

Brandon Anderson

Never Give Up!

It has now been over one year since Brandon Anderson's motorcycle accident, which resulted in an above the knee amputation due to an unexpected infection. Having a life-long dream of being a firefighter, Brandon's successful career as a Lieutenant with Fishers Fire Station 93 was abruptly interrupted on August 12, 2016, but never dismissed.

Shelby Jennett, VR Counselor in the Columbus VR office, recalls her first meeting with Brandon and his wife, Nesha, which occurred on December 22, 2016. She said she knew she had to work quickly to ensure that Brandon could return to full duty as a Lieutenant firefighter. "I was encouraged by the support that Brandon's fire station team offered him by giving up their sick and vacation days for him while he recovered from his accident. Brandon came into this intake with hope and motivation to get back on the fire truck. His motivation moved me to advocate for him throughout the VR process."

Shelby explained, "After discussing Brandon's prosthetic limb options with Patrick from Kenney Orthopedics, I knew that VR had to purchase an additional limb that could be stationed in Brandon's fire boot at all times so that he would be able to quickly take off his leg (covered by insurance) and pin it to his stationary limb in his boot (purchased by VR) in order to meet timeliness requirements of a firefighter. Within less than 3 months we were able to purchase Brandon's additional limb in order for him to begin his physical therapy and practice his response time to emergency calls."



Brandon spent a month in the hospital and underwent 10 surgeries. He returned to light duty January 17, 2017 and was released on May 30, 2017 to begin retraining to resume his firefighting career. Training included a physical agility test with eight different exercises; walking stairs with full gear; carrying hose up and down stairs; raising ladders; carrying tools; completing search patterns; dragging a dummy; completing a sledgehammer swing; a ceiling breach and more. The tests are completed by firefighters every year. Brandon also underwent retraining for EMT calls and live training such as auto extrication and forcible entry.

VR provided the Ottobock X3 prosthetic, which is rugged and technologically advanced enough to meet the demands of a firefighter's job. It is a one-of-a-kind product that has a microprocessor which reads pressure and how Brandon is moving. It allows him to climb stairs, step over objects, and go up and down different terrains. Brandon has an extra prosthetic leg fitted in his bunker pants at the fire station. When the station receives a call, he switches out prosthetics.

Brandon acknowledges the importance of the additional state-of-the-art prosthetic device for his fire boot that was provided by VR to enable him to meet the required firefighter response time-lines. When asked about his VR experience, Brandon is very quick to comment on his VR Counselor and the services provided by VR. He said "Shelby has been awesome and I thank her for all she has done to help me in a time of need. VR was very easy to work with throughout the process."

Brandon explained that through their research, it was discovered that he is the first career fire-fighter to go back to work as a person with an above the knee amputation. On June 26, 2017, Brandon experienced his first day back with his crew. He recalls that he was nervous about his first day back at the firehouse, but it was also a huge relief and sense of accomplishment to be back to work in less than a year after the amputation.

"If I can share where I've been and what I've come through...I can help..."

Brandon Anderson

Today, Brandon is not one to ever look back, but he does share his story as a source of information and support for other firefighters who have experienced an amputation. He maintains contact with firefighters across the county. His experience is both inspirational and affirmative to others to "never give up." Brandon stated "If I can share where I've been and what I've come through ... I can help them." Brandon stated that there truly is a "brotherhood" among firefighters.

He remembers the concern and encouragement given to him and his family throughout his recovery process. "I am so proud and honored to be a part of this brotherhood of firefighters."

Camping, hiking, boating, hunting, working on the family farm, and hanging out with family and friends are among Brandon's interests and activities when not at Fire Station 93. He and his wife have two wonderful sons, ages 13 and 16, who keep them busy with their school and extracurricular activities. "My wife and sons have been a great support system throughout this journey. My hope is that my boys have a whole new understanding of what it means to never give up, no matter how difficult the situation."



Photos by: Jenna Watson/IndyStar