

Amanda Perla


Hi, I'm Amanda from Orlando, FL. About 10 years ago, I had just turned 18, I had been dancing competitively for 11 years and was a month away from graduating high school when in a split second my life changed forever. On April 21, 2007 I was a passenger in a car accident that left me paralyzed from the chest down. I broke my neck and almost completely severed my spinal cord. I am now a C6 Incomplete Quadriplegic.



So instead of walking at graduation and spending the summer with my friends, excited about the future, I spent the next 6 months at Shepherd Center in Atlanta learning to live life in a wheelchair. I was told because I showed no sign of finger function or voluntary movement below my injury, not only would I never walk again but I would never live an independent life. So when my insurance ran out, they loaded me up on a bunch of meds, sent me home and told my mom to put me in a nursing facility if she couldn't take care me. Unfortunately, this is the reality for most people living with a Spinal Cord Injury and it was my reality until I decided to do something about it and start NextStep Orlando in 2008.

The ultimate goal at NextStep Orlando is to help our clients regain function through exercise and to walk again. But more importantly, it is to increase their quality of life and decrease secondary complications that kill people in wheelchairs, like pressure sores and heart disease.

Because of NextStep Orlando I have somewhere to exercise consistently, I have a part time job, I live on my own, and I've started to drive again. But the best part is the friendships I've formed



with our clients and their families... Being able to restore their hope for their recovery and their future after they've been told there is none makes it all worth it to me.

I love trying different adaptive sports with the friends I've made. My favorites are surfing, water skiing and handcycling. I just registered for my first 10k in November at Disney! I also was featured as Miss March in the 2015 Orange and Blue The7line calendar. The7line is a New York Mets fan club that my boyfriend and I travel the country with, going to different ballparks and watching the Mets play.

I was told to accept what I couldn't change. Instead, I changed what I couldn't accept. Don't let anything hold you back!