

Paul's Story

Prior to August 1, 2000, Paul Fullmer was a healthy, athletic, energetic man looking forward to skating, playing hockey, coaching, and refereeing at RollerPlex. He and Karen had spent over five years creating the dream of RollerPlex and were soon to see that dream come to fruition. However, just eight weeks prior to opening the doors, tragedy struck. Paul offered to help out a contractor for a one-day job caulking a building under construction on 83rd Avenue north of Union Hills. After a few hours on the job, a faulty ladder caused Paul to plunge 29 feet onto the hard ground below rendering him unconscious, barely clinging to life. Because of his life-threatening injuries, Paul was air-evacuated to Barrow's Neurological Institute at St. Joseph's Hospital where he would be on life-support for nearly two weeks breathing only with the help of a respirator. His injuries included eight broken ribs, a punctured lung, nine broken vertebrae, a broken collarbone, fractured skull, bruised brain, and a severe back burn. After nearly three weeks in intensive care and 23 days at St. Joseph's, Paul was awake but unaware of his surroundings, the date, his family, and sometimes even his name. He was then transferred to HealthSouth Valley of the Sun Rehabilitation Hospital spending the next 30 days in intensive physical, occupational, and speech therapy. Paul had to learn how to talk, swallow, walk, and generally take care of himself all over again. He was diligent and worked very hard impressing his doctors and therapists with his ambition and drive, often creating new exercises to focus on specific areas needing improvement.

Meanwhile, RollerPlex was continuing to be built with many items left unfinished that Paul was scheduled to complete himself. With a small plea for help, our family, friends, neighbors, and most graciously our church family (Copper Hills Community Church) joined together and over 100 people

showed up on two hot August days to accomplish the almost overwhelming task of landscaping the property. Volunteers raked out tons of heavy rocks, dug holes, hauled granite, planted trees and bushes, painted curbs, cleaned up debris, and every other task imaginable. Many volunteers continued to meet at RollerPlex for the next several weeks painting beams, cleaning and repairing skates, installing dashboards and flooring, and whatever it took to open our doors. God worked a miracle in Paul as well as RollerPlex the summer of 2000.

Paul was released from HealthSouth in a wheelchair on September 21, 2000, and came straight to RollerPlex. He was to spend several more weeks in a wheelchair gradually learning to walk on his own, but left his wheelchair behind collecting dust after the first day. He continued receiving extensive physical, occupational, and speech therapy for the next six months and still today works hard to try and regain as much movement and stability as possible. Paul continues to live with a Traumatic Brain Injury which effects his speech, balance, and endurance. He also can't skate or drive, is unable to taste or smell, has constant pain in his head and chest, and lives with persistent tingling and numbness along his right arm and hand as well as his left leg and foot. However, Paul typically chooses to not dwell on his disabilities, which may stay with him for life, and instead focus on how God has allowed him to live to be an example to others. Paul's accident brought together many people with different backgrounds for a common goal and proved that with teamwork and faith, we can accomplish anything.

*Thank you everyone for your continued support,
encouragement, prayer, and friendship.*