



## CIF Urges Support for Tech Burned in Shop Accident

March 16, 2022. By Joel Gausten: The Collision Industry Foundation (CIF) is urging members of the auto body field to do all they can to help Bryan Miller, an Ohio-based technician and painter who is recovering from a devastating in-shop accident that burned over 70 percent of his body and nearly ended his life.

Last September, Miller was working on a motorcycle at Elite Auto Body, Cycle and Sales in Bethel, OH when it backfired and triggered a chain reaction that resulted in the shop going up in flames. Trapped inside his work area for several minutes, he caught on fire before forcing his way through a window. Once outside, he watched the building burn as his body was overcome by the agonizing trauma.

“The only way I could keep myself from passing out was to scream,” he recalls.

Thankfully, a man and woman on a motorcycle soon spotted him and stopped to offer assistance. As Miller remembers, it took 30 minutes for medical personnel to arrive on the scene and another 30 minutes for a helicopter to arrive to transport him to the hospital. He remained conscious the entire time.

Miller’s experience caught the attention of CIF, which has been working hard to bring him a sense of hope and encouragement during this difficult time. At a recent Collision Industry Conference (CIC) in Phoenix, the 150-plus industry leaders in attendance did a virtual shout-out to Miller to show him their support. (*A video of this virtual shout-out can be viewed at <https://tinyurl.com/25hrck2>.*)

Although he survived the event, Miller was left with mostly third-degree burns covering the majority of his body. He also endured a near-fatal case of pneumonia while in the hospital. Six months — and multiple surgeries and skin grafts — later, he lives in constant pain that he describes as “background noise that’s normal.” Lotion needs to be applied to his body on a constant basis to keep his scars moist.

“I have to wake up and basically stretch myself back to some kind of normal mobility. I get tight again every night; it’s like wearing a shirt that’s too small for you.”



After leaving the hospital, Miller received constant care by his fiancée, Kassi Nellet, who spent five hours a day changing his dressings. Unfortunately, an infection in his wounds prompted his transfer to the Daniel Drake Center for Post-Acute Care in Cincinnati, where he still resides. Shortly after the holidays, he contracted COVID-19. Thankfully now recovered from the virus, he hopes to leave the Daniel Drake Center within the next few weeks and move in with his father in Batavia, Ohio. He expects it will take at least another year for him to regain full mobility and for his scars to settle down.

Originally a mover, Miller began his auto industry career in 2016 when a friend asked if he'd be interested in picking up some side work at a high-end restoration shop. A self-described "artist at heart" who had tried his hand at tattooing prior to working at the shop, he instantly fell in love with the artistry of pinstriping and painting cars and took things from there.

"I found that everything came quite naturally to me – from simple bodywork all the way to framework and painting."

After further developing his skills as a combination collision technician/painter at two other facilities, he moved on to his most recent job at Elite.

"I love doing what I do for a living and could not imagine doing anything else. It is the most

satisfying thing in the world when someone brings in something broken so I can transform it into something beautiful. And to me, 'painter' is a prestigious title."

Despite his recent harrowing ordeal, he hopes to someday return to the profession he loves.

"I want to go back to work right now! It's my passion; I feel blessed to have found a career that's given me a sense of pride to be able to tell people what I do for a living. I just love everything about my job."



Michael Quinn, CIF Board president and president of AirPro Diagnostics, urges his collision industry peers to support Miller in his recovery and hopeful return to the automotive world.

"Bryan's incredible story is one of survival and fighting back. We as an industry have an obligation to help our own, and we ask you to dig deep to aid CIF in helping Bryan and his fiancée to start again. This is not a one-time donation or effort; CIF is committed to following Bryan through rehab and getting him the training and tooling necessary to work his way back to a shop. On a recent call with CIF, Bryan called us his new best friends. We are honored to know him, and we are committed to helping him rebuild his career in this industry."

Jim Ocampo, CIF trustee and strategic accounts sales manager for Axalta Coating Systems, echoes Quinn's sentiments.

"CIF's core value is to help people in need. I don't think there's anything that better defines our mission than Bryan's story. His spirits are high, and he really has a desire to get back into the industry. We don't want to lose someone like him. There are so many things he can do within the automotive field. We would like to raise as much money as we can for him, so we're calling on everyone in the industry to help this young man rebuild his life."

"Before the folks at CIF had reached out to me, I was very depressed and had no idea how I would move forward," Miller adds. "Jim and Mike encouraged me to keep fighting and to know that I had some unrealized purpose. It was like a storybook getting connected with these guys. And the video shout-out from CIC in January really helped motivate me and to know my industry cares."

Miller's many needs include (but are not limited to) funds to aid him in securing permanent housing, tools to replace the ones he lost in the fire and education/direction in regard to new professional opportunities (estimating, parts, etc.) that could accommodate his physical condition as he works towards his desired return to painting and bodywork.

Miller, who recently celebrated his 32nd birthday, is quick to express his deep gratitude to his industry friends for everything they have done for him thus far.

"I would really like to thank everyone who is and will be involved in making all these amazing things happen for me in such a dark time. It is truly a blessing, and I don't know if I would even be able to get back in the industry without your assistance."

Tax Deductible donations can be made at [www.collisionindustryfoundation.org/donate](http://www.collisionindustryfoundation.org/donate) , use 'general donation' and specify that your donation is for Bryan Miller. For more information, please call (855) 4CIFAID (toll free) or (804) 427-6982 (direct).

*Joel Gausten has been covering the national collision repair/automotive service industry since 2000. He can be reached at [gaustenbooks@gmail.com](mailto:gaustenbooks@gmail.com).*

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**About CIF:** The Collision Industry Foundation (CIF) is the 501(c)(3) charitable arm of the collision repair industry. We provide emergency relief by securing and distributing donations to collision repair professionals who have experienced significant losses due to natural disasters or other catastrophic events. For more information visit: <http://www.collisionindustryfoundation.org>

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COLLISION INDUSTRY FOUNDATION



Phone:  
(804) 427-6982

Website:  
[www.collisionindustryfoundation.org](http://www.collisionindustryfoundation.org)

Email:  
[collisionindustryfoundation@gmail.com](mailto:collisionindustryfoundation@gmail.com)