

NEAR-FATAL INJURY INSPIRES WESTFIELD RESIDENT

By Chelsie Lanning
Current in Westfield

Westfield business owner Brian Hanrahan had an "eye-opening" experience two years ago.

Hanrahan, who owns Club City Fit (3246 S.R. 32), was involved in a traumatic skydiving accident that left him temporarily paralyzed. Over time, he has regained near-normal function, but the event nevertheless inspired him.

As a direct result of the accident, Hanrahan's business is offering a new program, the Fitness Lifestyle Network – a network of fitness clubs that offer free training and exercise to Indiana residents with challenges or disabilities.

"When I was in a wheelchair, my whole identity shifted," Hanrahan said. "The only thing people would talk to me about was my injury, and that became my identity."

Marriage and family therapist John Jordan, a good friend of Hanrahan's, assisted him through the process. Jordan said it was hard seeing his good friend in a wheelchair.

"Brian is trying to give back to a group of people who are often overlooked," Jordan said. "So many people with disabilities are marginalized or overlooked. And it's important to give to more than just yourself."

Hanrahan said exercise has value, and he believes it is what sheltered him from his paralysis. His experience has given him a deeper understanding of people with dis-



Jordan, Ruggles, Maylen (in wheelchair) and Hanrahan

Photo by Chelsie Lanning

abilities, and he has made it his mission to introduce the disabled to fitness.

"Exercise is not going to make someone recover, but there's a social benefit to exercising and getting out," he said. "My experience has changed me from being a taker to a giver."

Hanrahan hopes to raise more awareness about the new program. Bryan Ruggles, Hanrahan's physical therapist from Carmel Rehab, met him through the gym and helps guide the network.

"It's a great idea," said Ruggles. "I provide guidance or consultation to people. I help from afar."

One of Hanrahan's first respondents to the program was Michael Maylen. Maylen found out about the program through a flyer, which he said was "a blessing from Heaven."

"I've literally had to retrain trainers, he said. "I need somebody who is going to follow up on me. Brian has been in a wheelchair. He can relate."

For more information, visit www.clubcityfit.com or www.brianhanrahan.com.

UNDERGROUND RAILROAD RUN SETS RECORD

By K.O. Jackson
Current in Westfield

With more than 400 runners and 700 walkers, this year's Underground Railroad Run (held March 28) had the highest number of runners in its 11-year history.

"We would like to thank our dedicated sponsors, volunteers and all participants for another successful year," said Jan Skinner, executive director of the Westfield Washington Education Development Foundation.

Josh Trisler of Carmel won the men's 5K with a time of 15:28. Karlene Herrell of Westfield won the women's division with a time of 21:15.

In addition to the run, Skinner said 173 guests gathered at The Bridgewater Club for the dinner dance and silent auction.

"This event provides an opportunity for celebrating education in our community, along with raising funds for college scholarships and teaching grants for innovative classroom enrichment," she said.

The run raised about \$22,000, and the dance and auction raised an additional

\$7,500. Much of the money will help the foundation provide scholarships to Westfield High School students.



SKINNER

Matt Putnam and Brady Felix know how important the foundation's grants and scholarships mean to academic pursuits.

Putnam teaches pre-engineering courses at Westfield High School. This is the second time Putnam has applied for – and received – a \$1,000 foundation grant to purchase robotic kits for his classroom.

"The kits are kind of pricey and instead of going into our pockets, the grants are an opportunity to purchase them," he said. "Applying for the grants was a great experience," said Putnam.

Several years ago, Felix's sister, Kara, received a foundation scholarship. Last year, as a WHS senior, Felix was awarded a \$2,000 scholarship.

The Ball State University freshman said the scholarship was "fantastic."

"It comes in handy for books, fees and classes," he said. "I am very thankful for it and I would encourage all WHS seniors to apply."

INDIANS MASCOT VISITS WESTFIELD SCHOOL

By K.O. Jackson
Current in Westfield

Rowdie, the Indianapolis Indians' mascot, recently visited the students at Oak Trace Elementary School. He left the comforts of Victory Field to teach students about living a healthy lifestyle.

"This is a good program, because it may be the first time (some students) have experienced live theater," said Chris Goldfarb, the Indians' mascot coordinator. "We are teaching them about eating right, exercise and good hygiene."

During the 25-minute musical presentation, Rowdie and his two stage partners sung about being good teammates and how to win at the game of life. They concluded the show with Rowdie taking laps around the students and giving them high fives.

The Indians' organization provided Rowdie's services for free. This is the program's first year, and Rowdie's visit was his 30th this year to schools across the state.

"This is for a good cause," said Cindy Collins, co-founder of the Carmel-based Actors Theater of Indiana. Her company wrote the show.

"They (the Indians) contacted us to write the show and we enjoy doing



Rowdie with Oak Trace students

Submitted Photo

it," Collins said. "It is art and it is teaching healthy living. That's a good combination."


Peggy Grimmer teaches physical education at Oak Trace. She said Rowdie's appearance was a "home run" for students.

"I am for anything that enhances healthy living and lifestyles," Grimmer said. "When you can bring in programs like this, it is very good for our students."

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