

Gunshot Victim Turns Life Around through Basketball and Positive Message for NTI@Home's Disability Jobs Ad Campaign

Paralyzed by a drive-by shooting, Derrick Stewart-Poole turned his life around to help others, play wheelchair basketball and model for NTI@Home's ad campaign.

BOSTON, MA, UNITED STATES, August 27, 2019 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Derrick Stewart-Poole was at a party with his friends. The then 17-year-old was just hanging out when a bullet changed his life forever. A drive-by shooter fired a shot that left a bullet lodged in his spine, leaving Derrick in a wheelchair for the rest of his life.

With the bullet unable to be removed, Derrick knew he had to make changes in his life and move away from the bad direction he was headed in.

"It was a blessing in disguise," he said. "It turned my life around."

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Derrick Stewart-Poole of the Rollin' Celtics

Derrick knew he was facing a long rehabilitation, but his positive attitude and the willingness to help other patients with their rehab drew the attention of the staff of the Franciscan Hospital in Brighton, Mass.

"I was there for about six months during rehab. They liked how I worked with other kids during their rehab to push them further and help them reach their goals. They saw me as a positive influence, so they asked me if I would stay for another year to help," said Derrick.

With a bus picking him up at the hospital for school every day, Derrick got his high school diploma and turned into a positive role model.

Eventually, he became independent enough to get his own apartment and traveled into Boston for work, which he kept until developing pressure and soreness issues.

"It took me a long time to get used to the wheelchair," he said.

Unable to work, Derrick channeled his time and energy to help others to avoid the path he was on before he was shot.

Now, he volunteers at the Holland Community Center in Boston, where he teaches basketball



Derrick Stewart-Poole Smiling on New Mobility Photo Shoot

and conducts motivational speaking.

"I take them under my wing," said Derrick. "I want to inspire them to follow their dreams."

With the Rollin' Celtics, Derrick takes part in clinics at Boys' and Girls' Clubs and in a program at the Quincy YMCA to teach wheelchair basketball and disability awareness.

"We give awareness to disabilities and to wheelchair basketball," he said. "Kids with disabilities have an opportunity to interact with other kids with disabilities. It is just to get out of the house and enjoy themselves."

"We try to encourage the people without disabilities to sit down and play with the kids who have disabilities. It is always good to bring awareness to everyone. Someone might have a friend who has a disability that doesn't know about wheelchair basketball."

While he was rehabbing, Derrick was looking for an opportunity to stay involved in athletics.

That happened for him when his car was in the garage getting repaired after a car accident in 2011. Derrick decided to go to the store to get something to eat and his life changed again.

"My friend Chris Johnson rolled up on me while I was pushing to the corner store to grab something," said Derrick. "He was like, 'Hey have you ever played wheelchair basketball?' I told him I had never played before."

Johnson told Derrick to be at the same spot later in the day. At 6 p.m., Derrick was waiting on the corner when Johnson picked him up and took him to his first wheelchair basketball practice.

Now, Derrick is a member of the Rollin' Celtics wheelchair basketball team that plays all over the country in the National Wheelchair Basketball Association. Chris plays for the New England Blazers and the two are still neighbors.

"It took me a while to adjust from playing on my feet to playing in a wheelchair," said Derrick. "I



Derrick Stewart-Poole Posing with Basketball on New Mobility Photo Shoot



Derrick Stewart-Poole Posing with Dominic Barber for New Mobility Photo Shoot



Derrick Stewart-Poole Posing with Basketball on New Mobility Photo Shoot

tend to go back to old habits and my coach doesn't like me doing fancy things."

"I still like doing tricks every once in a while, but it is usually two pushes and then you have to dribble."

In wheelchair basketball, the rules are almost the same as the ones used in the NBA and in college basketball.

Oh yeah, there is another thing that is the same as the NBA. There is no shortage of trash-talking on the wheelchair basketball court.

"I do anything I can to rattle them," said Derrick with a laugh.

"I yell at them and I am in their face. When I had the opportunity, I took advantage and I practiced every day to become who I am."

When NTI@Home marketing director Mike Sanders was putting together an advertisement for New Mobility magazine, he was looking at a David and Goliath theme for the photo shoot. Mike already had his David in NTI@Home's Dominic Barber, but getting a Goliath was more of a challenge until he discovered Derrick.

"I heard about Derrick and then I saw his picture," said Mike. "He was perfect for the ad campaign. I call him the 'Enforcer' and that is what I was looking for.

The Take a Shot With NTI@Home advertisement appears on the back cover of the August edition of New Mobility magazine, which has more than 98,000 subscribers.

With the advertising campaign, NTI@Home is reaching out to Americans with disabilities to let them know about the job opportunities out there for them.

For Derrick, the advertisement has been another way for him to send out positive messages to others facing the same challenges he deals with.

Increased visibility led Stewart-Poole to set up fan pages on Twitter and Facebook at @pooleenforcer and <http://bit.ly/DerrickPoole> respectively. Derrick stated, "I'm excited about this and have been waiting for this my whole life."

The final advertisement from New Mobility Magazine can be seen on the New Mobility Website at <http://snip.ly/NewMobilityAugust19> and individuals with disabilities looking for work-at-home jobs, can sign up for NTI@Home's program at <http://NewMobility.NTIatHome.org>.

COMPANY PROFILES:

NTI@Home (www.ntiathome.org) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that helps Americans with disabilities find employment opportunities with government agencies, Fortune 500, and large and small companies. Through NTI@Home individuals on SSI, SSDI or have a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor are eligible for free job training, mentoring, and job placement.

New Mobility Magazine (www.newmobility.com) is the official publication of the United Spinal Association, helping the integration of active wheelchairs into mainstream society. The magazine's mission is to improve the quality of life for people with spinal cord injuries.

The Rollin' Celtics (www.rollinceltics.com) are a wheelchair basketball team based out of Raynham, Mass., that plays in the National Wheelchair Basketball Association. The NWBA has more than 200 teams across the country. Bryan Bjorklund is the head coach of the team.

Pedro Blanco Photography (<https://pedroblancophotography.com>) is based in Barnstable, Mass.

He specializes in studio fitness competitor portraits, on location shoots, and boudoir, maternity and fine arts photography.

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