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“NEVER GIVE UP” - A STORY OF PERSEVERANCE, FAMILY, AND FAITH

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PHOTOS PROVIDED

Life happens... but not always the way we plan. No matter the age, many think that “it can’t happen to me” or “I have tomorrow”. Then the unthinkable or unimaginable occurs. Things change in a flash. How a person rebounds from the adversity or curve balls thrown in one’s direction, well that speaks volumes. Case in point – Brandon Tankersley.

It is the year 1991. Brandon is three days shy of his 20th birthday. He’s out with friends - hanging out as teens and college buddies do. In a matter of seconds, Brandon’s life changes. He and his friends are involved in a serious, traumatic car accident in which drinking and not wearing a seat-belt are factors. Brandon, who was in the back seat of the car, sustains life threatening injuries and was in a coma for six weeks. Brandon’s family is informed by doctors that Brandon would likely be in a “vegetative state for life”, not sure “if he would pull through the first night”, and to “think the worst”.

“Let me tell you about a miracle.” says Brandon’s dad, Jim Tankersley. It is now 2009. Brandon is 38. After ongoing prayers, great medical attention, and months and years of continuous, intensive physical therapy, Brandon has overcome and continues to beat the odds that were so stacked against him. He’s graduated from college – The Ohio State- with a



Brandon with his dedicated, proud, and loving parents—Sue and Jim Tankersley.



Brandon works as a certified intervention specialist (left) teaching life skills at The Warren County Juvenile Delinquent Center. He has spent countless hours volunteering and giving back including volunteering at Cincinnati Children’s Medical Hospital in the Child Life Center.

Bachelor of Science in Business Administration and earned a Masters in Special Education from the University of Cincinnati. Employed as a certified intervention specialist, Brandon now teaches a life skills class to juveniles at The Warren County Juvenile Delinquent Center, is active with his church, and has volunteered countless hours speaking to school and community groups about working hard, being focused on doing your best, the dangers of drinking and driving, and not wearing a seat-belt. Writes a youth who participated in a summer program in which Brandon taught, “...you [Brandon] are a person I have great respect for, because even in the hardest of times you kept strong and fought to make your life better and into what it is today. Keep it up and you will change more lives [lives] than you may ever know.”

Brandon is changing lives. Just ask Krista Jones and Stephanie Lambers, both TriHealth, Injury Prevention Coordinators, based out of Bethesda North Trauma Services. Brandon, a passionate volunteer and captivating speaker with the ThinkFirst for Teens Injury Prevention Program, shares his compelling story with students at various schools and community events throughout the TriState. The program, which focuses on decision-making

skills, empowers individuals to ThinkFirst and weigh the consequences of risk-taking behavior. Said Jones and Lambers, “Brandon continues to make tremendous impact on our program. When he [Brandon] speaks out in the community, he is so passionate about delivering his message.” Recently, Brandon, along with the TriHealth Injury Prevention Coordinators, went to Columbus to testify in front of the Ohio House in favor of passing a primary seat-belt law. Brandon’s message was so powerful and moving that Colonel Collins, then head of the Ohio State Highway Patrol, personally thanked Brandon for testifying.

Brandon’s message is being heard – “never give up”, “work hard”, “believe in yourself”, “don’t drink and drive”, and “wear your seat-belt”. With unwavering support from family and friends and never ending prayers, Brandon’s perseverance, empathy, medical triumphs, diligent work ethic, and faith are key to Brandon’s life story. His being able to tell his motivating story today and live a fulfilled, rewarding, and inspiring life is phenomenal and his impacts immeasurable. Says Brandon, “Have faith” and “Never give up”!