have additional independence, and can do even more.

Go get 'em Hector! You're an inspiration to us all.

CAF would like to give special Thank You to Men's Health and Dodge Avenger for providing this incredible gift to CAF grantee Hector Bruno.