



**EMBARGOED UNTIL 4:00AM
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**Coast Mental Health Announces
Third 2008 Courage To Come Back Award Recipient
John Banovich named as recipient in Physical Rehabilitation category**

*VANCOUVER, B.C. April 14, 2008 – Coast Mental Health announced the third of six award recipients of a 2008 Courage To Come Back Award. **John Banovich of South Surrey** has been named as the 2008 Courage To Come Back Award recipient in the Physical Rehabilitation category. Recipients in the remaining three categories will be announced weekly leading up to the awards gala on Thursday, May 8th.*

On February 1 1997, John Banovich was traveling in his Jeep on the King George Highway when he was hit head-on by a drunk driver, who died from the force of the impact. John was rushed to the Royal Columbian hospital where doctors began to stabilize his injuries to his face, wrist, arm and hips, reconstructing his face, even rebuilding his right socket and wiring his jaw shut. They put plates and screws in his wrist, face and hips, and had to remove the patches of fabric from his clothing that had been pressed into his flesh by the seat belt.

John spent an agonizing three months in hospital, most of the time being confined in isolation so his screams of pain wouldn't disturb the other patients. On a liquid-only diet, filled with painkillers, John's weight plummeted to 91 pounds. Surveying the damage to his pelvis and legs, doctors said he'd likely never walk again and by the time he got home, he was wheelchair-bound, relying on others for everything, even bathing. The pain and the trauma of that crash lingered with John and he began having horrifying nightmares and was prescribed more pills: antidepressants this time. Over the next 18 months, however, John started the long fight back, progressing from a wheelchair, to crutches, then a cane and eventually walking on his own once again.

The one-time avid athlete and long-distance runner had another problem: finances. Unable to work, he was forced to sell nearly everything he owned. His promising film career looked hopeless: who would hire someone so disabled, so thin, so scarred, unable to walk? And yet there was a spark in John, something that made him get up, do the painful rehab work, and continue trying. One other thing motivated John – the desire to tell his story so that others would not suffer as he has. One month after getting out of hospital, John spoke to 800 young people at a rally about the dangers of drinking and driving. He told them his powerful story and realized that the telling, too, was part of his recovery. Since then, he has continued to spread the message to countless others, speaks regularly to high school and college students, new Canadian groups, First Nations groups, anyone who is willing to hear about his horrific collision and the tragic, lifelong impact it has had on him and his loved ones. He cherishes the thousands of thank-you cards and letters he gets in return. John reads them in recovery every time he has to go in for another surgery, motivating him to get through more pain.

To others who are suffering John says, "You might be asking yourself, 'Why did this happen to me?' Do not allow yourself to focus on the negative...allow yourself to be open to positive change for the better and focusing on a future time when you will have overcome your adversities."

John Banovich is a powerful example of strength, coming back from a horrifying crash to teach and reach others. Today, John is back in the film business, both behind and in front of the camera, and is happily married with a baby on the way. He volunteers with MADD – speaking with the media and politicians, running every year in Stanley Park to raise funds - still giving weekly presentations, and continues to inspire his friends and family because they know that even now, John battles chronic pain on a daily basis and keeps on trying, keeps on smiling, keeps on finding The Courage To Come Back.

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John Banovich named as recipient in CTCB Physical Rehabilitation category

John will receive his Courage To Come Back Award at the 10th Anniversary gala dinner at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Vancouver on Thursday, May 8th. For tickets, call 604-675-2327 or purchase online at www.coastmentalhealth.com.

About Courage To Come Back:

The Courage To Come Back Awards celebrate people who have valuable lessons to share as they have courageously battled back from illness, adversity or injury. Through Courage, British Columbians are acknowledged for their accomplishments, positive attitudes and willingness to give back to their communities. Awards are given in six categories including: mental health, physical rehabilitation, medical, addiction, social adversity and youth.

About Coast Mental Health:

The Coast Mental Health Foundation (CMHF) was formed in 2001 to raise funds for community mental health services and to educate the public about the needs of people with a serious mental illness. Since 1974, the Coast Foundation Society (CFS) has been providing high quality housing, employment programs, social opportunities and other community mental health services for people with serious and persistent mental illnesses.

Through presenting the stories of six amazing recipients each year at The Courage To Come Back Awards, Coast Mental Health Foundation strives to offer hope to all those suffering from illness, adversity or injury and demonstrates that all people have value and dignity regardless of the illness, adversity or injury they have faced.

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