



SUCCESS STORY

SUSAN CAMICIA: Auction Speaker

VIDEO FILE (Click to access video)

Susan Camicia is a legal assistant in the law firm of Danielson Harrigan Leyh & Tollefson; she's been with the firm for thirteen years. Susan also has been an active athlete all of her life. She's cycled around the South Island of New Zealand in 2004 and rode her bike from Seattle to San Francisco in 2005 to raise money for the American Lung Association. In June 2006 though, while training for a triathlon, her life was forever changed when she was in a cycling accident.

Susan was the featured speaker at the October 25, 2008 Outdoors for All Gala Auction and received two standing ovations! She inspired everyone in attendance. Susan described how Outdoors for All has made a difference in her life since her injury and how hand cycling and skiing with a bi-ski have helped make it possible for her to get outside and be active! Read more below and also check out the video to the right!

Outdoors for All Gala Auction presentation by:
Susan Camicia (October, 2008)

While I love being active, my least favorite activity is public speaking. But because of what Outdoors for All does for people with disabilities and how it's impacted my life, I'm willing to sit here in front of 600 people and tell my story. Besides, I figure if I pass out, I'm already sitting down.

I want to start by telling you a little about my life before my accident and how Outdoors for All has helped me since my accident. Prior to my accident weeknights were spent working out and weekends were spent outdoors biking, hiking, snowshoeing. I was an avid cyclist. In 2004, I rode my bike around the South Island of New Zealand. In 2005, I rode my bike from Seattle to San Francisco to raise money for the Lung Association. I was training for a triathlon and 1,000 mile bike ride at time of accident.

I couldn't imagine a life without being active. 3 weeks before my injury I commented to boyfriend (Paul) if I was ever paralyzed, to just shoot me. It was a few blocks from where I got in my accident. I was injured in June 2006 while riding my bike. I hit a bollard, flipped over my handlebars and broke my neck. I am a quadraplegic – which means I don't have any feeling or movement from my chest down.

I remember when I was inpatient at Harborview the rec therapist told me about Outdoors for All and handcycling. I was very excited. I asked if she could come back and tell me and boyfriend all about it. I later went to rehab in Atlanta for few mos. and got to try handcycling – I loved it. I remembered about Outdoors for All and was excited to get involved when I returned home.



Last year, Paul talked me into trying skiing (he loves skiing) – in fact he signed me up for skiing w/ Outdoors for All for Christmas. I never liked skiing before my accident. I can still remember my first time skiing with Outdoors for All – I loved it! The feeling I had after going down the slopes was indescribable – I just remember the huge smile I had on my face. I was hooked! I have not had as much fun doing anything else since I have been paralyzed. The instruction and assistance were great! It was such an amazing experience. It was so nice to find something active that Paul and I could do together. It's priceless!!

For my two year accident anniversary, Paul asked me if I wanted to spend the day reflecting or having fun. I told him I wanted to rent a handcycle from Outdoors for All and spend the day handcycling at Magnusson Park – it was a perfect day – and a great reminder of how far I'd come.

Unfortunately, along with paralysis comes a form of dependence – which makes it hard to participate in activities without assistance. Having an organization such as Outdoors for All makes it possible to get outside and be active. Your generosity makes it possible for me -- and so many others -- to get outside again. I feel like a new person when I get outside and participate in physical activity.

Thanks to everyone – volunteers, Outdoors for All staff, board members, donors – for all you do to provide such an outlet for people with disabilities. Without your support, it would be impossible to participate in such programs. You are wonderful! What more can I say besides thank you thank you thank you!!! Any donation you make tonight will continue to help Outdoors for All grow, and change the lives of people with disabilities – and show them that outdoor recreation is possible.

Gosh, Outdoors for All has helped do something else I never thought imaginable – public speaking without passing out!

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to tell my story. Preparing for my presentation reminded me of what a full life I've lived and will continue to live. I am constantly reminded of the importance of having the right people and resources in my life. I am blessed.

Thank you!