



LAKEWOOD HIGH SCHOOL



22 May 2006

As a result of the Universal Design for Learning workshops through the Center for Leadership at Lorain Community College, Lakewood High School took advantage of Dana Bowman's offer to come speak to our student body. Getting 2400 students and staff outside to our football stadium and back into the school (where half of the students saw him live on stage in our auditorium and half watched on television) was a logistical nightmare, but all were in awe of perhaps the most dynamic opening to a speech I have ever witnessed: jumping from a plane and parachuting down to a perfect landing on our LHS logo in the middle of the football field...with two artificial legs.

After his landing and a few brief words from Dana over the PA system, we all headed inside where Dana spoke to the students directly while his video (with footage of his accident and his subsequent accomplishments like water skiing and biking) played behind him. His message to the students, "It's not the disability; it's the ability," was received well by students and staff. Notes, letters, and e-mails poured in thanking me for bringing such an inspiration to LHS. My students were in awe of Dana and his accomplishments, both before and especially after his accident. People were moved, and in today's jaded and cynical climate, that says a lot.

It's hard to believe that was a year ago. I still have my signed poster in my room which elicits positive memories from my students. Our lives were enriched because of Dana and his powerful message.

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