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# Wheelchair donation enables chef's return to work



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By Darrin Youker  
Reading Eagle

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Phil Polynone remembers nothing of his crash.

Riding his new motorcycle for only the third time, Polynone was struck head-on by a drunken driver on Lancaster Avenue in Reading in March. Two months ago he finally came back to his Marion Township home after recuperation stays in hospitals and health centers.

But this time, he was in a wheelchair.

The accident left Polynone paralyzed from the waist down. At the age of 25, he was left unable to continue working as a chef.

But thanks to the Darrell Gwynn Foundation, Polynone will be able to work again.

Polynone was given a specialized wheelchair Sunday by the foundation that will lift him upright so that he's able to chop vegetables and cook over a stove. Polynone was presented with the wheelchair at Maple Grove Raceway.

Polynone, who graduated from Conrad Weiser High School, studied cooking at the Culinary Institute of America in New York and worked in restaurants in Las Vegas and Colorado before returning to Berks County.

Without the wheelchair, Polynone said he would be unable to return to kitchen work.

The foundation was started in 2004 by Darrell Gwynn, who was paralyzed during a racing accident in 1990.

Gwynn, who found success during his racing career at Maple Grove, returned Sunday as part of a fundraising effort for his foundation, and in commemoration of a charity softball game between celebrity race drivers held for him 20 years ago in Reading.

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Reading Eagle: Bill Uhrich  
Darrell Gwynn, left, shakes hands with Phil Polynone after Gwynn's foundation presented Polynone with a specialized wheelchair that will enable him to return to work as a chef. Gwynn, who made the presentation Sunday at Maple Grove Raceway, is a former Maple Grove racer who was paralyzed during a racing accident in 1990. Polynone, Marion Township, was paralyzed when his motorcycle was hit by a drunken driver in March.

[Darrin Youker on Facebook](#)

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Polynone said he was thrilled by the donation of the wheelchair, which he would have been unable to afford on his own. The specialized wheelchair, Polynone said, costs around \$10,000 and is an item that his insurance would not cover.

"I can get back to the kitchen and rip it up," he said. "I'll get through. I'm so excited."

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