

American Standard Case Study: Aimee Copeland

Aimee Copeland: Survivor Thriving in Independence Using American Standard Products

Summary:

In 2012, graduate student Aimee Copeland fell from a zip line, suffering a deep cut in her leg that caused her to contract a flesh-eating bacterial disease. While she survived the life-threatening ordeal, doctors were forced to amputate both of her legs and hands.

Inspired by her brave battle to overcome her injuries and adjust to her new “normal”, American Standard provided Aimee with a number of innovative, ADA-compliant bathroom products – each designed to make life safer, easier and more comfortable for people with limited mobility.



The fiercely independent spirit of Atlanta resident Aimee Copeland shines through, aided by the stylish, accessible plumbing products provided by American Standard for her remodeled bathroom.

For a video interview with Aimee Copeland about her remodeled home and bathroom,
[click here to view.](#)

Case Study:

In 2012, adventurous, independent graduate student Aimee Copeland decided to celebrate finishing her school classes by vacationing with friends near the Little Tallapoosa River in Georgia. During the trip, Aimee fell when a zip line snapped, suffering a deep cut in her leg, which caused her to contract a flesh-eating bacterial disease. During her struggle to survive, doctors were forced to amputate both of her legs and hands.

Aimee refused to let her “new normal” put limitations on her lifestyle. She recently graduated with her second master’s degree in social work and hopes to build a holistic center for people with disabilities. She also lives in her own residence, a one-story home in a redeveloping area of downtown Atlanta. Aimee loved the home’s open space floor plan but it required substantial modifications to make it a more comfortable and accessible home.

Inspired by Aimee’s story, MRP Design Group, an architectural and engineering firm in Atlanta, provided their service, including materials to the project. The firm also reached out to professional and personal connections, including plumbing products manufacturer American Standard Brands. Immediately taken with Aimee’s brave and triumphant story, American Standard offered to participate in the home renovations providing \$14,000 worth of specialty bathroom fixtures designed to make life easier with limited mobility.

Aimee’s master bathroom space measured only 4 feet by 4 feet, which limited her accessibility. Its layout increased her risk of falling and suffering injuries. In addition, her wheelchair was too wide to fit through the bathroom doorway. As a result, Aimee had to rely on constant assistance from her friends anytime she needed to use the bathroom — an embarrassing frustration for a self-sufficient woman. Therefore, the doorway needed to be widened and the space reconfigured in order to accommodate ADA-compliant products and wheelchair access. However, Aimee faced an obstacle before any work could even begin.



The original bathroom in Aimee Copeland’s home was small and not accommodating to her wheelchair, compelling her to remodel her home to better suit her mobility needs.

When Aimee's house was built in 1920, county regulations called for a minimum of four feet of space between the property line and one's home. However, recent changes to the regulations extended the gap to a 7-foot space. As a result, Aimee would not be allowed to build a new, extended bathroom without requesting a special permit. Almost a year after the request was filed, and with the support of her neighbors and friends, Aimee finally received the special permit – and the project could begin.

A Lifestyle of Accessibility and Safety with American Standard Products

The transformation began in August 2015, when builders laid down the home expansion foundation in the backyard. Two weeks later – after construction, tiling and installation of granite, cabinetry and the [ADA-compliant products from American Standard](#) – the bathroom project was complete.

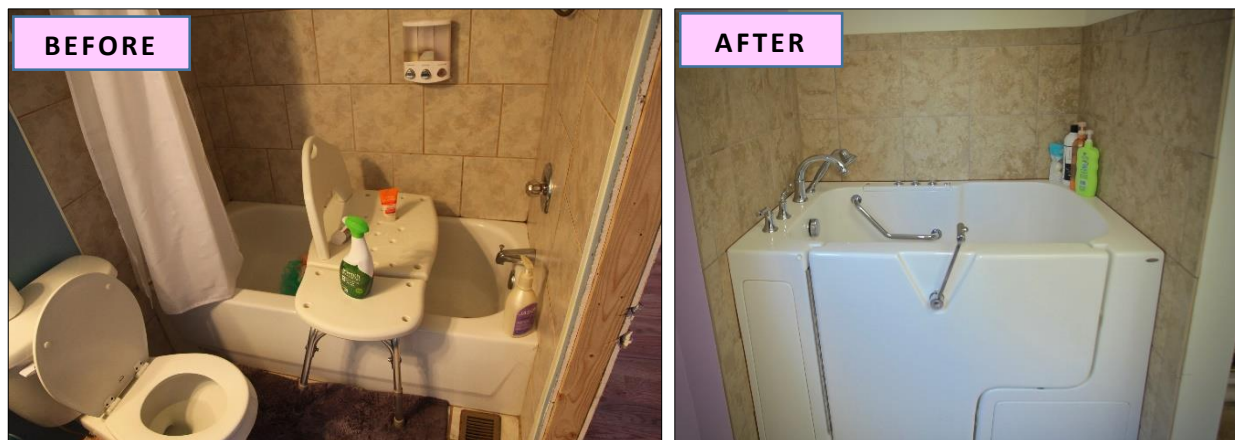


With the expansion and remodel of her bathroom – and the help of accessible, ADA-compliant fixtures and fittings from American Standard – Aimee Copeland can safely and comfortably navigate in her own bathroom without limitations.

A key addition to the new bathroom is a deep and spacious [American Standard Massaging Walk-In Bath](#), which provides Aimee with an accessible, safe and relaxing bathing experience. This Walk-In Bath, which has received the [Arthritis Foundation's Ease-of-Use Commendation](#), offers many therapeutic benefits, thanks to the effervescent air tub combined with an invigorating whirlpool massage.

Made from fiberglass-reinforced acrylic for extra durability, the Walk-In Bath features a large [watertight door that swings outward](#), providing more room when entering and exiting the tub and allowing full access to the seat for safer user wheelchair transfer. Its ultra-low entry makes for more accessible entry/exit and a built-in comfort seat further enhances the bathing experience. The Walk-In Bath features the American Standard [exclusive QuickDrain system](#) that uses a powerful pump to remove the water significantly faster than a standard drain, to prevent the bather from becoming chilled waiting for the water to exit the tub.

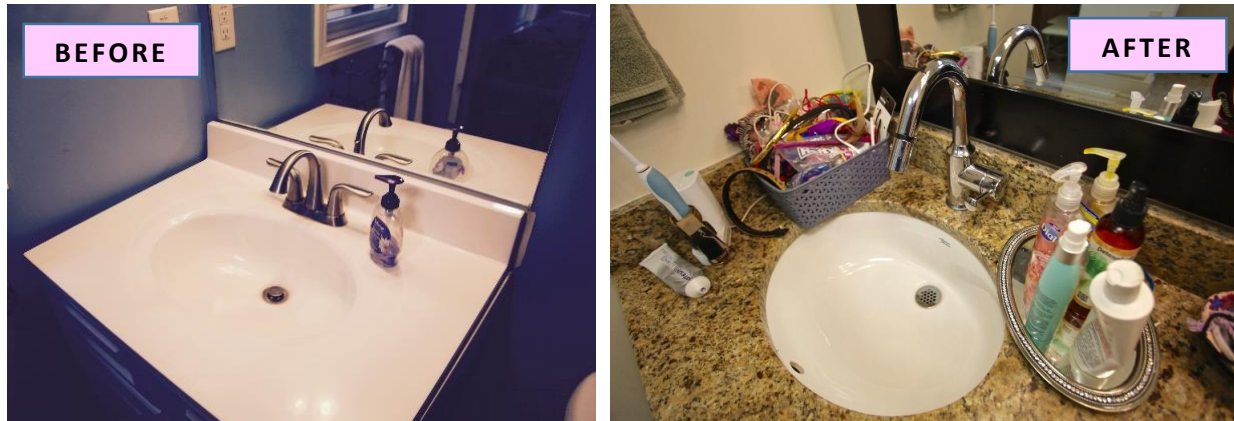
“Before the installation, I couldn’t even take a bath. I was amazed the first time I opened the door to the American Standard tub, because I knew I would be able to have an easy and safe transfer into it from my wheelchair,” said Aimee. “The tub has made a huge impact on my life because it’s enabled me to take therapeutic baths for my scar tissue and skin grafting. The tub overall has helped eliminate a lot of my pain, which means I can sit up longer and also more comfortably – especially in my car.”



Aimee Copeland’s tub set-up was ill-equipped to provide her with safe wheelchair-to-tub transfer, plus the wall showerhead delivered water everywhere and was not targeted. Her new American Standard Air Spa Walk-In Bath combo massage bath features a large door and a built-in comfort seat.

American Standard also provided an [Ovalyn Undercounter Sink](#) and a [Pekoe Pull-Down Bar Faucet](#) for Aimee’s remodeling project. Before the installation, Aimee’s bathroom sink faucet was too low for her to access it. The Pekoe pull-down faucet — which is traditionally installed as a bar faucet — provides the flexibility and functionality that Aimee needed. Offering the perfect height for Aimee, the Pekoe faucet includes a Hi-Flow swivel spout with a pull-down spray, memory position valving that provides water at her preferred temperature, and an ADA-approved lever handle. The Ovalyn Undercounter Sink, which is made from high-gloss, stain-resistant vitreous china, is easy to clean because all spills can be brushed right into the sink with no obstruction in the way.

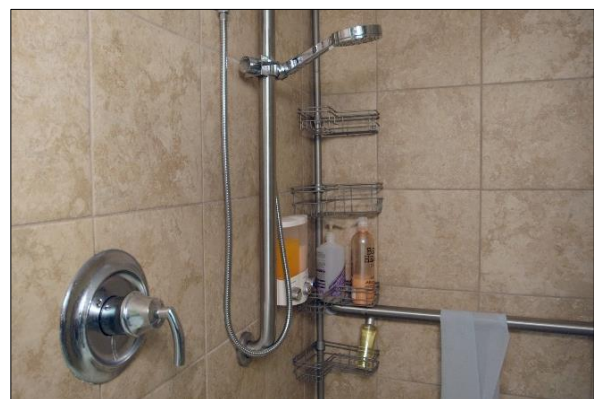
“Before my accident, I would simply cup my hand with water to rinse my mouth out while brushing my teeth,” Aimee added. “American Standard installed a pull-down spray faucet with a lever handle that is easy for me to grip, which makes it easier for me to brush my teeth and rinse out my mouth.”



The sink area in Aimee Copeland’s original bathroom provided minimal usability. American Standard provided a solution for her bathroom functionality – with their Pekoe pull down faucet and Ovalyn undercounter sink – that allows her to safely and effectively perform daily grooming tasks.

Aimee also needed a shower setup that would give her more bathing independence, while providing safety and comfort. Previously, Aimee did not have a roll-in shower — which allows a wheelchair to maneuver into the shower stall — and said the transfer from her wheelchair was very unsafe. She also noted that water from the showerhead got everywhere because it wasn’t adjustable and the spray would hit her shower bench.

Upon completion of the roll-in shower installation, American Standard added its [Modern 3-Function Hand Shower](#) with a 59-inch shower hose. The hand shower offers three different sprays for a customized experience, including full spray, pulsating massage and gentle aerated flow. American Standard supplemented it with a complete shower system kit that includes a 36-inch long combination slide bar/grab bar that meets the American National Standard Institute's (ANSI) standard 250-pound pull test for grab bars; a 1½-inch diameter stainless steel bar with chrome-plated hand shower holder; and an ADA-compliant lever handle to adjust hand shower height.



The American Standard Modern 3-function hand shower provided Aimee Copeland with showering independence, while at the same time offering additional comfort and safety to her daily routine.

“Being able to take a shower on my own without anyone’s help is an amazing feeling. The American Standard showerhead’s form and water flow give me peace of mind that I am getting maximum body water coverage,” said Aimee. “The level handle is also perfect because now I can easily adjust the height for me and when I have guests over.”



The accessible bathroom products from American Standard has allowed Atlanta resident Aimee Copeland to more easily and effectively move about her home independently.

“I was absolutely stunned the first time I saw my new bathroom! And, because everything in my bathroom is so accessible and streamlined, I save a lot of time getting ready,” added Aimee. “American Standard is very focused on providing solutions for people with disabilities. Because of them, I now have these beautiful, sleek products that allow me to safely and efficiently live my life.”

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