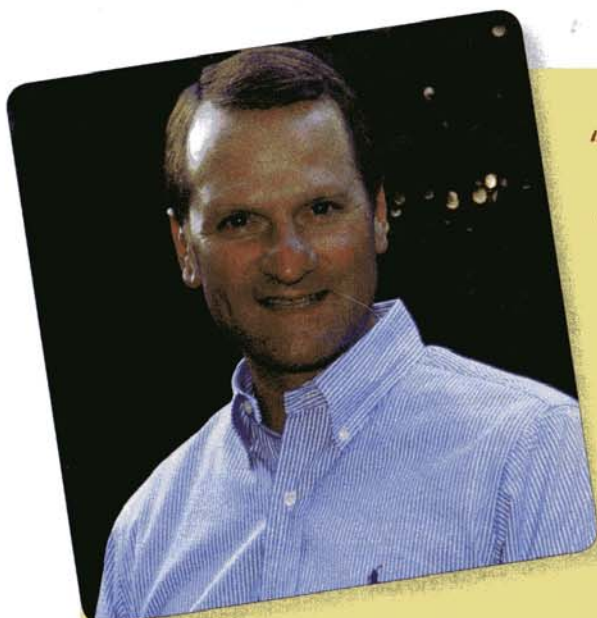




By Tiffany Carlson



“Work gave me an opportunity to contribute again with no ‘expectations discount.’”

Finding the New You

A jaunt down a ski slope is a moment in C. John Stachina’s life that he’ll never forget. “I could tell I was going to hit one of the landscape timbers,” he recalls. He was going down a run he had done previously, but this time in poor lighting. “I remember thinking to myself, ‘This is going to hurt.’”

An athlete his entire life, the crash challenged his identity. “I wrapped my back around that pole, shattering the vertebrae in my lower thoracic and upper lumbar spine and completely severing the spinal cord,” says Stachina, 42, a T5 para from Plymouth, Minn. “I was no longer C. John the ski instructor, C. John the bike racer, C. John the inline speed skater or C. John the soon-to-be airline pilot.”

“Once I was discharged to live with my parents, that was when the really dark months started,” he says. “I had no sense of how I was ever going to make anything of my life,

and no comprehension of who would ever want me like this.” However within months of his injury, he became invigorated thinking of one thing only — returning to work.

“Work gave me an opportunity to contribute again, and in a way I had contributed prior to my accident, with no ‘expectations discount’ because I was now living with a disability.” Stachina returned to his job as a market research analyst with a medical supply manufacturer within a year after his skiing accident.

He’s now moved on to creating the products himself. A passionate dog lover who credits his dog Sam for helping him get over his “woe is me” outlook, Stachina created the Houndabout, a hands-free dog walking system for wheelchair-users. He also created a hands-free rigid carrier he’s dubbed the Utilitote.

Learn more about his products at bluezoneenterprises.com.

Forever BMX Athletes

When Britain’s Steven Murray, one of the world’s best BMX riders, broke his neck during a race in 2006 in Baltimore, Md., becoming paralyzed from the shoulders down, the close-knit nature of the skater and BMX community really showed its stuff, resulting in the Athlete Recovery Fund. This nonprofit is dedicated to providing medical and educational assistance to injured professional BMX, freestyle motocross and skate athletes — a group for whom spinal cord and brain injuries are not uncommon.



And the individual behind this organization is Aaron Cooke, a close friend of Stephen Murray’s. In addition to founding the Athlete Recovery Fund to honor Murray, Cooke intends the fund to help athletes who find themselves in a similar situation, and to cover what insurance won’t. The foundation’s goal: “So they can be prepared, rather than react.”

To apply for an ARF grant and to learn more, visit www.athleterecoverfund.com.

Stay Warm Without The Worry

Electric blankets, notorious for burns, have received a major SCI friendly upgrade. Chattam & Wells are now offering “Safe & Warm Technology” — a soft heat low voltage blanket that uses less than 25 volts, instead of the typical 120 volts. And for when the Sandman visits, it automatically shuts off after 10 hours. For more info, go to www.electricblanket.net.