

October 2011

Dear Brother,

As I sit here writing this letter, it amazes me to think November marks the third year in a row the brothers of Beta Lambda will get together in support of my ongoing recovery from a devastating spinal cord injury. However, our annual gathering also serves as a show of support for the more than 1 million individuals living with an SCI, as well as their families, caretakers and medical professionals, who all work tirelessly towards finding a cure.

In fact, this past year was one of the most significant times in the history of SCI research. Several breakthroughs were achieved that were once thought inconceivable:

- In May, Rob Summers, a man paralyzed from the waist down after being hit by a car in 2006, regained the ability to stand, take steps on a treadmill and move his hips, knees, ankles and toes voluntarily as a result of an experimental treatment developed at UCLA and the University of Louisville. Doctors now believe this treatment could potentially treat 10% to 15% of people living with an SCI and allow them to regain some function of their legs.
- In July, researchers at Case Western Reserve University coaxed skittish nerve fibers to bridge a gap in damaged spinal cords and forge new connections. The experimental repairs revived partially paralyzed diaphragm muscles, restoring normal breathing in 9 of 11 test animals. Researchers call the result "the culmination of 30 years of work" and continue work towards advancing the treatment.
- In September, the Allen Institute for Brain Science announced the discovery of a new class of cells in the spinal cord that act like neural stem cells, offering a fresh avenue in the search for therapies to treat SCIs.
- And earlier this month, The Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation published updates on several ongoing, independent, human stem cell trials. Results range from safety studies showing no adverse affects in patients after being implanted with embryonic stem cells 12 months earlier; promotion of significant and persistent recovery in walking ability when implanted in mice; anecdotal reports from several other studies citing recovery in individuals with acute SCIs.

These stories are just a few of the remarkable happenings within the scientific and medical community when it comes to treating SCIs. I continue to remain optimistic about the future and possibility of one day benefiting from the exciting advancements taking place. However, my hope is certainly not a substitution for my continuing disciplined work ethic, not only physically, but also mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

Some of the ways in which I am rebuilding myself is through helping others. As a result of my catastrophic injury, I have found myself in the unique position to be able to use my experience and perspective to assist other individuals living with an SCI. I am working hard to help bring more awareness to the devastating effects of SCIs. It is also my intent to serve as a resource to those confronting a spinal cord injury and provide them with the tools they need to persevere and flourish.

A few steps I've taken since our gathering last year to help fulfill this mission are as follows:

- Weekly visits to the spinal cord unit at Cleveland Metro Hospital to meet with patients and their families to counsel, offer support, answer their questions and concerns.
- Speaking appearances at grade schools, high schools and other venues about the power of faith, a positive attitude and persevering through difficult times.
- Appointed to the Board of Directors for LEAP (Linking Employment, Abilities and Potential), an organization whose mission is to advance a society of equal opportunity for all persons, regardless of disability.
- Continuance of my website that provides informational links and helpful information regarding spinal cord injuries. The website also chronicles my road to recovery and provides a unique perspective on living with a spinal cord injury (www.ScottWFedor.com).
- Founded a nonprofit organization known as, *Getting Back Up*, whose primary purpose is to raise awareness, support and education for spinal cord injuries. Furthermore, the organization also seeks to invest in research initiatives deemed worthwhile in advancing towards a cure for paralysis (www.gettingbackup.org).

Finally, I'm excited to report that a state-of-the-art therapy center for paralyzed individuals, *Buckeye Fitness*, has opened up in Cleveland. The center is designed to provide aggressive, rehabilitative physical therapy techniques that have been used to restore muscle growth and function. The center practices the same techniques used at, *Project Walk*, an innovative SCI recovery center in California.

Unfortunately, as is the case with most of these therapy centers, insurance is not accepted. Any individual hoping to take advantage of the restorative exercises they provide must do so at their own expense. Each hour session cost \$125. It is my desire to participate in 8 to 10 sessions each month. However, I am currently not in the position to do so due to the other numerous medical expenses I incur each month. That is why any funds raised through your generosity at this year's event will go towards my therapy sessions.

Although it's been more than 13 years since graduating from Lehigh, the outpouring of support, messages and prayers I have received from the DTD Brothers has been nothing short of amazing! I feel very grateful and fortunate to be part of the Brotherhood! I wish the best for all of you!

Fraternally Yours,

Scott