

Injured Worker Comp Laude

Kenneth Black

Kenneth Black, winner of the Injured Worker Comp Laude Award, serves as an “inspiration for other injured workers and to the industry as a whole” for overcoming his opioid addiction and reclaiming his life after a debilitating work injury, says one nominator. Black was 46 years old when he injured his lower back at work in December 2001. Two surgeries and a permanent dorsal column stimulator implant later, Black required canes and a scooter to get around, could not exercise or complete activities of daily living because of pain, and stayed in bed most of the day, feeling depressed and in a fog. Worried that “he wasn’t going to make it or would wander off,” Mrs. Black retired early to care for her husband.

Twelve years post-injury, Safety National’s medical review of Black’s claim revealed his reported pain levels were still high, despite two prescriptions of opioids (Fentanyl and Opana) with a daily morphine equivalent of 425 mg, neuropathic medication, a Lidoderm patch, topical creams and occasional epidural steroid injections. The Best Doctors Pain Remedy Program was then implemented for Black, with the goal of increasing function and decreasing his reliance on opioid medication. The team recommended Black undergo a detox program at Brooks Rehab.

Black’s “willingness to change” helped him complete the detox program “with flying colors,” according to his award nomination. What’s more, Black now helps other injured workers by sharing his journey and telling how the Brooks Rehab program helped him get his life back. Committed to living an active and more functional lifestyle, free of opioids and pain, Black exercises regularly and even slow dances with his wife once again. While dancing together seems simple, it’s a big deal for them, says Mrs. Black, who had thought her husband’s prior work injury disability would make it impossible for them to ever dance together again.

The Blacks are thrilled to have their lives back and can once again enjoy taking care of the house, cooking, visiting with friends, attending social events, going to the gym, traveling and spending quality time together.

