

Carl Riccio, LLC.

“.. Dedicated to hope, awareness, and a better tomorrow.”

My name is Carl Riccio and I am from Warren, New Jersey. Currently, I am a senior at Villanova University and looking forward to attending law school in the fall. I grew up in a large, sports oriented family. For the first 17 years of my life, my goals and aspirations mostly revolved around athletics. I became a state champion in wrestling, and in my favorite sport of baseball I was awarded a position on the Junior Preseason All-American Baseball Team. It was very gratifying to feel I was on track to reach my life long goal of playing professional baseball. On February 22, 2003, something happened in a split second that forever changed the course of my life. I suffered a severe spinal cord injury (SCI) while competing in a high school wrestling match. The injury rendered me a quadriplegic. After my injury, I realized that I had to redirect my life, rethink my goals, and take a different path toward success. I met many people with similar injuries to mine. Some were beaten, and felt that their lives were over. To watch this happen to another human being is a life changing experience. I don't know why I have been given the ability to go on striving for success despite my physical challenges, but I do know that in itself makes me a lucky man.

Soon after my injury, I felt the need to do something more in order to help myself and others with similar conditions. While I was recuperating in the hospital, my family found out about a bill sitting dormant in the New Jersey Assembly. The bill would legalize stem cell research in New Jersey. With their help I came up with some ideas on how to get involved, and help pass this important piece of legislation that may not only help myself, but could possibly help millions of others with diseases or conditions. We started by creating a web site called The Carl Riccio Special Needs Trust. The web site was created to inform people of my initial ongoing care, but in addition became a place to educate people on the importance of stem cell research in New Jersey. We created an area where people could contact their legislators and send a letter of support. Next, for people who were not computer friendly, we put together a booklet with informational pieces about stem cell research to help them understand this new science. The booklet also contained a list of all the legislators in the state and their contact information along with a guided letter for them to fill out and send to their assemblyperson. Thousands of people including friends, family, and complete strangers sent in the letters of support and made phone calls. In December of 2003, the bill came to the floor of the assembly. New Jersey became the second state in the country to legalize stem cell research.

When I began advocating, New Jersey did not have any public funding for stem cell research. We are now the first state in the country to put public funding into this research. I have spoken in front of the legislature and with many of them privately to stress the importance of supporting and funding stem cell research to better the quality of life for all people. I was personally thanked for my work by Assembly Chairman Lou Greenwald in front of the Assembly Budget Hearing Committee for not only helping educate the legislators but the people of New Jersey as well.

I was asked by the past three governors on several occasions to speak at public hearings. I was a guest speaker at the bill signing for The Stem Cell Research Building Bond Initiative in December of 2006, and recently in July, Governor Corzine asked me to speak at the bill signing for the ballot question to fund \$450 million dollars in stem cell research grants. Sadly, that question did not pass in the November election. However, I will continue to work on new ways to educate and push New Jersey forward to fund this important research.

I have come a long way since the early days of my injury. There were so many questions, so many unknowns. Could I finish high school on-time, and graduate with my class? What could I learn to do for myself? What would I need to depend on others for? How can I adjust to this totally new and unknown life in a wheelchair? These are all issues that I and every other newly spinal cord injured individual have to learn to deal with. I have dealt with them, and new issues, roadblocks and hurdles that come into my life daily. Things that many people don't even give a second thought to. Recently, I have realized the need to tell my story in an educational documentary. The documentary would chronicle my life, including my accident, injury, rehabilitation, and subsequent dedication to stem cell research. It would share with the public the break down and re-birth of a family who experienced a life changing event. It would also serve to raise awareness of the urgency and importance of stem cell research.

Many people have told me that mine is a story that must be shared. It can be a very lonely feeling to be stricken with a debilitating or life changing condition. It helps for people to know that they are not alone. It helps to know that there are people, real people, like me who have and are still going through the day to day struggles, both emotionally and physically that they are. If seeing my story helps one person with a new SCI, by answering a question, seeing how I got through a certain situation, or just inspiring them, it would be worth it. Another important reason for this documentary is to let people know that they can make a difference in the world. Whether they are able bodied, wheelchair bound, or have any physical challenge, their voice can make a difference. If a law is wrong or unfair, you can and should do all that you can to make it right. This country's founding fathers, as well as its greatest heroes throughout history are the people who thought this way.

I would like to ask for your help in raising funds to support my documentary. I have hired a film company and have started preliminary work. My budget is from \$150,000.00 to \$200,000.00. You can help by being a sponsor for the film. Your name or business will be listed in the credits of the film. With a substantial donation you can be the primary sponsor.

Thank you for taking the time to learn about my story. If you are considering being a sponsor and have any further questions regarding the documentary, please contact Tricia Riccio at kpcst@aol.com or call 908-285-0928.

Forever hopeful,

Carl Riccio