

Toyota Helps Paralyzed Veteran Open Spinal Cord Injury Recovery Center

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TAMPA, Fla. (July 2, 2015) – During his third tour of duty in Afghanistan, Romy Camargo’s patrol was ambushed. A sniper’s bullet changed the life of this decorated war veteran and his family. Now, with help from Toyota, Camargo, his family and a strong team of supporters are forever changing the lives of paraplegics and quadriplegics across the country.

Camargo and his wife, Gaby, have opened the doors to Stay In Step, a new, non-profit recovery center dedicated to helping spinal-cord injury (SCI) patients take a step forward toward recovery. This groundbreaking facility offers treatment, rehabilitation and support services to veterans and civilians in Tampa, Fla.

Toyota donated \$300,000 in last-mile funding to help the facility reach its \$750,000 fundraising goal and open its doors. At the grand opening June 20, Toyota Motor North America Executive Vice President and Chief Administrative Officer Simon Nagata also presented Stay In Step with a wheelchair-accessible 2015 Toyota Sienna minivan.

“Supporting Stay In Step is aligned with Toyota’s corporate vision to lead the way to the future of mobility and enrich lives around the world with the safest and most responsible ways of moving people,” Nagata said. “Toyota is proud to support Stay In Step and the tremendous work of Romy and Gaby.”

By combining intense strength and conditioning workouts with a focus on the natural movements and weight of the body, Stay In Step will use emerging therapies and a “never quit” attitude to help patients and their families.

“Stay In Step is dedicated to providing cutting edge physical rehabilitation services and including the much needed tools to win the mental game,” Gaby Camargo said. “We want to create an environment for patients to support one another, share stories and give encouragement, and offer some relief from the intense daily schedule. Stay In Step provides a place of comfort, relaxation and shares a sense of family.”

That sense of family was in full force June 20, when the Camargos cut a long resistance band to open the center. They were surrounded by Nagata, Lt. Gen. Martin Steele, Lt. Col. Scott Mann and other supporters.

For Toyota, the support and interest in Stay In Step goes beyond the donations.

“We are applying the strength and expertise of Toyota’s engineering and robotics to the challenges faced by those injured in service to this country,” Nagata said. “Toyota’s partner robots are being developed to assist people in their everyday activities.

“By sharing this technology, we hope to serve the mobility needs of veterans and people around the world.”

The Stay In Step story began in 2008 when Romy was shot. He spent 18 months of intensive inpatient care before he was finally able to leave the hospital, in a wheelchair. Romy and Gaby drove twice a week from their Tampa home to Orlando for treatment.

Now, there is a center in Tampa that can treat Romy and other SCI patients in the community, helping them continue on their road to recovery. Tampa is home to the busiest polytrauma unit in the nation at the James A. Haley VA Medical Center. The Haley polytrauma unit treats the most severely injured veterans while they are in the hospital.

“With everyone’s support, we have built up a center that’s going to impact so many lives,” Romy Camargo said. “Gaby said that we could do this – that we could open up this center in Tampa. And now it’s a reality.”