

## The Never Ever Boys

Spectators at the Peachtree City Toga Trot watched as three competitors stepped—and one rolled—past the finish line. What they didn't see was the initial prognoses of “never ever to walk again” and the years of work it took for each of the four men—Trevor Akers, Justin Campagna, Tremaine Nathan and Colin Madhavaiya—to participate in the race.

The Toga Trot was the first event in Peachtree City with participants dressed in togas, but it was the spirit and triumph of the Never Ever Boys that made the race unique.

In July 2003, Akers was in a motorcycle accident that left him with a head injury as well as a T2 complete spinal cord injury (SCI). Doctors told him that he'd spend the rest of his life in a power wheelchair, but Akers never accepted that verdict. At the race, he used his manual wheelchair for all but the last 10 meters of the one-mile portion. Then he got up on his feet and, with the aid of his walker and ankle supports, walked across the final 10 meters without assistance.

Campagna's injuries were much like Trevor's. After being involved in a traumatic car wreck that killed his girlfriend five years ago, Campagna woke with blindness in his left eye, a head injury, broken bones, a severe spinal cord injury (T3 complete) and the prognosis that he'd never walk again. He was determined to prove the doctors wrong—and he walked the final 100 meters of the race, the same distance he used to run in high school competitions.

Nathan, also hurt in a motorcycle wreck, suffered a ruptured aorta and a T6 complete spinal cord injury. Though he was told he'd never walk again, Nathan wheeled the first part of the mile and walked the last 10 meters of the race with the help of his walker. Nathan's wedding is set for April 2009 and his plan is to walk into the church and stand next to his bride as they recite their vows.

Madhavaiya was injured four years ago in a diving accident, immediately paralyzing him from the neck down (C5 complete SCI). He was told that he'd never again use his shoulders, arms, hands and trunk, let alone his legs—and that he'd never be able to use a manual wheelchair. Madhavaiya completed the mile loop wheeling himself the whole way and has let the other Never Ever Boys know that next year, he'll be walking across the finish line with them.

Susan Leger, DS, MS, PT, and general manager of Center IMT Atlanta, says that when the Never Ever Boys were told that they'd never walk again, that prognosis became their challenge. Dr. Leger has been treating spinal cord injury (SCI) patients for over 20 years and is doing cutting edge work with them at Center IMT Atlanta, an internationally known physical therapy clinic in Fayetteville. She's had amazing results with Integrated Manual Therapy and combining her extensive study in anatomy and physiology.

The Spinal Recovery Program at Center IMT Atlanta has seven crucial elements that are required to move a person through recovery from SCI, according to Dr. Leger. Three are from the outside in:

1. Stage Directed Exercise (progressing in successive increments)
2. Receptor Stimulation, and
3. Electrical Stimulation, Threshold (nighttime) and Neuromuscular (daytime)

Three more are from the inside out:

4. Structural Work (aligning and preparing the injured area for exercise and healing)
5. Biophysiology (nutrition), and
6. Laser

7. Finally, the most important element is the person's mind-body connection, which drives the healing.

“The combination of these seven elements is the focus of our program,” says Dr. Leger. “The structural diagnostics and hands-on treatment is called Integrative Manual Therapy and is developed and directed by Dr. Sharon Giammateo.” Another aspect of the program, the use of threshold electrical stim to grow muscles, was advanced by neonatologist Karen Pape, MD.

Center IMT Atlanta has patients that come from all over the world—about 85% are from all across the US and 15% from outside the US. Patients arrange to come for a block of time, learn the program and take part in the treatment. Once they return home, they continue the program to the best of their abilities.

While many of the patients are athletic, one 68-year-old man had been paralyzed for 35 years after an accident. He started the program and four years later, he can walk around his house and his bladder and bowel function has returned, Dr Leger reports.

“It takes a lot of work—it can be challenging. Patients need to take breaks in between the therapies.” But, Dr. Leger adds, with dedication and continued improvements in the therapy, she’s confident that the Never Ever Boys can eventually relearn to run.

For more information on Center IMT Atlanta, call Dr. Leger at 770-716-8885.

*The first Peachtree City Toga Trot 5K & 1-Mile Walk was held in early September. The race’s Greek theme stems from the Phi Mu Fraternity’s national headquarters located on Westpark Drive, the race’s start and end point. Additionally, one of the race co-sponsors is ASCAPA (Atlanta Southern Crescent Alumnae Panhellenic Association). Center IMT Atlanta also co-sponsored the event, as did the Rotary Club of Peachtree City, which raises money for the Rotary Polio Plus Foundation dedicated to the elimination of polio worldwide.*

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