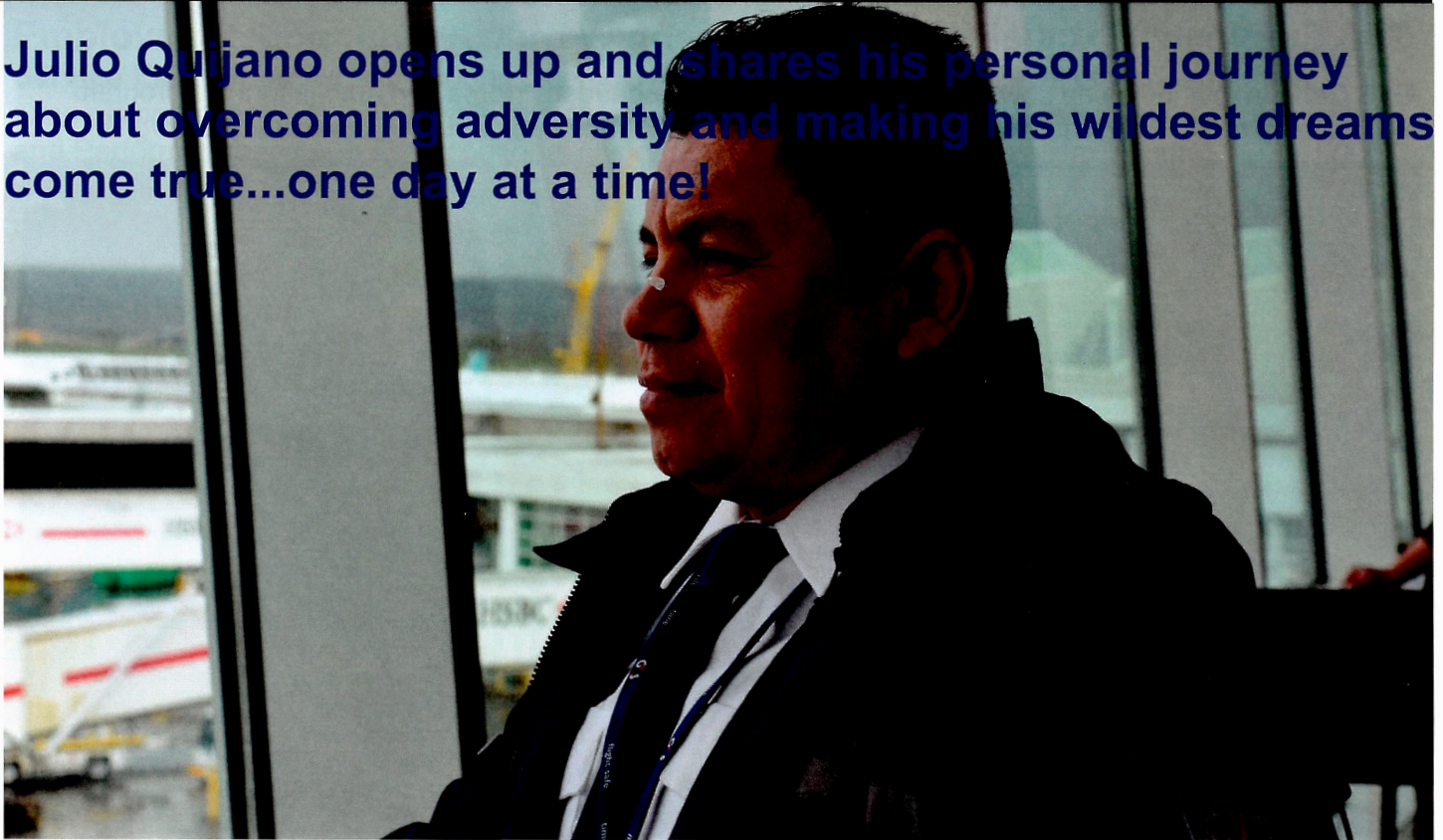


**Julio Quijano opens up and shares his personal journey about overcoming adversity and making his wildest dreams come true...one day at a time!**



*Julio Quijano opens up and shares his personal journey about overcoming adversity and making his wildest dreams come true...one day at a time!*

It's midday on a clear spring day, and Julio is about to come and share his story with us. Casually dressed in jeans, runners and a black windbreaker, he strolls up with tea in hand. He sits down to join me at a table near the window overlooking the runway. For the past week, Julio has been in training for Screening Officer recertification, getting ready to resume work after being on medical leave, going to physio and regularly visiting his doctor.

Since getting hired as a Screening Officer with Aerogard, Julio has come a long way. "I am very proud of what I do. It's a fulfillment to see passengers thank you for keeping everyone safe."

In 1998 Julio contracted Meningitis, causing him to lose both legs below the knees, both of his hands and causing damage to his hearing and vision. After eight

months, his condition had stabilized, he was left with a damaged kidney that was then functioning at 65%. "As we know, kidneys are an essential part of our body, and perform the function of filtering our body, discharging any organic chemicals that the body doesn't need," he explains. Even though his physical state was stabilized, Julio was about to endure the biggest hurdle of his life overcoming the mental breakdown. Immediately after his extremities were amputated, Julio was in a state of shock, and could not yet grasp what was happening and the state that he was in. His life had changed forever.

Months later, Julio was still struggling with the trauma of his amputations. "By nature, you never imagine losing your legs. When you see yourself without legs, it's very powerful," says Julio. In early 1999, Julio was scheduled to attend *GF Strong Rehabilitation* center, to learn how to function and care for himself. "I didn't want to live anymore, I didn't want to talk to anyone, not even my family. I was still in shock. I didn't know what happened, was I still living?" Julio explains. They even made me attend psychology and motivational classes."

## Personal Information Changes

If there are any changes to your personal information such as address changes, name changes, adding or changing emergency contacts, please fill out the Employee Info Change form that can be obtained by emailing [aviation.hr@ca.g4s.com](mailto:aviation.hr@ca.g4s.com) or for those at YVR, the form is still available at the Level 4 office.



On the first day of class, Julio got ready and went into the building, only to realize that the class was on the second floor. "I went into the elevator and someone yelled 'stop, hold the elevator'. I held the button, and saw the person coming in had no movement; he was paralyzed from the neck down. This person was moving just by blowing in and out of a tube that controlled his wheelchair. That got my attention. I had movement, I could move my arms and legs. 'Why are you sad?' he asked me. And I thought, what do you know about me, can you see I don't have legs?! He then replied, 'I don't have the chance to walk again, you do!' and I thought, wow, this is a powerful thought. He told me, 'if I was you, I would just walk!' It seemed that during those 15 seconds in the elevator, we were talking for hours. I got the message I needed," Julio explains.

Once they arrived to second floor, Julio went to get a drink before entering the classroom. When he entered the room, he was surprised to see that the man talking to him in the elevator was in fact the instructor of the psychology class. "Literally when I saw that, I told him 'I am going to go!' and from that point on I decided to walk!" says Julio. "That was the turning point of my life!"

After getting his prosthetic legs, Julio learned how to walk again. "It took me 3-4 years to incorporate myself back into society. I questioned, how do I look? How do people see me? I felt ashamed, I felt different. I don't feel like I have to explain myself, but people have to understand that I am very open. People who live with a disability want to be treated honestly, and not feel inferior to others. If you treat me like I am inferior to you, that's how it makes me feel. I went through the same process and have the capacity to do the same work as you do. I have the same job that you have, I do it differently, but I get the job done!" he explains.

Julio's doctor advised him that his kidney wasn't going to function anymore. During the next two years, Julio's kidney deteriorated, but fortunately his brother gave him his kidney. In 2003, Julio was admitted to the VGH, and the kidney transplant was complete. "My body changed, and as soon as I got the kidney my body started working again. It's like an engine, your car gets a new part and it starts working again," explains Julio.

This whole experience positively impacted Julio, and made him appreciate life more.



*"I used to take things for granted. I walk, WOW, I have legs and I can walk. I work in a uniform and people rely on me. You have to appreciate what you have, and not take it for granted."*

Years later and nearly losing his breath, Julio has embraced his life more than ever. Today, Julio is the founder of *Latin American Soccer Academy of BC*. He works with youth and coordinates programs at various community centres across the Lower Mainland. With a passion for cooking, Julio provides catering services for events. In 2000, just a few short years after losing his legs and hands, Julio won the 100 meter at the Paralympics. "I almost beat a guy with one leg," he laughs.

With a number of powerful moments in his life, Julio has started writing a book about his life to inspire others. "I wrote almost 110 pages, getting to the part where I start walking," says Julio. He has also been a motivational speaker himself, talking to Elementary school kids, speaking about his experience.

In the end, nothing seems to be stopping Julio from doing what he loves and making his dreams come true. "Anything is possible, all you need is time and organization!" says Julio.

To find out more about Julio's *Latin American Soccer Academy*, please visit [www.lasoccerbc.com](http://www.lasoccerbc.com)

