



# Kelly Brush

## WINS NCAA INSPIRATION AWARD

Middlebury grad honored for courage and determination BY ERIC WILLIAMS AND THE KELLY BRUSH FOUNDATION

On Jan. 15, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) honored Middlebury graduate and former collegiate ski racer Kelly Brush with the prestigious Inspiration Award.

Brush was paralyzed from the chest down in 2006 while ski racing for Middlebury College. After her fall in a GS race, Brush underwent 10 hours of surgery to realign and stabilize her spine. She then spent two and a half months in rehabilitation, regaining her independence in a wheelchair, on a hand bike and driving a car. After missing only one semester she returned to school, graduated with her class and started a foundation to raise awareness about ski racing safety and help others with spinal cord injuries.

"Kelly is a true role model of perseverance and dedication for all NCAA student-athletes and individuals, and we're proud to honor her with the NCAA Inspiration Award," Tim Gleason, chair of the NCAA Honors Committee and commissioner of the Ohio Athletic Conference, said. "Kelly could have easily given up, but her determination to return to competition and the classroom, and then to establish a foundation, shows a strong commitment to accomplish her goals, and it shows her compassion for others and devotion to the sport of skiing."

The Inspiration Award is given to athletes who have courageously overcome personal adversity

to inspire and serve others in similar situations. The honor is not necessarily awarded every year.

"I'm touched to receive this honor from the NCAA," Brush said. "Sports have been such a vital part of my life that when I had my accident I never thought about living any differently. I feel very fortunate to have had the support of my family, friends and the skiing community all of whom inspired me to dedicate myself to turning a tragedy into a catalyst for change and a forum for improving the lives of others living with spinal cord injury."

The NCAA Honors Committee selected Brush to draw attention to and honor her accomplishments in the face of hardship. She not only graduated with her class in 2008, but also returned to her love of skiing, mastering the mono-ski and traveling with her team to cheer them on at races. And she didn't stop there, Brush continued to train on the mono-ski and raced at Middlebury's Winter Carnival last February, where she completed the steep and icy course in front of hundreds of spectators.

Together with family and friends Brushed formed the Kelly Brush Foundation in 2006. The nonprofit's goal is to improve ski racing safety regulations and equipment and enhance the quality of life for people with spinal cord injuries (SCI). The foundation strives to provide

costly adaptive sports equipment to aspiring athletes, advance scientific research in SCI and support the U.S. Disabled Ski Team.

Last fall, the Kelly Brush Century Ride, a 100-mile bicycle event, drew 366 participants and raised \$137,000. Last winter, the foundation launched the "Ski Racing Safety is No Accident" campaign, a national crusade to improve ski racing safety and prevent spinal cord injuries. The effort granted more than \$58,000 to ski clubs nationwide, helping the teams purchase crucial safety equipment, including fencing and protective gear.

"Kelly has been an inspiration to the Middlebury College community, the ski community, and beyond, through her own personal recovery, but also through her outreach through the Kelly Brush Foundation," said Erin Quinn, the Middlebury College director of athletics. "Kelly's participation in the Kelly Brush Century Ride on a hand bike, her participation in the Middlebury College Winter Carnival on a mono-ski, and her commitment to help others through the Kelly Brush Foundation set an inspiring example and also make a significant contribution to enhancing ski safety and to improving the lives of others with spinal cord injuries." **SR**

For more information including ways to support the foundation, visit [www.kellybrushfoundation.org](http://www.kellybrushfoundation.org).