October 2025

Community Spotlight: Damion O'Brien

The Moment Everything Changed– And the Reason I'm Still Here

They say your life flashes before your eyes when you have a near-death experience. Well, that's kind of what happened to me.

My life didn't exactly flash, but I do have a permanent image of the moment right before I was injured. It's of me in a bucket, looking south, with a transformer on a pole in front of me. My left arm is reaching out because a wire tail got away from me—and I reacted to catch it. That's it. That's the moment. That's where my life changed forever.

Soon after, things got spotty. I remember coming to on the ground with my foreman over me, slapping my face and telling me to stay with him. Then I remember being loaded onto a helicopter, and later waking up on the helipad at KU Med. They told me the ICU was full and that they were flying me to University Hospital in Columbia, Missouri.

I woke up a week later from a medically induced coma. My right arm was gone, and my left arm was wrapped up like a tenderloin in a vacuum bag. Needless to say, it was the second shock I got that week.

The staff at Mizzou was amazing—from my surgeons, to the hyperbaric chamber techs, to the incredible ICU nurses. I made a lot of great friends during the month I spent there.

After the ICU, I was transferred to Rusk Rehabilitation Hospital for another month, where I went through countless hours of mental, physical, and occupational therapy to begin accepting my new life.

After that, I was flown to Denver, Colorado, to work with upper-limb specialists at Amputee Services of America at Presbyterian St. Luke's. I spent another two months there, continuing my recovery and undergoing 30 additional surgeries—on top of the 10 I'd already had in Missouri. But most importantly, I was fitted for my first prosthetic arm. (continued page 2)

Damion and his dog, Sadie

Limb Loss Support Group

Please join us to connect with other limb loss survivors! We offer discussion, education, and opportunities to meet with local providers. Meetings take place the second Thursday of the month at 3:30 pm located in Conference Room A in the basement of LMH Health.

- November 13, 2025: Lorraine Cannistra author of "More the Same than Different: What I Wish People Knew About Respecting and Including People with Disabilities"
- November 21, 2025: bowling at **Royal Crest Lanes**, 10:00 am—12:00 pm
- December 11, 2025: Holiday party
- January 8, 2026

Email Jodi.morgan@lmh.org with questions

https://www.lmh.org/wellness/events

The Moment Everything Changed (continued from page 1)

It was a body-powered, cable-driven, hooked contraption that was clunky and hard to use—and could've been registered as a deadly weapon with how many things I broke using it. Luckily, I got better with practice.

Early on, the biggest challenge was that the electricity had fried most of my nerves. I couldn't move my hand, and I couldn't feel anything. Despite all the surgeries and hours of therapy, the function and feeling just weren't coming back. My arm was a useless husk.

To say the least, I got pretty low. I questioned why I was even on this planet and how I was supposed to go on like this. I tried to take my own life three times. Like I said—low.

But then I found my reason. The thing that got me up in the morning: my dog, Sadie. Silly, I know—but she was it. She gave me that sense of duty, and I didn't want to let her down.

My point is this: no matter how small or silly your reason might seem—and it'll change through the years—if you have it, hold on to it. No matter what.

After that, my attitude and outlook on life got so much better. I was living on my own again, and even my nerves started to regenerate. I still remember sitting in the hospital getting an antibiotic infusion. Out of boredom, I looked at my hand and thought, MOVE.

All of a sudden, my middle finger twitched. After six months of absolutely nothing—there it was. One of the happiest moments of my life.

I honestly believe that shift in attitude played a big role in my recovery, because things started coming back all at once after that. It was amazing.

Not long after, I was released back into the world to do it on my own.

I won't lie—the last 20 years have been a rollercoaster of sheer hell and absolute elation. But here I am. I try to stay busy and do my part. I design and build assistive devices for people with disabilities, and I'm currently starting a new case study that has tremendous potential. It's my new reason—and I love it.

If I've learned anything, it's that no matter how bad things get, you can't give up. Stay positive, and take it one day at a time. It will get better. By Damion O'Brien

Join us for Bowling!

- Limb Loss Support group invites you to join us for Bowling at Royal Crest Lanes. We will meet on Friday, November 21, 2025 at 10:00 am—12:00 pm.
- This event is sponsored by the LMH Foundation, which is covering the cost of games and refreshments.
- The bowling alley is located at 933 Iowa St, Lawrence, KS. There will be modifications including bumpers and ramps available. Also, participants are encouraged to utilize assistive devices including wheelchairs as needed. All skill levels are welcome!