

Injured Airman overcomes disabilities on slopes

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1/28/2008 - **KEYSTONE, Colo.** -- For the average person, losing a limb while serving one's country might seem like the sacrifice of sacrifices. For Airman 1st Class Kevin Krogh, it's just another one of life's challenges.

Airman Krogh, an F-22 weapons loader assigned to the 1st Aircraft Maintenance Squadron at Langley AFB, Va., is one of several injured servicemembers taking advantage of free ski lessons offered through Adaptive Adventures, Inc., at the military's annual SnoFest!!! ski weekend here Jan. 25-27.

"I never expected to do these things again," said Airman Krogh. "After snowboarding in the past, I never thought I would be back on the hill again."

Adaptive Adventures, founded in 1999, is dedicated to helping physically disabled people realize a better quality of life exists, according to their Web site www.adaptiveadventures.org.

An avid snowboarder prior to a March 2007 auto accident, Kevin first returned to the slopes of Breckenridge, Colo., in early December -- just nine months after surgery, rehabilitation and physical therapy. And like many who try something for the first time, Airman Krogh admitted he was a little scared.

"It was something new," he said with a grin. "Going without falling was even better. It was something new, and you have to get used to it."

That grin comes from the spirited 22-year old, who only after two years in the Air Force, was the victim of a car crash near his Virginia base. He was admitted to a civilian hospital in March 2007 in a coma with two broken legs, a broken right arm, a broken nose, and a shattered wrist. Authorities later moved him to a Naval hospital in Portsmouth, Va. When he awoke from his coma, he was transported to his home state of Minnesota to be near his family, and admitted to a Veteran's Affairs hospital.

"(Recovery) was difficult, but I couldn't give up," said Airman Krogh.

In September 2007, he was notified by the VA he was being transferred to a hospital in Texas that specializes in getting injured servicemembers back on their feet. Today, he goes through regular physical therapy.

"It's going good," he said about this therapy. "I can walk around with a cane and sometimes without. I'm still not good at getting up because of my wrist."

Part of his therapy also comes from the close bond Airman Krogh said is formed between disabled veterans.

"(We're) all here for each other," he said. "There's a lot of support out there, but it's most important to not give up on yourself."

But where this active Airman may lack in some lingering physical disabilities, he more than makes up with determination. After facing two mountains in the span of only two months, Airman Krogh is preparing to tackle scuba diving between Jan. 28 and Feb. 1.

"He's looking forward to his future, said his mother Sonya Krogh. "He never looks back."

After rebounding from a near-fatal accident, if he could go back to that day his life changed forever, Airman Krogh said he wouldn't give up his experiences.

"I do act differently since the accident," he pointed out. "If I could go back to having my legs, I probably wouldn't go back because I've gotten to meet the San Antonio Spurs, I've shaken the President's hand and I'm going scuba diving. These are experiences I'll never forget."



Airman 1st Class Kevin Krogh (center), with help from an Adaptive Adventures, Inc., instructor, mounts a modified ski basket built for disabled persons Jan. 26. Airman Krogh, who was injured during an automobile accident, is an F-22 Raptor weapons loader assigned to Langley AFB, Va. Airman Krogh, together with several other disabled servicemembers, took advantage of the company's free ski lessons offered during the annual SnoFest military community event in Keystone, Colo. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Stephen Collier)