

Pedaling inspiration, one step at a time

Self-proclaimed "triathlon-freak" shares story

By Emily Thurlow
Staff Writer

SPRINGFIELD —When life hands you challenges, it isn't always easy to find a way to continue to have fun. And often times, that drive and want to pursue some of life's smallest pleasures can be halted by some of society's or an organization's rules or misconceptions.

Having experienced first-hand some of the bumps on the road of life, Holland resident Dick Hoyt was recently invited to speak at Human Resources Unlimited's (HRU) annual fundraising meeting at the Sheraton in Springfield. HRU is a community rehabilitation program with satellite offices in Springfield and other Western Massachusetts communities that provides opportunities to individuals who have disabilities or are otherwise at a disadvantage to access employment, skills training and community resources by creating and supporting employment options that incorporate individual goals and promote full inclusion into the community.

As Dick Hoyt's fan-base that surrounds him and his son Rick know well, the duo never let challenges or the word "can't" cross their minds even once.

One of the first challenges that Rick faced was moments after his birth, where an umbilical cord was wrapped around his neck, preventing him from getting enough oxygen to his brain. Shortly afterwards, Rick was diagnosed as a spastic quadriplegic with cerebral palsy and according to Dick, was told by doctors that his son should be "put away in an institution and that he'd be a vegetable for the rest of his life."

"But you have to understand the word 'can't' isn't a word that's in the Hoyt's vocabulary," Hoyt said.

And clearly the phrase has never been. Since then, Rick was mainstreamed and graduated from high school (aided in part by the creation of the Tuft's University Interactive Communicator, which allows him to communicate through the use of a computer); graduated with a degree in special education from Boston University; and developed quite a taste for competition, having competed in over 1,050 races across the world, including marathons, duathlons and triathlons, six of which include the world-renowned Ironman Competitions in a partnership with his father.

The taste developed in 1977, when Rick heard about a benefit run for a boy that played lacrosse at Westfield State College that was paralyzed after an accident and told his father that he wanted to participate in it, telling him, "I want to show him that life can go on after something like this."

Dick, having served as a lieutenant colonel in the Air National Guard, wasn't unfamiliar with exercise, but hardly considered himself a runner; still, he decided that he would push Rick's wheelchair in the race for the entire five miles, coming in next to last.

As Dick tells it, that night, when Rick and he were home, Rick told his father, "Dad, when I'm running, it feels like I'm not handicapped." And it was that moment that Dick started training to be able to help compete for his son more.

"He's the athlete, I just serve as his arms and legs because he can't," Hoyt said. "If he weren't disabled, I know that he would be an athlete of some sort."

HRU President and CEO Don Kozera said that Hoyt has been one of the biggest integration advocates that he has ever met.

"Team Hoyt represents all that we inspire the individuals we service to do, some who are even similar to Rick," he said. "Our goal is to provide people with new experiences that they've never done, so it was a perfect match."



Dick Hoyt signs his book for a fan after speaking during HRU's annual fundraising event.



Health care Supervisor and Registered Nurse Melissa Keegan, Developmental Specialist/ ISP Coordinator Teresa Lewis, Pyramid Project Manager and West Brookfield resident Christin Deremian, Jorge Delgado, Dick Hoyt, Hung Vu, Karen Pellissier, Phynetta Moran stand together after Human Resources Unlimited's recent fundraising event, which Hoyt spoke at.

Kozera described "choice" for those with developmental disabilities in the past as a façade.

"In the past, if you asked someone with developmental disabilities what they wanted to do, they would tell you bowling, not because it was something they wanted or didn't want, but because it was the only thing they ever had the option to do," he said. "I've made it a personal mission of mine to give people the option to hate it, by giving those we service more options of things they can do."

Kozera mentioned that some of the more exciting options that Pyramid Project Manager Christin Deremian has provided to clients included playing hockey and going out on dog-leads.

She said that it is HRU's mission is to maximize opportunities for the personal growth and independence of disabled and disadvantaged people, "by empowering program consumers to make informed decisions and providing opportunities for meaningful work, because meaningful work is an integral part of the of a person's well-being and sense of purpose."

"I'm working to empower people here," Deremian said. "As a result of our programs, each year hundreds of people with disabilities use and develop their skills, earn wages and contribute to their communities as proud members of the workforce."

Hoyt said that he understands how frustra-

Turley Publications photos courtesy of Driscoll Photography

ted people get, but he never let that stop him.

"At many of the events we went to, people said we didn't belong there. They hid from us and avoided us," he said.

In addition to overcoming some initial ill wishes, Hoyt also had to break through a lot of boundaries like that surrounding a suggestion of triathlons in his mid-forties.

"I didn't know how to swim and I hadn't ridden a bicycle since I was six," Hoyt said. "But through training for nine months, we did it. Now we consider ourselves 'triathlon freaks,' having competed in over 270 of them."

He said that he loves being able to share his story with people, inspiring them to say that "Yes, they can."

"It's just awesome. Different people can take away different things from this presentation, even if they aren't runners," Hoyt said. "It would be a success even if it meant someone going home to hug their kids some more. To me, that's what makes it all worth it."

For more information about future speaking engagements from Team Hoyt, visit www.teamhoyt.com.

HRU practices Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, and are prepared to make reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities to ensure equal access to employment, services and facilities.

For more information about HRU's programs, visit www.HRU.org.

PEOPLE

The American Red Cross seeking 2012 Hometown Heroes Nominations

REGION — The American Red Cross Pioneer Valley Chapter serves greater Hampden, Hampshire and Franklin Counties assisting families affected by disaster; helping military families relay emergency communications to their deployed loved ones; and providing life-saving training programs.

Each year the Hometown Heroes Breakfast honors local individuals (or group of individuals) who have shown courage, kindness, and unselfish character when a friend, family member or stranger faced a life-threatening situation; or who have had an extraordinary impact on his/her community or fellow man. This year's event will take place on Thursday, March 15, 2012 at the Mass-Mutual Center in Springfield.

Members of the community are invited to nominate a local hero for consideration. With the various disasters

our communities experienced over the summer, the chapter is certain that there are many wonderful stories of heroism and kindness that can be shared. Honorees will be selected by a committee of individuals from the community, including former American Red Cross Pioneer Valley Chapter Hometown Heroes.

The Red Cross welcomes the submission of nominations from throughout the three-county area. Nomination forms and criteria are available on the chapter website at www.redcrosswm.org. Nominations must be submitted online or postmarked no later than Nov. 30.

Sponsorship opportunities are also available. Hometown Heroes is the chapter's largest annual fundraising event. For further information, contact Dawn Leaks at leaksd@usa.redcross.org or 413-233-1006.

Girl Scouts seek B.O.D. members

REGION — Girl Scouts of Central and Western Massachusetts (GSCWM) is seeking cutting edge leaders to serve on its Board of Directors and Board Development Committee. The organization is interested in seeking Franklin, Hampshire and Hampden County residents to compile a slate of highly qualified candidates that represents the diversity of its jurisdiction. This is a two-year term commitment beginning in April of 2012.

GSCWM Board of Directors is a vital, engaged group of volunteers who routinely open doors and make major decisions on behalf of the Girl Scouts of Central and Western Massachusetts. Members possess the ability to see the big picture, the willingness to tout the

mission of Girl Scouts, and the capability to serve and promote GSCWM with their time, talent and resources.

The Board of Development Committee searches for dynamic individuals with diverse talents and experiences to help oversee the operations of GSCWM and further the mission to build girls of courage, confidence and character, who make the world a better place.

If you have the talent and enthusiasm to hold a critical leadership position and help further the mission of your local Girl Scout council by serving as Board Member or member of the Board Development Committee, visit www.gscwm.org for more details and a nomination form or call 800-462-9100 or e-mail at info@gscwm.org.

TRIPS TO TAKE

Do you have a trip you would like to share? This listing is for nonprofit sponsored trips. Please send all pertinent information, including who is sponsoring the trip, when the trip is taking place, the trip destination, how much it costs, and contact information for interested travelers, to: Journal Register, Trips to Take, Attn. Douglas Farmer, 24 Water St., Palmer, MA 01069; or by e-mail at journalregister@turley.com.

On Dec. 3, 2011, a Lasalette Shrine trip will be offered. The trip will leave from the Church of the Divine Mercy in Three Rivers at 10 a.m. and will stop at Wright's Chicken Farm Restaurant for a family-style meal. Patrons will then board a bus to the shrine with LED lights. There will be some good surprises on the bus. The cost is \$37 for adults and \$32 for children up to 10. For details, call Irene Grzywna at 283-4463.

Monson water, sewer bills due

MONSON — Water and sewer bills for the usage period July 1, 2011 thru Sept. 30, 2011 are due and payable on Monday, Nov. 21. For questions on usage or meter readings, contact the Monson Water/Sewer Department at 413-267-4130.

Bills not payable by the due date will be charged interest at a rate of 14 percent from the due date, as required by town accepted by law. Return addressed envelopes accompany each bill for mail payments. All payments must be received by the due date in order to avoid additional interest and penalties.

Payments can also be made by going to the town collector's Office, 29 Thompson St., Monson. Public hours are Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to noon and from 1 to 4 p.m.

Class warfare sermon Dec. 4

MONSON — Malita Brown will be offering a sermon on class warfare, who started it and when, who is winning and the debate over the increased regulation and taxes and whether or not they create jobs on Sunday, Dec. 4 at the Unitarian Universalist Church on Main Street in Monson at 10 a.m.

"We have the wealth. We have the money. It is just not circulating," said Brown. "It's being hoarded and that's the problem with the economy. The Occupy Wall Street people have it right, demanding that the rich pay 35 percent as the tax code dictates in an effort to circulate some of that money."

How to submit photos and news

Readers, local merchants, institutions, municipalities, non-profit groups, and civic organizations are strongly encouraged to send The Journal Register their submissions of hometown news and photographs.

■ News items and press releases should be sent by e-mail to the editor at journalregister@turley.com as either a Microsoft Word document attachment, or pasted directly into the e-mail message screen. Be sure to include the "who, what, when, where, and why" information with the submission, preferably written in the third person unless it is a letter to the editor or guest column.

■ Please send photo captions identifying all subjects in the submitted image(s) as they are pictured from left to right. We need the first and last name, hometown, person's title (if applicable), and a brief description of what the subjects are doing in the photo.

■ E-mail uncorrected, raw, RGB color

digital photos at highest resolution directly from your camera, or sized at least 6 inches wide at 200 resolution. Do not condense the photo for faster e-mailing because those photos cannot be printed in the newspaper. The photos may be e-mailed as attachments to dfarmer@turley.com.

■ Publicity chairpersons are encouraged to send in news about upcoming fundraising or other calendar events at least three weeks before the events are scheduled take place. Send those with the subject line "Calendar listing."

We will respond to all e-mail messages received. If you are having difficulty with a press release or need help, please feel free to call Editor Douglas Farmer at 283-8393, extension 236 for help and suggestions.

If you don't have e-mail, please mail these materials to:
Douglas Farmer, Editor
The Journal Register, 24 Water St.,
Palmer MA 01069



- CLUES ACROSS**
- Currently fashionable
 - Free from gloss
 - Licenses TV stations
 - Pop
 - Wakes a sleeper
 - Not light
 - 13-19
 - Sets of statistics
 - Ultimate image
 - Rescued by payment of money
 - Vowel sound
 - River in Florence
 - European money
 - Electronic data processing
 - Carriage for hire
 - Not out
 - Bird homes
 - Helps little firms
 - Challengingly approaches
 - Taxis
 - 007's creator
 - Scoundrels
 - Landed properties
 - Dash
 - Yemen capital
 - Atomic #89
 - One point E of due S
 - Kilocalorie (abbr.)
 - Ed Murrow's home
 - A braid
 - Czech writer Karel
 - Examines in detail
 - W. Rumania city on the Muresel
 - A citizen of Oman
 - Cain's brother
 - Add alcohol beverages
 - N. Swedish lake & river
 - Fury
 - Prohibition
 - Birthday sweet
 - Frozen rain
 - "1836 siege" of U.S.
 - Murdered by Manson
 - An equal exchange
 - M M M
 - Insures bank's depositors
 - Indication of superior status
 - Large groups
 - Chip stone with sharp blows
 - ___ Lanka
 - Fat for birds
 - The brain and spinal cord
 - Reciprocal of a sine
 - Goat and camel hair fabric
 - Founder of Babism
 - Strategic Supply Chain
 - Former OSS
 - Feline mammal
 - Smallest whole number
 - Brunei monetary unit
 - Public promotions
 - Tap gently
 - The woman
 - Terminate someone's job
 - The bill in a restaurant
 - Rushes out to attack
 - Divine Egyptian beetle
 - Llama with long silky fleece
 - A coral reef off of S. Florida
 - 1000 calories
 - A S. Pacific island group
 - A special finish for velvet
 - Former Russian rulers
 - Home of Adam & Eve
 - Informer (British)
 - Israeli politician
 - Lily flower of Utah
 - Securities market
 - Soul singer Rawls

See crossword answers in next week's Shopping Guide.