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Tech Injured in Ohio Shop Fire Back Home and Moving Ahead

Written by Joel Gausten

The Collision Industry Foundation (CIF) continues to urge members of the auto body community to do all they can to assist Bryan Miller, an Ohio-based technician and painter who is recovering from severe burns suffered in a devastating fire at Elite Auto Body, Cycle and Sales in Bethel, Ohio last September.

The in-shop accident left Miller, 32, with mostly third-degree burns covering the majority of his body and nearly ended his life. He also endured a near-fatal case of pneumonia and a bout with COVID-19 in the early months of his recovery.

Thankfully, Miller's spirits remain high as he works hard to improve his condition and make his desired return to painting and bodywork. Nearly six months ago, he left the Daniel Drake Center for Post-Acute Care in Cincinnati and moved in with his father, Ron, in Batavia, Ohio. Despite feeling a little stir crazy due to his inability to spend much time outdoors these days, Miller is very happy to be home.

"It's exciting and challenging," he says. "I have to deal with some issues with my body every day, but it's nothing I can't handle."

Miller's daily routine at home includes physical therapy to keep his skin from getting tighter and improve his overall strength and stamina. Despite the severity of his injuries, Miller is proud to share that he hasn't taken pain medication for months.

"My pain specialist told me it was going to take a year to taper me off of the medication. I'm like, 'A year?!' I said, 'Just cut what I'm taking in half this month, and we'll see how that goes.' I didn't even go back the next month; I just quit taking it."



Perhaps best of all, he has spent recent times slowly getting back to working on vehicles. Recently, he rehung the front bumper on his Honda Civic and performed some body work on one of its quarter panels.

"My hands are good – they work just the same as before!"

Miller hopes to be back to work within the next year. In the meantime, his more immediate goal is to build up his stamina so he can work for longer periods of time. "Just standing is still challenging, but it's doable," he says.

Additionally, he is using his time at home to brush up on his education via online courses graciously donated by I-CAR. He is using a laptop donated to him by AirPro Diagnostics, and his current training also includes Axalta Coating Systems courses.

The third week of July will see Miller hit the road with his fiancée, Kassi Nellet, and his cousin, Steven Legg, to attend the 11th annual CIF Gala in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. It will be his first out-of-state trip since his accident.

"The whole experience is going to be pretty exciting for me," he says of the July 20th event. "It's a little nerve-wracking, but I'll be alright. I'm getting more used to being out in public."

As Miller works to regain his life, he is quick to express his appreciation for everyone in the industry who has offered support. He is also grateful for any additional help he can receive on his road ahead.

"I lost everything. Whatever everybody can help me out with is more than I have right now."

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