

Severe accident makes David Beattie more determined

When David Beattie persuades people not to text and drive, he knows firsthand what can happen if drivers don't heed his warnings.

The 23-year-old Western Campus student participates in AT&T's "It Can Wait" traveling program that implores drivers to put down their phones when behind the wheel. To date, more than 12.7 million Americans have taken the pledge to not text and drive. Beattie wants more drivers to make that commitment.

"I go around with Kevin Lynch (It Can Wait representative), to different schools and businesses. Kevin talks about statistics, and I tell my story of what happened. We have had very good feedback," Beattie said.

Beattie grew up in Brunswick and graduated from Brunswick High School. By age 21, he was managing a Champs store and thought getting a degree in business management would be a wise career move. He enrolled in classes at Brunswick University Center and the Western Campus because the classes were affordable and the locations convenient, but on Sept. 3, 2014, an accident changed his plans forever.



Beattie was riding his motorcycle to the Western Campus. In North Royalton on West 130th Street and Valley Parkway, a woman was texting and driving and accidentally hit Beattie, dragging his body and bike 104 feet beneath her car.

"The girl didn't look up in time to slow down for the red light and rear ended me. Initially, I thought I was going to die," he said.

[North Royalton firefighters](#) used airbags to lift the car off Beattie who was pinned. Beattie was rushed to MetroHealth. He had third-degree burns on his body from the car's exhaust pipe, and his right leg was mangled. He spent 30 days in the burn unit and had seven surgeries the first 21 days.

As for the driver, she received a citation. Beattie said that texting and driving is considered a second-degree misdemeanor in North Royalton.

Beattie credits Sherrie Novak, a unit operations specialist, for helping him early in his recovery and offering him encouragement. "Sherrie Novak has been excellent. She helped my mom drop all my classes initially when I was in the burn unit," he said.

Despite a total of 11 surgeries, Beattie experienced several complications with his lower right leg. At his insistence, Beattie's doctors removed the damaged foot, ankle and lower calf, amputating his leg a few inches below his knee. After physical therapy at Strongsville's Lifeworks and being fitted with a prosthetic, Beattie's injury is not evident unless he lifts his pant leg to reveal the artificial limb.

Because he had to delay his education in 2015, Beattie is determined to not miss classes. "The only time I was in the hospital in the last year was for my amputation, and I was out of the hospital within 24 hours. I didn't miss any school, and I no longer need physical therapy," he said.

The physically fit Beattie doesn't view himself as disabled. He drives himself to school, works at a gym, plays basketball and baseball and weight trains. What has changed is his major. Beattie wants to earn a doctorate in physical therapy and help other amputees.

"Being an amputee is a daily thing to me, and there is a lot that goes into it, so I would like to make the transition easy for other amputees as well," he said.

Taking summer, online, day and evening classes, he plans to graduate with an associate of science degree from Tri-C by spring 2018, earn a bachelor's of science degree at Cleveland State University and then transfer to the University of Findlay to earn his doctorate in physical therapy.

Ultimately, Beattie wants to help war veterans who are recovering from amputations at Walter Reed Medical Center.

Beattie radiates confidence about his future. He doesn't show anger toward the woman who hit him or frustration about his situation. "I think I have a more positive outlook on life because I know that seconds can really make the difference between life and death," he said.

His long recovery has also made him more cognizant of his own discipline and patience. "People with disabilities don't look at it as if we have a disability. Personally, I only think someone who limits themselves and tell themselves that they cannot achieve something is more disabled than I am."

###