

The Can-Do Comeback of Detroit's Shane Dwyer

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The way is different, but the *will* is mightier than ever.

Two years after a catastrophic snowboarding accident left Detroit's **Shane William Dwyer** unable to walk, the affectionately-nicknamed 'Shane Will' has become a study in purpose.

The Audit Associate recently led a panel at the KPMG Diversity and Inclusion conference in California. He also founded and convened the first-ever Detroit's Abilities in Motion network, all while distinguishing himself as a top performer and a beloved teammate.

He has even returned to the slopes, determined to remove the word 'limits' from his vocabulary.



Dwyer returns to the slopes on a monoski.



Attending the Diversity and Inclusion conference in California.

Back to the Mountain

"It's about continuing to do what I love, even if it means finding a new approach," shrugs Dwyer. "Some of my favorite memories are of being on the mountains and I really want to be able to continue that, by forcing myself out of my comfort zone, and being unafraid to try new things."

Barely 24 months ago, the seasoned snowboarder and former hockey player sped down an Upper Michigan hill into an unmarked, unexpected obstacle concealed within an unremarkable snowdrift. The collision severely damaged his spinal cord.

Dwyer was transported off the mountain and spent the following eight months adjusting to his new status as a paraplegic. He purchased a specially outfitted vehicle, moved to an accessible apartment, and enjoyed unprecedented support from colleagues, friends and family who raised thousands of dollars to help defray his medical costs.

When Dwyer returned to work in August of 2015, the coworkers who'd sought to raise *his* spirits were instead buoyed by Dwyer's own upbeat attitude.

Can-do and Change

"When he came back here from his rehabilitation in August of 2015, he had to deal with a new industry, a client undergoing a transformation and all sorts of personal changes. And yet, he was always positive and never complained," marvels Dwyer's PML Senior Audit Manager **Margaret Muzzin**.

Grateful to those who had rallied around him, Dwyer was eager to make a difference. And his new status provided that chance.

"When I came back, everybody made me feel so welcome -- which speaks to the amazing nature of the KPMG family," he recalls. "I was looking for the perfect way to give back and pay forward all that kindness. And I saw the AIM network as a critical part of that."

Dwyer submitted a formal proposal, enthusiastically endorsed by Detroit OMP **Heather Paquette**, to the national AIM organization. He enlisted Tax Partner **Kevin Voigt** as the group's champion and convened a successful inaugural meeting in early November. One week later, he travelled to California to participate in the firm's second-ever Diversity and Inclusion conference, where AIM and The Veteran's Networks came together to share strategies.

Paquette was impressed: "Shane is a role model for us all. He has a never-ending commitment to giving back to his team and his community," observes Paquette. "He's shown what can be accomplished if you put your mind to it. We're proud that his visible leadership is helping us understand the challenges with disabilities and driving the AIM network through the Motor City."

Dwyer returned from the conference energized and empowered.



"From day one, it's been about focusing on what I *can* do." Dwyer on a hiking trip with his girlfriend.

Renewed Focus

"My biggest takeaway came from listening and interacting with people about their experiences with different disabilities. Whether those challenges are direct or indirect, apparent or not apparent, I think it's important to remember that not all battles are visible. And I'd like to see AIM help raise awareness about that in the workplace, so people feel comfortable sharing," says Dwyer.

He points to his own powerful resiliency; a characteristic *gained* when he *lost* his mobility.

"From day one, it's been about focusing on what I *can* do," says Dwyer. "I think the fact that I don't want pity has helped a lot. I refuse to feel sorry for myself. And I now realize that things I'd have previously thought impossible can be accomplished."

Written by *Sue Treiman*.



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