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PARALYZED DUE TO GUN VIOLENCE, CHICAGO MAN FINDS NEW HOPE

“It’s Bigger Than Me”: 32-Year-Old Michael Seeks Donations, Pursues Unique Mission

CHICAGO—Five years ago, Michael Walthall became a victim of a shocking random act of gun violence. Today, his life with paralysis includes a passion for adaptive athletics and a new mission: to help other paralyzed gun violence survivors overcome barriers. He is partnering with the nonprofit Help Hope Live to fundraise for his own injury-related medical expenses so he can continue to bring this meaningful mission to life.

“On March 3rd, 2016, my life changed,” explained Michael. “I was in my car waiting for a traffic light when a car with unknown individuals drove next to me and began to shoot at my car.” With no motivation or personal connection to their victim, the assailants fired at Michael, forcing his car off the road. Jaw-dropping YouTube footage shows Michael’s car dangling dangerously off an overpass after the accident before he dragged himself to safety, his legs paralyzed: <https://youtu.be/7NbOmzhagoU>

After the shocking encounter, Michael began a new life with paralysis. Today, he is a passionate and capable 32-year-old alumni of DeVry University who credits his family, friends, the Chicago community, and adaptive sports with helping him to overcome the immense trauma associated with his injury—both mental and physical.

Michael discovered a new personal mission post-injury: helping other adaptive athletes, particularly gun violence survivors like himself, to overcome their barriers to participation in life-enriching sports such as wheelchair basketball and softball. “These sports provide athletes with a strong and meaningful community,” he said. “Most adult athletes with spinal cord injuries are due to gun violence in Chicago.”

To fuel this newfound mission, Michael knew he would first need to meet some of his own immediate needs. The cost of a spinal cord injury like Michael’s can exceed \$2 million over a lifetime according to the Reeve Foundation. Many critical medical and related costs are not covered by insurance, including activity-based therapy, home health care, accessible vehicles, home medical supplies, and assistive technology such as exoskeletons, which can vastly improve health and wellbeing.

That’s why Michael turned to the trusted national medical fundraising nonprofit Help Hope Live. He has started a tax-deductible and medically verified fundraising campaign—donations can be made at: <https://helphopelive.org/campaign/19035/>

“I’ve discovered what I care about, and have come to know that this calling is bigger than me. I am grateful for the support of my family, friends, co-workers, and

teammates—it is only with everyone’s unwavering support that I am able to stay mobile and be a part of a community that I can now call Home.”

Michael hopes to extend the reach of his efforts all the way to the Chicago Bulls: “I dream about developing an adaptive sports program in partnership with the Bulls.”

Donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law, and all funds raised will be managed by the nonprofit to cover verified medical and related expenses. Help Hope Live verifies medical and financial need for every patient.

Help Hope Live is a national nonprofit that specializes in engaging communities in secure, tax-deductible fundraising campaigns for people who need a transplant or are affected by a catastrophic injury or illness. Since 1983, campaigns organized by Help Hope Live have raised over \$150 million to pay patient expenses.

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