

Volume 1, Issue 11

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# BECOMING YOUR BEST

## Stories Of Hope And Encouragement About Individuals With Disabilities

# Becoming Your Best Newsletter

Holiday greetings to you and your family!

This is an exciting and busy time of the year. There is the hustle and bustle of shopping, parties to attend, and for some—traveling to see family. It is a time of fellowship with family and friends and giving of thanks for our many blessings.

The focus of this month's issue is individuals who were born with or developed some type of physical handicap early in life. Nick Vujicic, who was born without arms and legs, shares the following thoughts for those who have never experienced what it is like to have this type of physical handicap:

"Imagine being born without arms. No arms to wrap around a friend; no hands to hold the ones you love; no fingers to experience touch; no way to lift or carry things. How much more difficult would life be if you were living without arms and hands? Or what about legs? No ability to dance, walk, run, or even stand. Now put both of those scenarios together...no arms and no legs. What would you do? How would that affect your every day life?"

There are some people who would view this type of a situation as "the end of the world" and be ready to give up and "throw in the towel." However, the three individuals featured in this month's issue have chosen to focus on what they can do instead of what they can't do! Not only do they give thanks for their many blessings, they use their situations to make a difference.

This issue is dedicated to all the individuals who have some type of physical handicap or limitation. It is my hope this issue will inspire you and give you hope.

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Submit your inspirational stories to the following e-mail address:

[stories@becomingyourbest.com](mailto:stories@becomingyourbest.com).

Subscribe to our FREE newsletter by sending an e-mail to:

[newsletter@becomingyourbest.com](mailto:newsletter@becomingyourbest.com).

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[WE ARE NOW ON FACEBOOK—BECOME A FAN AT BECOMING YOUR BEST.](#)

The photograph is by Bob Sumners—see more at [www.shootthebeach.com](http://www.shootthebeach.com).

Mission:

We are dedicated to presenting inspiring stories of hope and encouragement about individuals with disabilities.

These stories of success are meant to provide support and the keys to "Becoming Your Best!"

Thank you for your stories and your support!

George M. Graham Jr.

## "MAKING A DIFFERENCE" BY GEORGE M. GRAHAM JR

William Jennings Bryan said, "Destiny is not a matter of chance; it's a matter of choice. It is not a thing to be waited for; it is a thing to be achieved."

This article features the stories of three very unique individuals who were faced with major life challenges from birth. All three could have chosen to feel sorry for themselves, easily accepting the circumstances they were dealt. This was not to be the case though. All three made a decision not to allow these obstacles to keep them from pursuing their dreams and endeavoring to fulfill their destinies.

Each of these individuals truly exemplifies what Arthur Ashe said, "True greatness is starting where you are, using what you have, doing what you can." That these individuals are truly great is demonstrated by the fact that they have committed themselves to making a difference in the lives of others.



Aaron "Wheelz" Fotheringham was born with Spina Bifida, which is a birth defect of the spinal chord. He is the third of six children, all of whom were adopted.

He never let anything stop him as a baby or as a small child. He did the same things others did at his age, but he had to figure out how to make it work for him. When the time came, he quickly mastered his walker and then his crutches.

His older brother, Brian, is credited with having an influence on him wanting to ride at skate parks. He watched his brother and eventually decided to give it a try. Even though Aaron admits the first time was scary and he fell, he didn't give up. Aaron said, "From then on he was hooked."



He applied himself and continued to challenge himself to do progressively more difficult tricks. In 2005, he perfected a mid-air 180-degree turn and went on to land the first wheelchair back flip on July 13th, 2006. Once he posted the "first ever back flip" on the internet, Aaron says his life was forever changed. (You can view this video clip on YouTube at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hc1YdL\\_w1Hg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hc1YdL_w1Hg).)

Thanks to his mother's help with scheduling, Aaron has traveled all around the U.S. as well as internationally. He has been featured in numerous magazines, newspapers, and on sports television programs such as ESPN. He enjoys going to summer camps for disabled children and helping out as a coach/mentor.



Aaron likes to show kids with disabilities that a wheelchair does not have to be a restriction but can actually be fun. It is a joy for him to help younger children learn how to use their wheelchairs in new and different ways. He says, "Someday I hope to design the 'most wicked' chair in the world."

Eric Johnson, a reporter with KOMOnews.com, did a video segment about little Zachary Puddy, who is also in a wheelchair. Zachary's mom said that a whole new world of possibility opened up to Zachary after spending time with Aaron. (See the actual video segment at <http://www.komonews.com/sports/heroes/16236927.html?t=a&video=YHI>.)

It is certainly apparent Aaron has a passion for what he does. He has a desire to change people's perception of those who are in wheelchairs. He also wants to help those with disabilities to see their own challenges in a new way.

Aaron is an inspiration to many and certainly makes a difference in the lives of others.

All the photos and information are from Aaron's website <http://www.aaronfotheringham.com/>  
The photo of Aaron flipping in his wheelchair was taken by Barry Bland.

## "MAKING A DIFFERENCE"... CONTINUED

Cody McCasland was delivered by an emergency cesarean section at 34 weeks. Cody's father, Mike, could see that things were not right. Cody's legs looked different and he only had 4 toes on his right foot. Mike was informed by the physician of numerous problems and that he should be prepared that Cody would not make it.

Later as Mike was telling the news to his wife, Tina, the doctor came in to say that Cody was stable. He further informed the parents Cody would be moved to another hospital to undergo surgery that could not be performed at the current hospital.



On the 3rd day after his birth, Cody had surgery and this was to be the beginning of the family's medical journey with Cody. He remained in the NICU for 23 days. He had two surgeries during that time. He was to eventually undergo 15 different surgeries.



By the third month of Cody's life, the family learned Cody would need multiple surgeries. One would be to amputate his right leg through the knee. The doctors were uncertain about the left leg at this point. One of his first surgeries would be to his right hip, which was dislocated.

Eventually, Cody's other leg had to be amputated. Then in June 2004, Cody was diagnosed with Osteopenia. This put him at extreme risk for his bones breaking. This caused him to have to undergo infusion therapy to help re-generate his bones. This lasted for a year and a half. It is now in remission.

Cody and his parents had to undergo many challenges through all these surgeries and hospitalizations. But through it all, Cody had a wonderful attitude. He had the opportunity to participate in numerous physical activities such as horseback riding, swimming, running, soccer, and many other activities.

Cody now competes in numerous events. He has competed in 60 meter and 100 meter races, earning gold medals in each event for his classification. He swam the 25 meter freestyle and backstroke. He won the gold for his age and classification. Team Cody even competed in the San Diego Triathlon Challenge and the Dallas White Rock Marathon.

Cody has appeared on many television programs including the Ellen Degeneres Show and met personalities such as Jeff Gordon. He speaks to others about limb differences and hopes to raise awareness of the abilities of children with limb differences.

He promotes the Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children and the Challenged Athletes Foundation (CAF), which raises money to help people with physical disabilities pursue an active lifestyle through physical fitness and competitive athletics. Find out more about CAF by going to <http://www.challengedathletes.org/>. Also, see the picture to the right!



Cody helps to raise funds for programs that have made a difference in his life and helped him to reach his goals. Now he is able to fulfill his destiny by making a difference for others.

All photos and information about Cody are from the website at <http://www.teamcody.com/>.

## “MAKING A DIFFERENCE” ... CONTINUED

More than likely you have seen a video clip or heard about Nick Vujicic. He was born without arms and legs. He was born in 1982, in Brisbane, Australia. There was no medical explanation as to why he came into the world this way.

Imagine the shock his parents must have felt when they saw their new-born child for the first time. They probably wondered what would he ever be able to do or become with this type of disability. They must have thought the world would consider him to be imperfect and abnormal. Little did they know that this limbless baby would be someone who would inspire and motivate people from all walks of life.

Nick had to deal with all the normal challenges of growing up like enduring bullying, self-esteem issues, but he also struggled with depression and loneliness. He wondered why he was different from the other kids. He wondered what his purpose in life was, or if he even had a purpose. His family, friends and people he encountered along the way encouraged him. He also credits his faith in God in helping him through the struggles he encountered.



Nick went on to obtain a double Bachelor's degree, majoring in accounting and financial planning. By the time he was 19, he started to fulfill his dream of being able to encourage other people by sharing his personal journey through motivational speaking.

Nick says he believes there is a purpose in the struggles we each encounter in our lives. He further states that our attitude toward those struggles, along with our faith and trust in the Lord, can be the keys to overcoming the challenges we face. He has traveled around the world, sharing his story with millions of people. He has told his story on television programs world-wide.

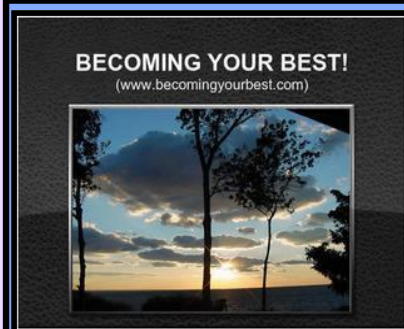
Nick moved from Brisbane, Australia to California where he is president of an international non-profit organization, Life Without Limbs. He also has his own motivational speaking company, Attitude is Altitude. He shares his story with students, teachers, businessmen, entrepreneurs and church congregations.

Nick says, "If God can use a man without arms and legs to be His hands and feet, then He will certainly use any willing heart!"

Nick found his purpose and is fulfilling his destiny by making a difference!



All the photos and information about Nick are from his website at <http://www.lifewithoutlimbs.org/>. He has a new book entitled [Life Without Limbs](#). You can order the book through his website or by going to our website at [www.becomingyourbest.com](http://www.becomingyourbest.com).



### NOW AVAILABLE—THE 2011 BECOMING YOUR BEST CALENDAR

This calendar was produced to help generate an awareness and provide support for the Becoming Your Best project. Any revenue will be dedicated to promoting this project.

Each month has an inspirational quote and picture! All the photos were taken by George M. Graham Jr.

Find out more information by going to our website at [www.becomingyourbest.com](http://www.becomingyourbest.com)