

# *Injured Worker Award*

## **Jeremy Romero**

Self-sufficiency wasn't in the cards for Comp Laude® Award winner Jeremy Romero. Born prematurely with hydrocephalus, physicians said he would most likely need disability assistance his entire life. Yet, he defied the odds and became a police officer.

His resolve was put the test again when his patrol car crashed during a high-speed chase and he became paralyzed from the waist down. After several back surgeries and months of intensive rehabilitation, he returned to police work in a wheelchair six months after his injury. Given just a 5 percent chance of walking again, Jeremy refused to give in, and with the help of case management professionals became the first American injured in the line of duty to receive funding for an exoskeleton device.

With the device, he can stand and move around. In addition, he has been able to wean off opioids, antidepressants and hypertension medication. He has also regained mobility in his upper thighs and is no longer incontinent or at risk for urinary tract infections from catheterization.

"I have had a drive instilled in me since I was a young child to do better than the day before," he explains. "Every day I work to get a little stronger and reach a higher level." After receiving the Comp Laude® award in recognition of his tenacity, Jeremy said he has learned that no matter happens, "you can't give up on yourself or on life. You have to keep moving forward."

For Jeremy, moving forward means running for sheriff of Guadalupe County in his home state of New Mexico and continuing to act as an advocate on behalf of injured workers and people with disabilities for the rest of his life. "I want to leave a legacy, and if I am elected sheriff, I will donate my salary to the community to support this cause," he said.

