## **Inspiration**

## **A Path Less Ordinary**

By Gavin Cloy, former Children's patient

Sometimes, meeting the right person at the right time can shape the course of your life. For me, that person was Physical Therapist Colleen Coulter-O'Berry, and the time was just after my twenty-first birthday.

Two weeks earlier, while on vacation in Colorado, I was horsing around with friends when we decided to jump on a train and ride it into town. It was snowy that day, and when I attempted to jump on the train, I slipped on ice and the train ran over my legs.

After a hospitalization in Colorado, I flew home. In fact, I had only been in Atlanta one day when Colleen called from the Children's Limb Deficiency Center to ask if I was ready to get up and start walking. That blew my mind, and set me on a forward-moving path I continue following today, 14 years later.

When something as catastrophic as losing a limb occurs, you can go two directions, and only one of them is positive. Colleen and the entire Children's team pushed me toward the right path; helping me find my own strength and never letting me feel sorry for myself. It took three years and numerous setbacks before I could walk comfortably on my prosthetics without exhaustion, but somewhere along the way I found the confidence to press ahead and, ultimately, excel.

In those difficult months immediately following the loss of my legs, I never imagined the doors that would



open to me as a consequence of the accident. But during the course of my recovery, I began playing wheelchair basketball, an activity that has become an integral part of who I am. It led to an athletic scholarship at the University of Illinois, where I trained intensively. After graduating in 2004, I made the Paralympics basketball team, traveling to Athens, Greece, to compete. In 2006, I was part of our national team that won a silver medal at the World Championships in Amsterdam. It was an extraordinary experience.

These days, I teach physical education at an elementary school and continue competing both locally and nationally. I am so grateful to Colleen for the inspiration she gave me when I needed it most. In an effort to give back, I visit Children's often, encouraging patients as well as their parents to look for the positive path in their own lives.

My goal is to show them that life is definitely not over and to remind them that there are many opportunities for people who are amputees or paraplegic or have any kind of disability. My hope is that I can be their right person at the right time, as Colleen was for me.