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LEESBURG, FL Clear , 73°

## Quad Squad bowls over adversity

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LEESBURG

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Bill Miller's life changed two days before he was set to begin his senior year of college in 1997, when he tripped in his bedroom over exercise equipment and ended up being a quadriplegic on a ventilator.

"Much like actor and real-life Superman, Christopher Reeve," said the Leesburg resident, who uses a computer voice software to communicate. "OK. So, my arms and legs don't cooperate when I tell them to move. But I still have my heart, my mind, and my soul -- which are the best parts of Bill Miller."

Another great attribute that Miller possesses is his positive attitude and desire to make life more enjoyable for other quadriplegics.

He formed the Quad Squad, a group of four to eight bowlers in power wheelchairs, who can be seen twice a month at Lake County bowling lanes where they use the IKAN Bowler device that Miller invented with Leesburg engineer Claude Giguere.

The IKAN Bowler ramp fits on a wheelchair and allows the bowler to send a bowling ball down the lane.

Want to see the Quad Squad in action? They're set to appear 4-6 p.m. Saturday at Spanish Springs Lanes in The Villages, where they meet on the fourth Saturday of each month. They also can be seen on the second Saturday at AMF Leesburg Lanes.

Rhonda Reese, Lilian Strandlund, Peggy Overbey, Melissa Sino, Aaron Parker, and Miller are the most regular bowlers. Joanne Anderson and Ben Lux bowl with the Quad Squad occasionally, and Brenda Wagner and Doug Goddard are two people who are new to IKAN-style bowling and Miller expects that they may join the squad regularly in the future.

"These people I just mentioned all use power wheelchairs due to either spinal cord injury, cerebral palsy, or muscular dystrophy," said Miller, who delights in seeing bowlers having a good time.

"It's always a thrill to get a spare or strike or bowl a personal best -- remember, we're talking about people who cannot actually pick up a bowling ball, yet we're able to bowl on a fair 'playing field' against able-bodied bowlers," Miller said.

The United States Bowling Congress (USBC) sanctioned the IKAN Bowler for league and tournament play -- any league or tournament, anywhere -- bowling with or against able-bodied bowlers and/or fellow IKAN Users.

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Quad Squad members Aaron Parker, left, Bill Miller and Lily Strandlund bowl on Saturday, June 9, 2012, at AMF Leesburg Lanes. To maneuver and roll the ball, they use a portable metal ramp, the IKAN Bowler, which attaches to a wheelchair.

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"The first spare and first strike ever bowled are particularly big thrills," he said. "We've seen first time bowlers and their loved ones cry with joy over the success."

Miller bowls often. His best game? A 255 high.

"I've seen astonished looks and dropped jaws from league bowlers who simply can't believe some of the impressive bowling shots we can make," said Miller, who has converted a 6-7-10 split four times.

"I've heard numerous times from able-bodied onlookers 'You bowl better than I do.' Where else can society's most physically limited do something physically better than able-bodied people? This is the magnitude of the IKAN Bowler."

His partnership with Leesburg engineer Claude Giguere in developing the device happened on a whim.

"Claude was volunteering in my stepmom, Judge Donna Miller's courtroom," Miller said. "He saw a picture of me and she told him about her bowling idea -- she knew there must be a way that I and other wheelchair users could bowl, but she didn't have the expertise to design something. Being a retired GM engineer, Claude had the expertise, and he also had the enthusiasm to help me and others be able to bowl. Together we decided an 'attached ramp' concept was the way to go, and Claude built a prototype out of wood that demonstrated that we had a viable concept."

Miller, Giguere, along with Vincent Tifer, an experienced entrepreneur, co-founded MGT (Manufacturing Genuine Thrills Inc.) to make the IKAN Bowler available to as many people as possible.

"We've sold IKAN Bowlers to people in quite a few countries," Miller said, noting the most popular is the universal mount that can accommodate any wheelchair with two side leg rests. There's also one with a center post mount that fits the newer style power chairs that have the two foot pedals coming off a single center post. The devices are made in Tampa.

Miller said the Quad Squad has formed a great bond with LovExtension, which features members of the youth group at First Baptist Church of Umatilla.

"They ensure that we have caddy help when we bowl," he said. "I'd be remiss if I did not mention them."

Want to meet Miller? He's featured on a 6-minute video: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=DiVonbXUWcU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DiVonbXUWcU)

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