

FEBRUARY 16, 2021

Daily Inspiration: Meet Amanda Boxel



Today we'd like to introduce you to Amanda Boxel.

Hi Amanda, we'd love for you to start by introducing yourself.

On February 27, 1992 I shattered four vertebrae while downhill skiing. An electric current ricocheted through my legs, and I lost all movement and sensation below my pelvis. I was paralyzed. Two weeks later, as I lay in a hospital bed, a young doctor strode into my room and spoke words that resonated in every cell of my body: "Amanda, you'll never walk again." After more than two decades of paralysis and a journey across continents, my pursuit has been one of spirit-mind-body transformation. In seeking the best quality of life, I have learned firsthand how important it is for the neuromuscular system to stay active. In pursuit of recreating and living my life to the fullest, I co-founded a non-profit called Challenge Aspen in 1996. Skiing again gave me my wings to fly on the snow and liberated me from the valley floor. Over time, my health and wellbeing became my utmost focus. We are made for mobility. The longer a person sits, the greater the risk for joint contractures, muscle atrophy, osteoporosis and pressure sores. Over time, limited mobility can be socially isolating too. My experiences have convinced me that having the opportunity to regain mobility and walk should be seen as a human right. Prepare your body today. Technology

is augmenting human potential like never before. Every person deserves access to innovative technology to enjoy a better quality of life. Sharing expands possibilities.

On October 19, 2015 we officially launched our local Mobility Program for Aspen/Snowmass and Roaring Fork Valley residents, designed to help individuals who have mobility impairments to regain motility with the assistance of the Galileo side-alternating neuromuscular training systems and a bionic exoskeleton suit (EksoGT, manufactured by Ekso Bionics). We have since acquired additional advanced technologies to remain on the forefront of technologies. Such equipment includes, but is not exclusive to, a Lokomat robotic assistive walking device from Hocoma, an Indego exoskeleton, a Keeogo Dermoskeleton, and The NewGait wearable harness system. The goal of our program is to provide access to this cutting-edge technology, which is typically cost prohibitive, to enhance neuro-recovery and quality of life for individuals who have neurological disorders or mobility impairments. The program enables such individuals to exercise in an inclusive health club environment that promotes wellbeing. We are building community. One of the most fulfilling aspects of this entire initiative is to see that locals from the Roaring Fork Valley participate for next-to-nothing. Our program is fully funded through community support and donations to Bridging Bionics Foundation. Join us in celebrating the power of human ingenuity to uplift the human spirit and help our locals regain mobility. Walk with us.

Can you talk to us a bit about the challenges and lessons you've learned along the way? Looking back would you say it's been easy or smooth in retrospect?

I will always have an indelible desire to give back to serve others. That comes at a cost though, and that cost is a fundraising hat that I wear to sustain the non-profits I have founded. The cost of healthcare should never be a financial burden or issue. I chose to make Bridging Bionics Foundation a charitable entity to truly give the gift of mobility to those who need it and deserve it the most. The biggest annual challenge is meeting our budget and raising the funds to sustain our program. The fundraising outcomes for 2020 were significantly impacted by the SARS-CoV2 Pandemic, resulting in a decline in revenue from 2019 by almost 20%. Despite the pandemic, we have kept our program operating. The Bridging Bionics program is highly utilized by approximately 45 clients per week, averaging 225 sessions per month.

Can you tell our readers more about what you do and what you think sets you apart from others?

The non-profit sector and serving others is my passion and expertise. I have been involved in community and outreach projects that aim to improve the lives of individuals with disabilities in the United States. I'm the founding Executive Director for Bridging Bionics Foundation, demonstrating how bionic exoskeleton technology has a positive impact on quality of life. I love to speak to audiences. I showcased the first partially 3D printed exoskeleton in the world for Singularity University's European Summit in Budapest, Hungary, and then again at the Aspen Ideas Festival in Colorado. In November 2014 I presented my forwarding thinking ideas about neuro-rehabilitation and humanizing technology at TEDCity2.0 in Chengdu China. I was the first person in the United States to own an Ekso bionic exoskeleton suit manufactured by Ekso Bionics, which I acquired in June 2013.

I donated my personal exoskeleton to the Bridging Bionics Foundation for use in the Aspen and Roaring Fork Valley Community to help others who are paralyzed walk. Bridging Bionics Foundation is in recognition of my legacy of helping individuals with neurological impairments regain mobility, and for some, rise out of their wheelchairs, stand up and walk by means of robotic technology or on their own two legs and feet. Using cutting edge exoskeletons combined with whole body vibration technologies that Bridging Bionics Foundation has acquired, clients each week are able to stand and take meaningful steps towards their future. Each therapeutic mobility session is gifted for next-to-nothing. I have dedicated my life to finding affordable and accessible mobility options to enhance neuro-recovery, using advanced technologies combined with daily physical therapy for others who have experienced similar injuries.

Is there anyone you'd like to thank or give credit to?

I often express that this non-profit is not about me. We are a team and we have built this disruptive therapeutic program model together, and we are getting results. I work with a phenomenal team of creative and highly skilled physical therapists who, like me, think out of the box and believe that neuro-recovery is possible. They are the ones who help our clients regain mobility and, in some cases, walk again on their own legs and feet. Our organizational staff help us with daily operations behind the scenes. Our community of supporters and donors deserve the greatest acknowledgement and accolades, for we couldn't do what we do without the unwavering support from our entire community. We are accountable for what we offer to our clients and we are transparent. In return, our community witnesses the results and continue to believe in the service we are providing. The real heroes in our program are our clients, who continue to show up week after week with grit and determination to feel better in their bodies.

Despite being immunocompromised, they still yearn for therapy to keep mobile. Our clients are the ones who I applaud the most.

Pricing:

- \$500 annual program fee for all clients. Approx. 40% receive a full scholarship for our services.

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