

## Overview

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### Industry

Construction

### Location

Washington State

### Challenge

Construction worker with a spinal cord injury leaving him wheelchair bound.

### Solution

Broadspire's Vocational Rehab Services coordinated state-supported training for a new career.

### Results

Former construction worker now happily employed as a web and interactive designer.

# Vocational Training Steers Disabled Construction Worker to Success in Career - and on Basketball Court

## Situation

Bill was a young and skilled construction worker when a fall at a job site broke his back and severed his spinal cord. Bill was unable to work in construction again. But that didn't mean he was unable - or unwilling - to work at all.

The fall fractured his C6 vertebrae. Following several surgeries, intensive rehabilitation returned some use to his arms and hands. Bill was left wheelchair-bound.

## Action

What Bill soon proved was that while permanently disabled, his personal commitment and the impact of career coaching by an experienced vocational counselor would set him on a path toward success.

Because of his injuries, Bill qualified for the state of Washington's statutory pension program, which would provide a permanent income. After several years not working and still in his 20s, Bill realized he wanted more from life. So he decided to explore his return-to-work options.

Washington vocational services agency officials knew they needed to act quickly on Bill's desire to return to work. The longer a worker unable to return to their former job or career sits idle, the less likely they are to return to work at all ([click here to learn more about Return to Work services](#)). So agency representatives reached out to Broadspire to implement its Return to Work services program.

The program partners Broadspire, the state agency and the disabled worker with career counselors and workforce development boards, area community colleges and career schools, mental and physical healthcare providers, employers and their various employer assistance programs (EAP) to help ensure returning-to-work candidates find suitable and fulfilling employment and the training needed to qualify for the job.

A resident of Washington state when he suffered his injury, Bill had since relocated to Texas. No matter. Washington's return-to-work funding laws ensured job training funds would follow Bill wherever he went.

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His Broadspire vocational counselor performed several job and aptitude assessments and determined Bill was well-suited to be retrained as a web and interactive designer. Placement testing found a program in Austin that would accommodate Bill and his wheelchair.

### **Result**

Classes went well, though he still faced challenges. Like many who are wheelchair bound, Bill endured various medical complications. He was hospitalized several times for infections, issues with his catheters and ports, and a broken hip suffered when he fell out of his wheelchair.

Throughout it all, Bill remained committed to his future. While he was completing his coursework, the college located and worked with an employer to arrange on-the-job training. Once his training was completed, Bill had a job waiting for him.

Bill discovered something else while in college. Before his injury, Bill had been a competitive pick-up basketball player. When they learned of his passion for basketball, the community college connected him with the local Special Olympics chapter. He soon earned a roster spot as a para-athlete on the wheelchair basketball team.

Whether with his new career or his performance on the hardcourt, Bill personified the importance of a positive attitude in helping the disabled achieve their new-found life goals. As we've found, many become "sick and tired of being sick and tired" and want to achieve more.

An experienced vocational counselor becomes a coach, a mentor, a task-master, and most of all, an ally in the pursuit of personal improvement. They ask, they listen, they guide and they champion their success on the path to a new future.

When permanently disabled workers can no longer enjoy the careers they once had, but are eager to return to work, Broadspire can help. If you'd like to learn more about vocational rehabilitation in your state or how your company, organization or state agency can help return more workers to suitable employment, visit [www.crawco.com/services/medical-management](https://www.crawco.com/services/medical-management).