

BRIANA WALKER

Dance Anyway

A story of hope and triumph

► CALIFORNIA



“I was determined to create an amazing life in spite of my new circumstances.”

Since she was a little girl, Briana Walker's parents called her their “Little Sparkle.” In August 2002, on her way to an LDS meetinghouse in Southern California, Briana fainted at the wheel, hitting a cement median at seventy-five miles per hour. She was paralyzed from the waist down at the age of twenty-three.

Briana's parents feared that their daughter's sparkle would burn out, but immediately following the accident, Briana made a decision to make the best of her situation. Today, her outlook is brighter than ever.

Since the accident, Briana has excelled in every way imaginable. In 2003, she became

the first female ever to be featured on the cover of *Mobility Management* magazine. Soon after that, Colours in Motion, a wheelchair company that offers unique chairs for everyday use as well as specially designed products for use in sporting events, asked Briana to be their new Krypto Girl.

“At first I wasn't sure if I fit the image they were representing,” she says. “I told them that I am just your average girl next door. They told me that I was anything but average, but my look and personality is exactly what they wanted to revamp their image.” Briana also represents Team PossAbilities, Life Rolls On, Power in You,

and Ralph's Riders. In addition, she is the commercial spokesperson for the Utah-based *overstock.com*.

Briana's personal motto is “Dance anyway.” Dancing had always been a huge part of Briana's life, and that didn't change after the accident. At a Colours trade show, she met another girl, Auti Angel, who used her wheelchair as a dance prop. Briana recalls, “[Auti] moved in ways that I never could have believed, which woke up something inside of me and ignited hope.”

She and Auti created one of the first-ever wheelchair hip hop dance teams to take the national spotlight. In 2003, the two young women performed onstage at the Vibe Music Awards.

Briana is also a natural-born athlete. Before her accident, she loved to swim competitively, wakeboard, snowboard, and play soccer, softball, golf, and volleyball. Since the accident, she has snow skied, surfed, participated in triathlons, skydived, and ridden four-wheelers.

Believing that laughter is the best medicine, Briana is currently writing a book of humorous wheelchair anecdotes, entitled *Does this Wheelchair Make My Butt Look Big?*, which will be released in 2009. Briana's first publication was an autobiographical account of her experience beginning with the day of the accident, appropriately titled *Dance Anyway*.

Briana's humor and optimism is contagious. She travels around the world, gladly sharing her compelling story with others to give them the strength and courage to deal with the unexpected obstacles of life. ■

By Megan Withers