

What a Difference a Day Makes



Juan Granados comes from a big family –

three brothers and six sisters. He came to the United States from Mexico after graduating high school. Spirited and eager to learn, he became a US citizen and tried his hand at various jobs before finding something he really liked – roofing. He learned the job through a journeyman program and on-the-job training and perfected



Rita Anderhub
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his skills for seven and a half years working on commercial and residential roofing projects. During this time, he saw some bad job-related accidents. But they happened to others, not to him, no way.

But then came Saturday, June 9, 2001 when he could no longer say or think that. Two hours into the job, on the roof when suddenly the lights went out. He lay unconscious and an hour and a half later, Juan awakened to “a lot of noise, very

bright lights and pain.” It wasn’t until he arrived at Bi-County Hospital that he knew he had fallen through the roof and suffered spinal cord injury, a dislocated right shoulder and gashes about the head and chin. That was five years ago. Five years filled with surgery, long hospitalization, rehab, education, retraining and mental gymnastics. Some of the whats, wheres and

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hows have been answered and even conquered, but the whys linger.

Juan has worked tremendously hard to get where he is today and he does it by “taking it one day at a time.” It’s an old adage, but still applicable. His skills have changed – driving with hand controls, maneuvering a wheelchair and

performing a myriad of tasks from a sitting position. Retraining as a dental technician has given him the ability to provide for his family. But it didn't happen overnight and there is still much to do and much to feel. Kim Thompson MS, LLPC, CRC, Vocational Consultant with

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Juan certainly hasn't slowed down any and he is proof that life doesn't end with a catastrophic injury. When asked if it was hard to relearn tasks he had been doing for 30 some odd years, he said, "Everything is hard unless you really want to do it." He has really wanted to learn English so he could interview and secure a new position; he has really wanted to drive again so he could regain control of his destination; and he has really wanted to retrain so he could command a salary and provide for his wife and child. He enrolled at Wayne County Community College in the Dental Laboratory Technology Program, a suggestion from a ReviewWorks Vocational

Consultant. After much hard work, he became a Certified Dental Laboratory Technician.

Kim contacted the dental community to set up internships and interviews and assisted Juan with his resumé upon his graduation. He was already juggling and struggling with so many new things in his life, such as a wheelchair, buying a specially-equipped van, taking English tutoring lessons twice per week, that this was one facet Kim could coordinate for him. Eventually, he landed a position

with Lieder Crown and Bridge in Auburn Hills, Michigan as a metal finisher.

Dale Lieder, the owner, said, "During the interview, I sensed a really nice guy and I thought I would give him a chance. The thing I like most about him is he is dependable and, with only eight people on staff, that is a very important quality." When asked if any physical adjustments were made to accommodate Juan's wheelchair, Dale said, "I would bend over backwards for him. He is such a gentleman and has real character. Juan makes things work and he never complains and I don't mind making concessions for him."

In this new position, Juan builds crowns, bridges and teeth from the molds sent in to the lab. Juan says, "I know when I make these appliances for people, they have a better smile and they feel more confident in themselves and that makes me feel good." So in a sense he is still a roofer. Now, instead of working with the roofs of people's houses, he is, in a way, working with the roofs of people's mouths.

Certainly it was because of Juan's commitment to hard work that he has accomplished as much as he has, but claims, "I gained strength from the good people around me. They showed me more possibilities and gave me a more positive outlook. I probably would not have had the opportunity to go to college. That is good. Am I upset that I'm confined to a wheelchair? Yes." When asked if it is harder to cope with the physical or



the mental anguish, Juan admitted, "The mental. The physical adjustment gets easier with time and practice. Maybe the mental burden will get easier with time as well."

Right now it is still too early to be grateful about many things. But he is appreciative of the collaborative efforts of his former employer, the TPA, the vocational rehab consultative service and the excess workers' compensation company, all, who propelled him through an arduous time. Working in tandem, Construction Association of Michigan (CAM-COMP), Comprehensive Risk Services (CRS), ReviewWorks and Midwest Employers Casualty Company (MECC) put their professional heads together and, with Juan's concurrence, devised and approved a plan of action. Open communication, a supportive and motivational workers' compensation program, a dedicated workers' compensation claim analyst, decisive rehab consultants and a true willingness on the part of the claimant proved to be a great catalyst for Juan's successes. Working collectively as partners interjected energy and purpose into a broken life. Because Juan was surrounded by people who cared about him and his family, he is forging ahead and making great strides toward a new and different life.

After Juan's accident, he, his wife and six-month old son were unable to return to their apartment since it was not wheelchair accessible. There were not two exits per code, the doors were not wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair and there wasn't a ramp into the

dwelling. With the help of Anita Dombrowski, RN Case Manager from ReviewWorks, Barbara Gullett, Claims Consultant from CRS, Dee Macy, Administrator from CAM-COMP and Vicki Barker, Senior Claims Analyst at MECC, Juan was temporarily moved from the hospital-rehab facility into a code-approved apartment in Dearborn, Michigan. After approximately a year and with the coordination and cooperation of all involved, Juan and his family finally moved into a house of their own that had been renovated and complied with code. Barbara Gullett said, "I believe this has also helped in his recovery."

Restoring independence to Juan was of major concern to everyone. The purchase of a PowerTrike is one example of how companies communicated and kept Juan's mobility first and foremost. The PowerTrike is a powerful electric tricycle designed for better maneuverability and the ability to go where standard wheel chairs cannot. Since Juan was responsible for chores outside the home, Dee Macy with CAM-COMP pounced on the idea of the trike, a suggestion

from the Rehab Division of ReviewWorks. She insists, "There will be many places that he will go in his lifetime and use this. Biking in the park with his family is good therapy, the State Fair once a year, a Mexican Festival, a construction site to see his friends, his son's football practices and games... I'd like to approve this expenditure. Every waking moment of the day, Juan has to think and plan his next move." Vicki Barker



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with Midwest Employers Casualty Company also supported the purchase of this piece of equipment for Juan. "It was a great outcome for Juan. He was so excited and truly appreciative to have it. The entire team has taken great strides to make sure Juan is comfortable. He never complains nor does his wife," Macy recalled. It's all about working together to make Juan's life a little more manageable.

All parties concerned are dedicated to changing behaviors

in the workplace and keeping employees safe on the job. The time to take action is before an accident occurs.

Midwest Employers offers a proactive approach with powerful services along with our excess coverage. With the Safety Cornerstones, Safety Trainer and ResearchLink programs, Midwest hopes that we can help policy holders prevent life-altering, work-related injuries. By enrolling in our on-line courses and educating frontline managers in safety, employers can send the message that safety is their top priority and that people like Juan are important.

What a difference a day makes and what a difference your excess workers' compensation carrier makes. Midwest Employers Casualty Company is interested in preventing the smallest of injuries to the largest of catastrophic claims. When the employer partners with MECC, they send a consistent message throughout their organization that their employees' lives are worth saving. ■■■



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