

## **Kenny Maestas, Class of '03**



Kenneth S. "Kenny" Maestas recognizes the value of a UCCS education in his life. While a student, he took advantage of many opportunities UCCS offered him, working as an honorary professor, assistive technology coordinator, web designer and graphic artist, and video editor. As is easy to do at UCCS, Kenny also developed strong relationships with his professors and other UCCS staff.

After graduating with a masters degree in Instructional Communications in 2003, Kenny set out to find a job. His qualified background and extensive resume earned him many interviews; but after seeing his situation as a C5/C6 quadriplegic, prospective employers neglected to call him back. It was at a UCCS job fair where he met a Wal-Mart manager who encouraged him to apply as an assistant manager for the company. Since becoming employed in May 2004, Kenny has proven to Wal-Mart that they made an excellent hire.

Kenny took seriously his opportunity to make a difference and set about encouraging disability diversity in the workplace. Aside from serving within his own stores, his professional accomplishments include speaking at a national Wal-Mart conference on diversity in the workplace. Additionally, in 2008, Kenny was named "National Employee of the Year" by Careers and the disABLED Magazine, an annual award for "Outstanding Achievement" Co-Manager in Wal-Mart Stores. He was honored and delivered a speech at a celebratory event in Boston. Only a few months later, Kenny was again honored by receiving Wal-Mart Stores' "Hero" Award - Ordinary People doing Extraordinary Things. To celebrate this accomplishment, Wal-Mart invited him to the annual Shareholders Convention in Bentonville, Arkansas, to deliver a speech to 17,500 associates.

He continues to be an advocate for individuals with disabilities, working to encourage discussion and being featured in a number of articles and films, most recently the Wal-Mart World Magazine in an article titled, "Ready, Willing, and Able." He also appeared in the documentary film "America's Strength," an in-depth look at disabled individuals succeeding in the workplace. You can view a clip from video by clicking Kenny's photo [online](#).

Kenny lives in Lamar, Colorado, and is still achieving excellence in his career with Wal-Mart. He easily expresses gratitude for the ways in which UCCS prepared him for his professional life, especially as it relates to his knowledge of communication and statistical information. Additionally, his experiences working with and developing a course to educate graduate students in the College of Education about assistive technology helped to prepare him for his latest endeavor. In August, Kenny began working as an adjunct professor at Lamar Community College.

Kenny wants to share with his fellow alumni: "I believe that  $N^2 = \text{Numbers} \times \text{Networking}$ . Increasing the people [Numbers] you have [Net] working toward the same goal exponentially increases the chances of achieving said goal. As UCCS Alums, we need to take pride in the future successes that can and must be initiated from within the walls of the University we ALL Know and Love!"