

Alumna runs half-marathon

Alumna trains for an upcoming half-marathon to benefit MS Society

BY EMILY BATTMER
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When alumna Alicyn Wyatt was 9 months old, her mother was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. For the past 23 years, she has grown up watching the effects this disease can have on patients and their families, she said. Now she is finding a way to do something about it and empathize with MS patients like her mom.

Wyatt currently is preparing to compete in a half marathon and is raising money for the MS society as she trains.

"I've kind of always thought that I couldn't do anything about it," Wyatt said. "I didn't have a way to do anything about MS. It was just something my family had to deal with."

Throughout college, Wyatt said she participated in several fundraising activities, benefitting organizations like the American Cancer Society and Special Olympics. While Wyatt said she felt good about working for those organizations, she wanted to pick something close to her.

She wanted to do something challenging that people would be willing to donate for, she said, so she decided to compete in the Bass Pro Maynard Cohick Half Marathon Nov. 4.

While it might not be the easiest task she has ever completed, Wyatt said it's nothing compared to living with multiple sclerosis.

Multiple sclerosis can slow nerves or completely deaden them, Wyatt said, but it's not always easy to see if someone is dealing with MS from the outside. For most of the time her mother has been affected by MS, Wyatt said her mother has looked like a healthy individual, so explaining something was wrong was not always easy.

Wyatt said while her training can't compare to what MS patients deal with, she can relate. Training affects the way she eats, the amount of rest she gets and her ability to go out and be social, she said. Sometimes people with MS have to say no to going out and doing things, and Wyatt said she has had to turn down invitations to stick to her training schedule.

"MS is very much about listening to your body," she said. "[Training] is kind of my way to empathize with that. There are good days and bad days and you have to know how to handle them."



Submitted Photo
Alumna Alicyn Wyatt, left, poses with her mother, Jill Wyatt, during her graduation from Truman State during May 2011. Jill has been living with multiple sclerosis for 23 years and said she was touched to learn her daughter was running a half-marathon to benefit the MS Society and raise awareness about this medical condition.

While Wyatt has raised about \$800 and is well on her way to her goal of \$2,000, she said what she really wants to accomplish with the race is raising awareness. MS affects 400,000 Americans, she said, but when she talks about it, many people don't know what it is.

"Yes, I want to raise money, but to get other people to donate they have to understand why I'm doing it," she said. "I'm happy that people who are donating are learning about it."

Alicyn's mother Jill Wyatt said she was happy to hear her daughter was doing something to help the cause.

"It's indescribable," she said. "It touched me in a way I can't even describe when I

found out she was doing this."

Jill is glad her daughter is finding a way to help in the fight against MS, even though she is away from home.

"I think she will feel like she's doing something to help me," she said.

"I know she probably feels helpless as far as I'm concerned."

Wyatt is not competing in the race alone. Like a MS patient, she said she knew she needed a support system, and she found support with Truman State alumna Jen Lawson.

Lawson said she agreed to run with Wyatt because it was a worthwhile way

to get in shape and support a friend, while learning more about MS and the challenges patients face.

"If you look at her reasons for doing it, you see that MS changes people's lives drastically," Lawson said.

Lawson lives a few hours away, but she said she and Wyatt talk at least once a week to discuss training and offer encouragement to each other. Lawson said she feels it's important to be a positive support system for her friend because she knows how important the cause is to her.

"I know it's really important to her because she's dealt with this her entire life," Lawson said. "I try to be positive. If you have MS, that's not positive, but you have to find the positives in tough situations."

Donations can be made online at:
<http://bit.ly/Nn3cBu>

Friends of NRA host banquet

BY JOHN BROOKS
Staff Reporter

The letters "NRA" usually are associated with a strong political viewpoint, but the Northeast Missouri chapter of the organization Friends of National Rifle Association (NRA) are not planning to promote any specific political ideal at their banquet today.

This organization hosts annual fundraisers throughout Missouri to promote shooting sports around the state as well as nationwide, and raises money for local and national shooting programs for organizations like 4-H, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. About half of the money raised stays in Missouri, and half goes to programs across the nation, the organization's state representative Greg Perry said.

"We help raise money for youth education and sporting equipment," Perry said.

Despite looking to promote shooting sports and their title, Friends of NRA is not politically motivated. Unlike the NRA,

which traditionally has been a political powerhouse, Friends of NRA seeks to promote shooting sports and no political activity is allowed, said Mike Clarahen, local Northeast Missouri chapter committee member.

Statewide, the organization has raised \$2.5 million in grants since 1994, Perry said. Throughout the state, money is raised through 24 banquets hosted annually by each chapter. Once the money is collected and totaled, it is returned to the community in the form of grants. Distribution of the money is determined by need, Perry said. Locally, Kirksville's Future Farmers of America got a \$9,500 grant last year for their shooting program.

The local Northeast Missouri chapter of Friends of NRA is hosting their banquet at 5:30 p.m. tonight at the NEMO fairgrounds. To raise money, tickets are \$25, and a variety of guns will be raffled off. Guns also will be sold through silent auctions, Clarahen said. Most of these items are donated by Kirksville organizations provid-

Friends of NRA upcoming events in Missouri

September 13	September 15	September 15	September 20	September 29
Kirksville 5:30 p.m.	Sullivan 5:30 p.m.	Branson 5:30 p.m.	Jefferson City 5:30 p.m.	Harrisonville 5:30 p.m.

According to www.friendsofnra.org/StateHome.aspx?sid=26&sc=MO

ing support for the event. While the banquet itself entails a great deal of work, from setting up the event to gathering items to be auctioned off and raffled away, Clarahen said he thinks it's worth it.

"I work with a bunch of great guys on this committee that know a lot of people in town and are not afraid to get out and ask for donations," Clarahen said.

The banquet will offer card games and auction off shotguns, rifles, pistols and other materials associated with outdoor activity,

Danny Rodes, Northeast chapter committee member, said.

The money raised goes to providing funds for organizations who might otherwise lose or have to make cuts to their shooting programs. The banquet also provides an opportunity for many people who might not otherwise meet, to enjoy themselves with the 250-300 people expected to show up, Clarahen said.

"The night of the banquet is the best," Clarahen said. "You get to meet a lot of new people who are like-minded in their appreciation of the outdoors

and the sport of firearms."

Rodes said he enjoyed meeting people and spending time with people that enjoy the outdoors, particularly because he was doing so while raising money for youth education and sporting events.

"The fun and fellowship is great," Perry said. "You get to meet people from all walks of life here. Some are your local law enforcement, some are doctors or lawyers, others are farmers - but they all look forward to supporting the shooting sports."

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