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A C5 quadriplegic, Chris Block says the freedom he found in open-water adaptive scuba diving was amazing! See how this Chicago native found the high seas.

Christopher Block Finds Freedom in Scuba Diving After SCI

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The **CURE NATION** (<https://curemedical.com/visit-cure-nation/>) blog often shares stories of people exploring their world after spinal cord injury to help encourage others on the same path to choose their own adventure too! We knew the minute we met Christopher Block, a C5 quadriplegic, at the Chicago Abilities Expo that his journey would also motivate so many people who dream of conquering the high seas. Read on below to discover how scuba diving changed Chris' outlook on paralysis and more as he adjusted to life after spinal cord injury.

CHRISTOPHER BLOCK GOT ON THE FAST TRACK TO RECOVERY AT SHIRLEY RYAN ABILITY CENTER

Christopher Block is 33 years old and lives in a suburb of Chicago called Highland Park. He was injured three years ago attempting a bicycle stunt in a friend's backyard, breaking his neck at C-5. "They didn't tell me the brakes were disabled," he tells. "I had a helmet on but that didn't help. I went over the ramp and head-first into the muddy bottom of the pond below."

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"I've been doing everything I can to get my independence back ever since."

Chris was sent to Shirley Ryan Ability Center for rehab where he's been working hard to get his life back. Transfers have been one of the most difficult obstacles for Chris, just as it is for most quads. He's had four bicep-to-tricep and forearm-to-thumb tendon transfer surgeries to try to gain more strength in his arms and function in his hands.



Chris credits Shirley Ryan Ability Center with much of his recovery after SCI.

"It's the bed transfer that I've been working on the most," he says. "I can get in it but getting out is almost impossible. It is impossible with a soft mattress."

CHRIS SHARES HIS FITNESS SECRETS AS A QUADRIPLÉGIC

"The best two things I've found, in my personal opinion, since being injured to help me stay in shape is a rowing program out of Spaulding Rehab and my standing wheelchair," Chris reports.

"The rowing machine I have is for quads and paras and uses E-stim for your legs while you row with your arms. You can really get a good workout with it and get your heart rate up. That's not easy for quads to do," he explains. "When I can I try to use it every other day, and I use those Active Hands gloves to keep my hands on the handles."

“As a quad, I feel that rowing has been the best thing for getting my core muscles stronger, and the E-stim keeps my legs in better shape.”

“The other thing I use a lot is my stand-up wheelchair,” Chris continues. “I have a Permobil F5 and I try to get up for at least 45 minutes every day. The doctors told me that’s ideal for my bones. I know it helps my digestion too.”

Chris also gets on the back of a horse once a week, thanks to a program called **Equestrian Connection** (<https://equestrianconnection.org>), only twenty minutes away from his house.





"I basically hold on for dear life," Chris says while laughing. "One of the therapists there just picks me up and puts me in the saddle."

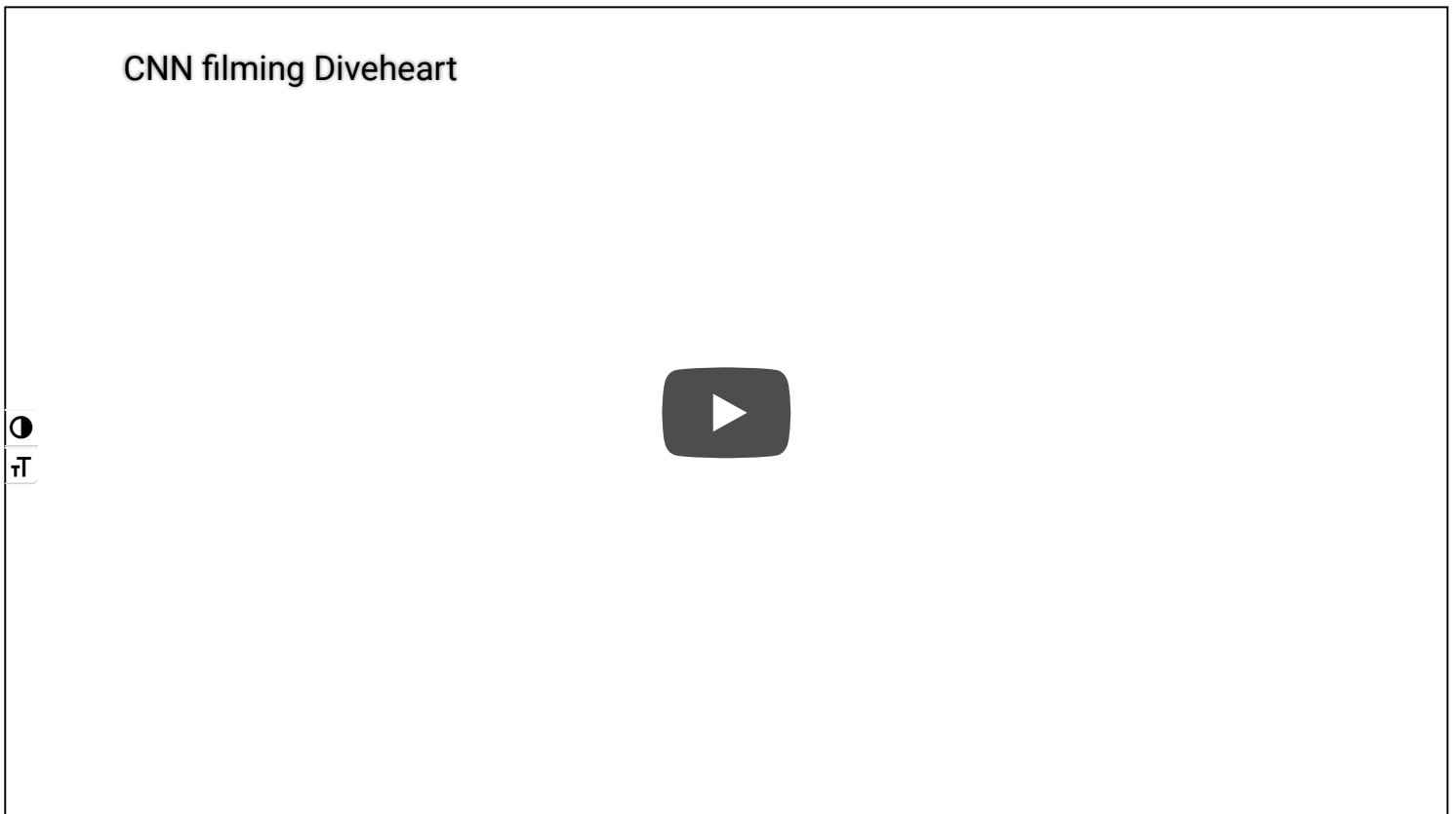
"They walk beside me the whole time though so it's safe. It's supposed to give your body that walking motion it's missing, and it only costs \$25/week for a half hour of riding, and they do a great job for people with all kinds of disabilities."

DISCOVERING A WHOLE NEW WORLD THROUGH DIVEHEART

"When I was inpatient at Shirley Ryan, I picked up a flyer one day about this scuba organization called Diveheart," Chris recounts.

"There was a cute girl on the cover which caught my attention too. I actually got to know her later. Anyway, they were having an event where anyone could come try it out so I went — and I loved it! It was in a swimming pool but being in the water, I felt so comfortable and the weightlessness was amazing. I could move around with so little effort."

WATCH CNN FILM A DIVEHEART ADAPTIVE SCUBA EXCURSION HERE:



"I got the note from my doctor that's required to participate in their programs and completed an hour and a half of online training as well as two pool dives when the Diveheart guys said 'Hey, do you want to go on a dive trip with us to Cozumel in April?'," Chris continues.

"I raised the \$1600 as fast as I could. That's what it costs for the week long trip, plus about \$400 for airfare, and made plans to go. Diveheart took care of everything else," he says.

"I thought the pool was great, but when I dove in the ocean my first time I was like 'Oh My God!' It was the most beautiful thing I've ever seen," Chris spouts.



"The freedom I found doing an open-water dive was amazing, and the Diveheart team members were with me every step of the way. They helped me transfer and put on my wetsuit and gear. It's not easy to get a quad in a wetsuit, you know," Chris adds.

"They taught me how to scuba dive. I couldn't believe how all of these strangers were there for me every time I needed something. They're a great group of people."

Chris does his best to go on at least one dive trip every year. "I went last year and I'm going this year in August," he says. "It's the vacation of my life. And I go to the training events when I can. I just went to one to support a friend of mine (a higher quad) to see him get in the pool for the first time. The smile on his face was priceless."



Chris can't wait to get out on the open water again!

"**Diveheart** (<http://www.diveheart.org>) wants you to be as independent as you can be in the water. Jim Elliott, the founder, is a great guy and they really go above and beyond to make sure they're prepared for all situations," Chris emphasizes.

CHRIS BLOCK AIMS TO PAY IT FORWARD FOR OTHER QUADS

What's next on Chris' to-do list? "Well, getting a job is number one," he says. "I'm coming to the end of my focus on rehab. As soon as I get my transfers down, I'm going to start looking for something in the engineering or rehab world, maybe both."

Chris feels that his own life experience with spinal cord injury has changed his career goals too. "I'd like to get into designing equipment to help differently-abled people be more independent. I'd love to make some things to make diving possible for higher quads. Maybe even get a job with Diveheart someday," he adds with a wink.





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Contact Diveheart to learn more about their accessible diving excursions.

CHRIS BLOCK APPRECIATES CURE MEDICAL'S GOAL TO EXPAND OPPORTUNITIES FOR QUADRIPLEGICS

When Chris visited with the Cure Medical team during the Chicago Abilities Expo earlier this summer, we were impressed with his concern for advancing the quality and range of lifestyle products for people like him who have limited hand dexterity.

Chris spent quite a bit of time with our team, learning why Cure Medical catheters were developed by a fellow quadriplegic named Bob Yant, along with Cure's commitment to funding medical research in pursuit of a cure for paralysis.

MEET BOB YANT HERE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT CURE MEDICAL'S COMMITMENT TO OUR CUSTOMERS AND THE PURSUIT OF A CURE. ([HTTPS://CUREMEDICAL.COM/ABOUT-US/MEET-BOB-YANT/](https://curemedical.com/about-us/meet-bob-yant/))



Cure Medical founder Bob Yant has a dream for a positive future.

"I really appreciate how hard Cure Medical works to create opportunities for higher quads to be able to cath. Just being able to do that on your own can mean the world to an individual. The ability to cath on your own is freedom! The fact that Cure encourages that independence is amazing," Chris concludes.

TRY A CURE POCKET CATHETER: REQUEST A FREE SAMPLE

The popular, U-shaped CURE MEDICAL® POCKET CATHETER (<https://curemedical.com/cure-catheters/cure-medical-pocket-catheter/>) for men is an ideal choice for individuals who value the convenience and discretion of carrying a catheter in a pant pocket or small bag.

The sterile, single use, U-shaped Cure Medical Pocket Catheter is not made with DEHP/DINP*, BPA or Natural Rubber Latex. It offers men discreet portability by easily fitting in most pant pockets.

The Cure Medical Pocket Catheter (<https://curemedical.com/cure-catheters/cure-medical-pocket-catheter/>) is made with polished eyelets on a straight tip and funnel end in a standard (16") and an extra long (25") length. A coude tip version is also available with lubricant.



CURE MEDICAL® POCKET CATHETER FEATURES

- Smooth polished eyelets provide increased comfort.
- A packet of water soluble lubricant is included to aide in comfortable insertion.
- Large flaps on the pouch enable a better grip for easy opening with minimal effort.
- High quality materials – not made with DEHP/DINP*, BPA, or natural rubber latex offer peace of mind.