

The Paul Meyer Story – An update

Publisher's Note: I can always tell when a story hits a nerve with people. The Facebook intrigue blows up and I get mentions about it when I'm out and about. The story of Officer Paul Meyer is such a story. It's hard to pinpoint the specific reason, but it's probably a combo of it being a tragic accident involving an on-duty police officer, the severity of his injury, the collective care and concern by his fellow police officers, neighbors and complete strangers alike. However, the most common reason people seem to be articulating to me is the amazing attitude Officer Meyer displays to all during this time.

Think about it. How would you react to having a nearly fatal accident, ending up paralyzed, having to re-think your entire life as one who will be confined to a wheelchair for the rest of your life? Some, probably most, would be bitter. Why me? What will I do now? What are the odds of a tree falling on me? But this does not seem to be the focus of Paul Meyer. From his welcoming smile to his passionate and emotional recounting stories of the kindness and love he's received from all, he is a man who is accepting his new reality with the sort of character not shared by many.

The following is mainly derived from Mary Meyer, who openly discusses the challenges, highs & lows she and the Meyer family have experience during these past months. While there has been much discussion about their van being donated, the details aren't as first reported in local news venues, but the happy ending remains the same. - JC

BY: JONATHAN CRANE

Last month we reported on the accident of Officer Paul Meyer that occurred last November when a tree snapped and smashed down on him as he was riding an ATV during a police exercise on Hayden Island. Officer Meyer was an active member of the Portland Police Bureau's Special Emergency Reaction Team (Same as SWAT). A 100-foot tree destroyed his helmet, broke his spine and left him paralyzed. Remarkably, he received no brain damage despite the gravity of the blow.

The aspect of this story that is so amazing is that Paul isn't focused on the loss of the use of his legs, he's simply grateful to be alive. His new motivation is to find ways to "Pay it Forward".

The Meyer family has lived in Tualatin for many years. They are very engaged with their neighbors and are intertwined in the community. When this accident happened, their neighbors showed the sort of care, concern and love that should make us all proud to be a part of this community.

Paul's wife, Mary Meyer, has been involved with every aspect of Paul's recovery since the word go. I've visited with them a couple of times at their temporary home in Tualatin (their permanent home is being retrofitted to accommodate Paul's wheelchair) and as I wrote her after our first meeting, it is not just his strength that's incredible, it's hers as well. Their bond with each other is palpable and a necessary ingredient in all of this.

While there have been many reports about the van that was "gifted" to the Meyer family, circumstances have changed and a combination of generosity from the Police Fire and Police Disability and Retirement Fund (FPD&R) and Brian Sanders of Dick Hannah Toyota will ultimately fund the van. In the photos you'll see this new van and the joy it has brought to Paul and Mary Meyer.

Since I was fortunate enough to receive a detailed update from Mary last week, I thought I'd simply run excerpts from it so you can see the sort of strength and humility she brings to the table.

The following is from Mary Meyer:

As a wife and mother, I have had my highs and lows during this very surreal time. I have been on the brink of exhaustion some days. I go from making PB&J's and giving our boys practice spelling tests to working with our contractor (Kevin Kelly, KHI Construction), getting Paul out to all of his Dr.'s and PT/OT appointments. Our dogs leash is dusty, poor guy.

We are not in our actual home right now; the ground hasn't even been broken yet for the remodel! We long for the day to finally be in our own home, safe and sound.

The rental we are living in is out of our Deer Creek Elementary school district boundaries. The Principal (Tiffany Wiencken) and our PSO President (Karen Schmitt) called the district's bus company with the hopes of an additional stop for our boys. The First Student Bus Company was happy to oblige and it's fabulous for Paul and I.

Our boys are absolutely loving having Dad at home. What a bond they have. Our oldest son is very delighted to be taller than his dad! It feels so good to live as a family again. Over 52 days without him were at times overwhelming. We missed him to extremes.

But then I reflect on the very powerful reminder that God spared Paul's life and for this I am forever grateful. Paul promises to "Pay It Forward" and he is excited to write a "new" slate for his new normal, living in a chair for the rest of his life.

I love him more that words can say. He is a remarkable man, father and husband. And everyone who meets Officer Paul Meyer feels better. Paul is a great reminder to us all to live each day as if it were your last. Sometimes I feel like that tag line is overused but after my experience it's now my motto.

We are receiving hot and delicious meals from so many people....friends, neighbors, our church and Portland Police and the SWAT team community. We truly feel the love from each dish we enjoy together as a family at our dinner table.

We are taken aback at the kind and generous people of Tualatin and the surrounding communities. It's hard sometimes difficult to accept the overwhelming generosity of so many. At times we feel unworthy.

On Thursday, February 7th Paul's new wheelchair arrived. The "loaner" chair is purple and has "mother-earth" etchings on the front legs. I found it a little funny to watch my tough SWAT husband rolling around Tualatin with that chair. (We referred to it as his "Chick" chair.)

We were happy to have it but we are very excited about his new, all-Black Wheelchair with Red spokes! Now that's more like it.

One of my sisters and my brother-in-law (Sarah and Dan Kiefel) have been making several large modifications to their beach house; a place that our family used to use frequently.



Paul & Mary

He continues to get stronger each day. It's quite amazing to see his progress! He was released from Good Samaritan Hospital's RIO rehabilitation facility on January 9th. We raised a toast together on February 9th. What a celebration.

There was a fundraiser on Saturday, February 16th at the Portland Police Training Facility – 14912 NE Airport Way, Portland. There were 60 teams (180 Participants!) competing. The men and women were amazing. Paul and I had never attended a Cross Fit competition.

We also attended a fundraiser last Saturday night at Harvey's Comedy Club in Portland.

Portland Police Officer "Willy Halliburton" is a stand-up comedian on the side and provided us with a TON of laughs...something that felt so good to do. We all agreed that it is impossible to think about your challenges while you are laughing. Willy and the club generously donated the proceeds to our family. It was an unbelievable evening. We had so many friends and family in the audience, it really made Paul and I feel so great to see how much we are supported. What a feeling.

Afterwards we went over to The Ringside Steak House (Burnside location) and were treated to a drink and many delectable appetizers. The General Manager, Tom Bean is amazing and his staff is flawless. It was a perfect way to end a Great night. Paul said that it was one of his best yet.

Our friends and the Portland Police Bureau are joining efforts and are in the preliminary planning stages of another fundraiser this spring. It will most likely be at one of the hotels in downtown Portland. There will be Dancing, Drinks and Appetizers. Look for further information on this event in a few weeks.

And lastly, many, many people ask how they can help. The answer is quite simple; please continue to keep us in your prayers and pay it forward today.

Because of the extensive modifications needed to make the Meyer home wheelchair accessible, their friends have set up a secured "PayPal" account at: www.officerpaulmeyer.com if you would like to contribute.



Paul & Mary thrilled with the new Van!



Paul checks out the new Van that arrived February 7th.



Paul & Mary check out the new chair, all too happy to return the loaner with the pink spokes and "Mother Earth" etchings.



Paul's new wheelchair arrived February 7th