



Ellen Moran cradles a photo of Betty Borry at Half Moon Pond in Hancock. Fifteen years ago, with Moran's help, Borry created Adventure Weekend at Sargent Center. Since Borry's death, in 2001, Moran and other volunteers have staffed the program that serves women with breast cancer. COURTESY

First steps on the road to greatness

WE ARE A NATION divided — Republicans and Democrats, sweet tea vs. unsweetened tea, those who love Barry Manilow and those who hate Barry Manilow.

Now we are divided on Nathan Sorrell, as well. Nathan is the 5-foot-3, 200-pound 12-year-old boy from London, Ohio, who was featured in a Nike Olympics commercial. The commercial showed Nathan jogging down a lone highway, huffing and puffing, his shirt soaked with sweat,



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against a somber voiceover about finding your greatness.

There are those who think the commercial was inspiring and those who think the commercial was raw exploitation.

Critics claim the commercial equates becoming fit with greatness and sends a hurtful message to those who are obese. They point out that a young man does not have to run to find greatness, that he can find greatness in art, math, literature or other fields.

The ones who claim that the commercial was inspiring are saying, "GO, NATHAN, GO!"

This much we can agree on: Not many people will find greatness sitting on the couch all day eating chips and playing video games. Nor will many find greatness eating frozen pizzas into the night while watching the Cartoon Network.

Greatness often requires that you get up and move.

Nathan's first move was to answer a casting call for a Nike commercial searching for a young person of a certain build. He wanted the spot. He went for it and he got it. That's not exploitation, that's success.

Yet, objections to the message that being fit is the equivalent of greatness carry some weight, as well. Oprah has had her ups and downs on the scales, Elvis was far from willowy in his later days, and if theologian G. K. Chesterton were alive today, he would need to book two seats on a plane. Size does not obscure accomplishment.

The common denominator to any sort of greatness, physical, mental, creative, is self-discipline. Self-discipline is in such short supply today that we cheer like mad for it wherever we see it. It's why we don't catch the irony of rooting for our favorite contestant on "The Biggest Loser" while eating a bowl of ice cream. It's why we love the Olympics. Most of us can't pole vault, swim for speed or do a gymnastics floor routine, but we appreciate someone who can.

It is the mastery of impulse, that ability to deny temptation and refuse to quit, that opens the door to greatness. The challenges can be as varied doing 100 crunches, saying no to dessert, memorizing chemistry formulas or formulating a business plan.

Nathan Sorrell and his mother have said they plan to slim down together. They joined a gym and will be exercising. They'll be exercising their bodies as well as self-discipline.

Nathan may very well have taken the first step to finding greatness, and, along the way, he may have motivated others to get off the couch.

Pretty great, if you ask me.

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Among friends

Shared adventures help women with cancer find strength

By MELANIE PLENDA
Special to the Sunday News

THE NEWS that she had cancer knocked Rose Love off her feet. There was no family history, no frame of reference. This wasn't supposed to happen. She was 36, a nurse and the mother of four young children, for crying out loud.

The cancer was aggressive. So was her treatment — high doses of chemotherapy and radiation. She could barely get off the couch. If she folded a load of laundry, it was a good day. This is why it was just about unbelievable when she found herself on the business end of a zip line free falling her way through a Hancock forest.

"It totally empowered me," said Love, now 51 and in remission. "When I was home and so overwhelmed, and I'm sure emotionally overwhelmed, the treatment had zapped me so physically that I didn't feel I could do anything. And then when I was there ... I did that whole ropes course. And I was, like, 'You're kidding me. I can do this.' And I felt like I could do this. I felt like there was no way these people were going to let me down, that they were going to get me through it."

Love attended one of the first Adventure Weekend retreats for people of all ages and stages of cancer started by Betty J. Borry in the mid-1990s. These weekends eventually turned into the Betty J. Borry Breast Cancer Retreats, a nonprofit that hosts three weekend retreats per year at Nature's Classroom Sargent Center near Half Moon Pond in Hancock, to help women living with breast cancer.

The intent of each retreat weekend is to gather women together in the beauty and freedom of the outdoors to not only express what they are going through, but also process it. Activities during the weekend are designed to encourage trust among the women as well as build confidence, with a finale that includes conquering an aerial ropes course and zip lining back down to the ground.



Betty Borry, who launched Adventure Weekend at Sargent Center, kayaks on Half Moon Pond in the late 1990s. Borry died in 2001 after her breast cancer returned. COURTESY

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"I felt like there was no way these people were going to let me down, that they were going to get me through it."

ROSE LOVE

Adventure Weekend participant



Posing with their Adventure Weekend teammates are two of the women who went through the program and are now volunteers and board members: Front row, fourth from left, is Clara Cumusa-Reed, and to her left is Cynthia Cote, now the executive director. COURTESY