

Inspirational Achievements Honored

National award program recognizes great comebacks from ostomy surgery

Courtesy ConvaTec

2008 Great Comebacks® National Award Recipient

Entrepreneur Lisa Becker, 31, a young mom and entrepreneur dedicated to improving the lives of other ostomates, was named this year's Great Comebacks® National Award recipient. Founded in 1984 by former San Diego Charger and ulcerative colitis patient Rolf Benirschke, the Great Comebacks® Program celebrates the inspirational achievements of people who have overcome debilitating intestinal diseases, colorectal cancer and ostomy surgery.

From the tender age of 13, Lisa has lived with Crohn's disease. Today, just over 20 years later, she is turning her years of adversity into her career passion with a "fashionable" business that caters to helping fellow ostomates feel more confident in everyday life.

Growing up with Crohn's, Lisa experienced the same fears and concerns that many affected young women have shared – that she might never find lasting love nor be able to have a child. Yet, by her late 20s, she had met and married her husband, Steve, and had given birth to a beautiful baby girl, Anna. Giving birth also brought on a severe flare-up of her disease and, after exhausting her options, Lisa underwent ileostomy surgery.

The ileostomy also sparked a new career for the young mom and former financial analyst. She started Ostomysecrets™ that caters to helping fellow ostomates feel more confident in everyday life. As she recovered,

one of Becker's biggest desires was to get back into her pre-surgery clothes and feel good about herself. For her, "Looking good helps you feel good!" and thus Ostomysecrets™ was born. Stylish, high-quality, reasonably priced undergarments for male and female ostomates that help conceal ostomy bags are the main products.

Lisa emphasizes that the support of family and friends helped her adjust to life with a stoma both physically and mentally. Lisa's doctors and nurses affectionately nicknamed Steve "super husband" because he was supportive from the very start and even took her to a colonoscopy appointment on their second date. Lisa also credits her WOC "angel" nurse, Amy, who went above and beyond by making home visits until Lisa could take care of herself again.

Lisa has also found tremendous strength through her daughter Anna, now 3 years old, who continues to inspire her daily. Wanting to resume her life after surgery, Lisa conquered her fear of wearing a bathing suit so that she and Anna could resume "mommy and me" swim lessons.

Lisa, her husband Steve and Anna live in Tampa, FL. "Having a stoma gave me the freedom to live a life that before surgery was filled with many limitations," she said. "I

want to help other ostomates so they, too, feel in control and can fully start enjoying life again!"

2008 Great Comebacks® East Region

Being told he was anemic at a high school blood drive, Patrick McKinney, then 15, went to the doctor only to discover that he had ulcerative colitis. The initial shock and later fear gave way to a newfound strength and determination that has helped carry Patrick not only

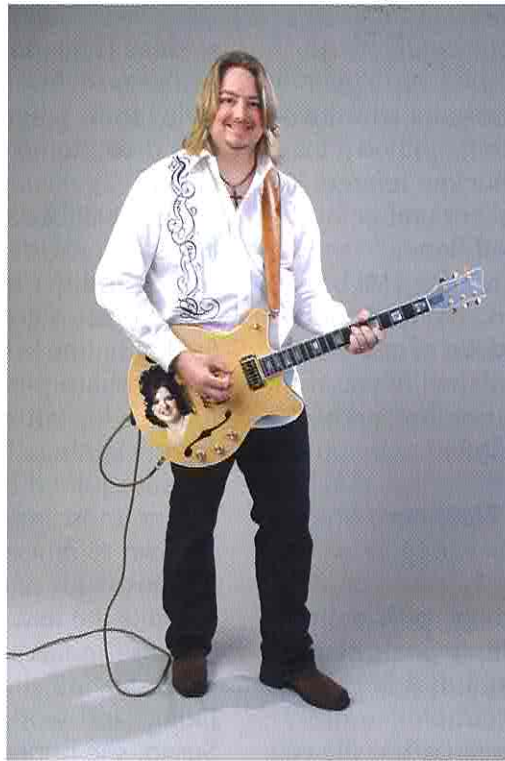


through his disease, but other difficult times as well.

After high school, Patrick found work as a clerk typist for the Navy and later took classes at a local community college. He moved to the Army, where he worked his way up as a safety specialist, a position he's held for the last 21 years.

With his career underway, Patrick's ulcerative colitis had stopped responding to treatment and he learned that he was at high risk of developing colon cancer. At the age of 27, his surgeries began, leading to a permanent ileostomy just over 10 years later.

In between his bouts with ulcerative colitis, Patrick's oldest son Ryan, who was 9 at the time, began experiencing the all-too-familiar symptoms. While Ryan's condition



has been relatively mild, Patrick realized how his experience enabled him to be a role model for his son.

Patrick also was thankful when he met his second wife, Michelle, whom he calls his soul mate. He credits her love and support for helping him get through two emotionally devastating years, in which he lost his mother to breast cancer and his 18-year-old daughter from a previous marriage, Claire, to a bacterial infection. Patrick also believes that his ulcerative colitis taught him invaluable lessons that helped him cope through this dark time in his life.

Through it all, Patrick turned to a love of sports and music. First, he became an umpire for high



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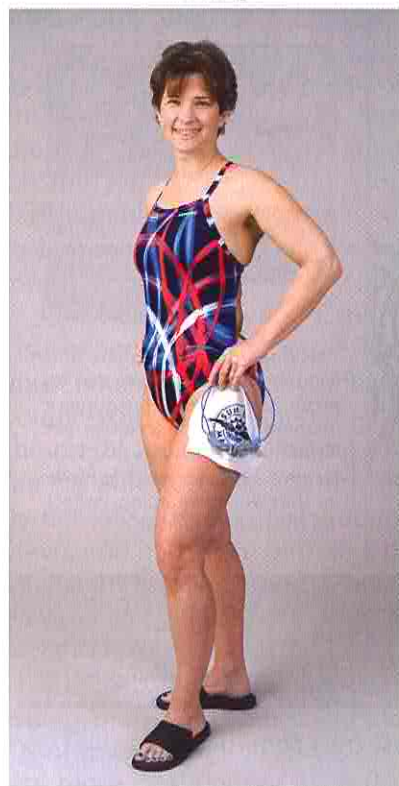
school and college baseball. Later, wanting to push himself to a new level, Patrick strapped on a pair of skates and learned to play one of the games he loved most, ice hockey. After several months he joined a team and went on to become a certified hockey referee. He also keeps his guitar chops fresh as a member of the classic rock cover band, The Half Shell Band.

Today Patrick, 42, lives in New Market, MD, with his wife, and has four children, Ryan, 18, Christopher, 15, Brynne, 5, and Elle, 3. The best piece of advice that Patrick has for other ostomates is "Live the life you want and desire. Living with an ostomy is not the end of the book, but the beginning of a new chapter."

2008 Great Comebacks® West Region

Susan Foster spent much of her young adult life feeling debilitated, helpless and alone because of ulcerative colitis. Today, emotionally strong, physically fit and mentally healthy, Susan has multiple goals in mind – to swim competitively, tell her story and become a role model to other ostomates.

Her ulcerative colitis symptoms began when she was 18 years old and just starting college. It wasn't until a year later during a group ski trip when her roommate, a nursing student, suggested that she see a doctor. Shortly after came the diagnosis: ulcerative colitis.



For the next 21 years, Susan went through cycles of pain, flare-ups and multiple surgeries, often, she admits, deeply in denial about her condition and struggles. At the age of 39, she made the decision to seek a better quality of life by having a permanent ileostomy.

After surgery and feeling healthy for the first time in memory, Susan wasted no time establishing an active lifestyle: scuba diving, alpine skiing, hiking, rock climbing and traveling to far-flung destinations

such as Thailand and Singapore. Looking to take things to the next level, Susan joined the Sun Devil Masters swim team where she trains and competes in memory of a dear friend, Emelyn, who passed away from breast cancer.

In 2003, Susan became a UOAA Ostomy Visitor, in hopes of providing support to other ostomates as her ET nurses and her family had previously done for her. She also began regularly posting on the UOAA and "IBD Sucks" online boards about swimming and doesn't hesitate to share photos of herself in her swimsuit to show that having an ostomy doesn't mean you can't wear fitted clothing. To sharpen her public speaking skills, she also joined Toastmasters.

The most important lesson that Susan would like to pass on to others is, "Take it one step at a time and do the best with what you have in the moment. If you try to make the new 'normal' into a good 'normal' you may be surprised at just how normal it is."

Susan, 46, lives in Tempe, AZ, with her husband, Doug, and works as a software engineer. Next up for Susan, she hopes one day to complete a sprint distance triathlon and the three-mile "Gatorman" swim at the La Jolla Rough Water Swim in California.

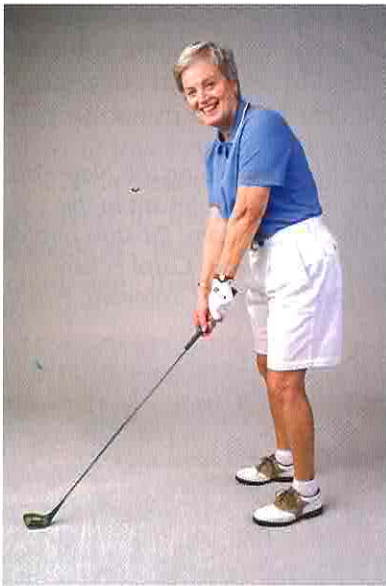
2008 Great Comebacks® Central Region

Juggling an infant with another baby on the way is a challenge for any young mother, so just imagine what it's like to be dealing with the exhausting symptoms of Crohn's disease at the same time. For 25-year-old Jane O'Brien Ayers of Columbus, OH, the answer was simple: keep moving forward!

Over the next five years, Jane not only learned to manage her disease, but also had two more children. Then, at the age of 37, with her four children ranging in age from 8 to 14, her condition rapidly deteriorated, leading to ileostomy surgery. While Jane has experienced further complications since, she says the surgery has allowed her to regain her energy and enjoy activities such as skiing, hiking, swimming, golf and gardening.

Once finding it difficult to travel, Jane was finally able to enjoy family trips. Now, with her children all grown up and living across the country, Jane is thankful long journeys aren't a problem so she can see all of her seven grandchildren.

At the change of each season, Jane and her husband of 45 years, Jim, pack up and make a three-day, 1,675-mile road trip so that they can spend quality time at their second home in Park City, UT, where two of their children reside. Three months later, they make the



epic journey back to Ohio to be with their remaining family, in all completing four trips each year.

In addition to her family activities, Jane enjoys playing the piano, is an active member at her church and the Philanthropic Educational Organization Sisterhood, which promotes educational opportunities for women and has taken on the project of tracking her

family's genealogy. Jane says her husband's support was crucial to helping her mentally, physically and emotionally recover from her surgery, recalling the many nights he spent by her hospital bed.

Jane, 67, is still determined to not let life pass her by. "If I feel like doing it, I do it. For anyone who thinks that surgery will be too overpowering, have trust that you'll have the strength to overcome any obstacle."

Inflammatory bowel disease, a collective term for Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis, affects an estimated 1.4 million Americans. Along with colorectal cancer, IBD is a condition that may lead to a permanent or temporary ostomy.

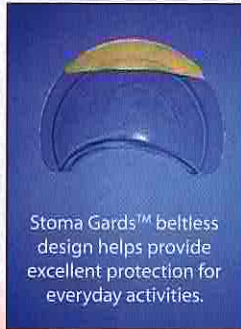
Now in its third decade, the Great Comebacks® Program honors individuals who give inspiration and encouragement so that others can reclaim their lives and pursue their dreams. The Great Comebacks Awards® are sponsored by ConvaTec, the Crohn's & Colitis Foundation (CCFA), the United Ostomy Associations of America, Inc. (UOAA) and the Intestinal Disease Education and Awareness Society (IDEAS). This year, the Youth Rally is a new sponsor of the Comeback Kids™ Awards, recognizing children and teenagers.

More information at www.greatcomebacks.com. Great Comebacks® is a registered trademark of ConvaTec Inc. ☺



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