

Main Platform Speakers



Mariam Paré

“MDRT and the MDRT Foundation are committed to helping others, and many of the lives we’ve touched have been shared on Main Platform,” MDRT Foundation President **Allan G. Hancock, CLU, ChFC**, told attendees. “But sometimes, in order to know where we are going, we must stop to consider where we’ve been.”

Rescuing a spirit

To inspire such reflection, Hancock revisited the story of **Mariam Paré**, a quadriplegic who fell into Lake Michigan strapped into her wheelchair during the 1998 MDRT Annual Meeting in Chicago, Illinois. At the time, nine-year MDRT member **Dan O’Brien, CLU**, of Suffern, New York, and 22-year MDRT member **Richard C. Van Waalwijk, CLU, ChFC**, of White Plains, New York, happened to be jogging along the lakeside and answered the call to help, eventually rescuing Paré.

Paré came to the 2005 Main Platform among cheers, and shared with attendees what the efforts of these two members — as well as MDRT and the MDRT Foundation — have meant to her over the years. “Since my accident first happened, I’ve been asked to tell this story many, many times,” said Paré. “And I always tell people that it’s more than a story about being rescued. It’s a story about guts, leadership, compassion and success.”

For Paré, meeting O’Brien and Van Waalwijk was a turning point in her life. “I learned to never underestimate the power we all

have to create change in this world,” she said. “I learned to never assume that a hero has to be a larger-than-life character; heroism is more about attitude, vision and compassion.”

Today, Paré is enrolled in school, designs a variety of holiday greeting cards and paints using a special mouth-painting technique. “I became energized after the accident,” Paré explained. “I found my own empowerment within.”

As a special thank you, Paré created a painting to commemorate the 2005 MDRT Annual Meeting. “Thank you for your enthusiasm,” she told attendees. “Your enthusiasm makes a difference in the world.”

Teddy bear hugs

Main Platform attendees were offered another opportunity to reflect on MDRT’s and the MDRT Foundation’s commitment to helping others when **Taylor Crabtree** joined Hancock onstage to talk about how far she’s come since MDRT members first met her at the 2000 Annual Meeting in San Francisco, California.

During the 2000 Annual Meeting, 9-year-old Crabtree sold hand-painted hair-clips to pay for teddy bears she provided to critically ill children. “I brought 5,000 hair-clips with me,” she said. “I was hoping to sell hundreds.”

But Crabtree didn’t know what she was in for. “A member with a cowboy hat jumped behind my booth, filled his hat with my hair-clips and went out and sold them for me,” Crabtree told attendees. “Then, he came back with the money and filled his hat again!”

This meant the world to Crabtree and her cause, as she was able to donate 20,000 teddy bears as a result of the money she raised at the 2000 MDRT Annual Meeting, and she continues to shoot for the stars. “When I look at MDRT members, I see caring and loving people,” she said. “Because of MDRT members, I dream bigger and I believe in myself. You’ve become a part of my family.” **RTT**



Taylor Crabtree