

Sylvania resident races in Austria for ESPN

When ESPN's Jose Morales heard about Sylvania's Todd Crandell and his rising above addiction to become an Ironman triathlete and creating Racing for Recovery, he knew it was a story he wanted to film. After some discussion, the only race that would fit the ESPN schedule was Ironman Austria, in Klagenfurt, Austria July 8.

"We had two weeks to put this trip together," Crandell remembered. "But, the opportunity to gain such wide spread coverage for Racing for Recovery was too good to pass up."

Crandell invited his friend Darrell Cousino, pastor of Olivet Lutheran Church and Racing for Recovery's spiritual advisor, to accompany him on the trip. "It was great to have Darrell along. He is a great friend and supporter and a good person with whom to share the experiences," Crandell said.

The two arrived at the race site July 2 and spent the time talking with people. "Everywhere we went, we ran across people wanting more information about Racing for Recovery," Crandell noted. "So much more happens than just competing in the Ironman race," he said.

Crandell completed the 2.4-mile swim in Worthersee Lake, biked 112 miles in the foothills of the Alps and ran the 26.2 mile third leg of the race in the countryside surrounding Klagenfurt. ESPN cameras were focused on Crandell every step of the way. They were in a boat during the swim and on motorcycles for the bike race and run. Cousino was with the cameramen and was part of the entire race as well. In fact, he is planning to enter his first race next year after this experience.

Crandell said he was aware of the cameras all along the route. "The thought crossed my mind, that not too long ago, I had been a hopeless alcohol and drug addict, homeless and living in my car. And, now, here I was competing in an event across the world with ESPN filming this," Crandell reflected. "But, just as quickly, I realized that this is not about Todd Crandell. This is about what can be accomplished if you are drug and alcohol free," he pointed out. "And, that is a powerful message. Just after I finished the bike portion, I did not feel well at all. But then, I realized those cameras were recording every step I took. And, I thought that just maybe, somewhere out there, someone with an addiction will see this story and realize that there is hope. That one thought kept me going. I finished the event in 12 hours, 32 minutes, my second best time," he stated.

Because this ESPN story is about Racing for Recovery, the network cameramen will travel to Sylvania the end of July to complete footage by covering some of the Racing for Recovery support group meetings and doing in depth interviews of some of the many success stories with people who have benefited from the organization. Crandell anticipates the story to be aired in mid August.

“I am just thrilled for this opportunity to have Racing for Recovery receive this kind of exposure. And, I am even more excited to think of all the people this story will reach and the number of lives that may be turned around,” Crandell said.

Prior to the Austrian contest, Crandell has completed Ironman events in Lake Placid, Florida, California, Wisconsin, Idaho, Arizona, Hawaii, Canada, Brazil, New Zealand, Korea and South Africa. He selects events that offer the greatest opportunity to promote Racing for Recovery. “Competing in Ironman contests is a vehicle to get people’s attention, make connections and get them interested in what we are doing through Racing for Recovery,” Crandell noted.

And those connections that are ever present intrigued Cousino during the Austria trip. “Everywhere we went, we ran into at least one person who either knew about Racing for Recovery or was familiar with Todd. We were constantly stopping to talk with people about what we do,” Cousino recalled. “The people connection was just great and I’m so glad I was able to be a part of this,” he added.

Cousino has been offering a spiritual component to the Thursday evening group meeting since last March. “It has been exciting to see people want to grow. People in recovery are hungry to learn how to hold on to hope when the world is so filled with pain. Racing for Recovery offers sobriety along with nutrition, exercise, mental, physical and now spiritual support. This is a true example of holistic recovery,” Cousino related.

Crandell and Cousino are looking to expand the spiritual component to other Racing for Recovery group meetings held daily in various locations.

Golf Outing

The annual Racing for Recovery Golf Outing sponsored by New York Life will be held Aug. 3 at Giant Oaks Golf Club. Proceeds from the event benefit the organization. Lourdes College Run.

The sixth annual Racing for Recovery 5K/10K race will be held Oct. 21 on the grounds of Lourdes College. “This is an exciting event for me,” Crandell said. “The race has been successful bringing in many people to Sylvania. I have wanted to do something positive and good for my home town and this race is one way for me to offer a payback to my community,” he said.

Outpatient Treatment Program

Sylvania resident Ross Chaban, LPCC, LICDC, OCPS2 has joined Crandell to offer outpatient alcohol and other drug treatment services at the organization’s headquarters at 901 Washington St. Crandell, who recently completed his master’s degree in counseling from Lourdes College, is a chemical dependency counseling assistant.

Chaban and Crandell will offer assessments, individual and group counseling and intensive outpatient programs along with general mental health counseling services. Referrals are anticipated to be made from individuals, families, local agencies, physicians, court systems and more.

“All of these services are available to individuals in need along with their family, friends and significant support system,” Chaban said.

“Racing for Recovery is expanding its services to be here and support those in need and their family members,” Crandell noted. “Treatment in conjunction with our existing prevention and recovery services allow Racing for Recovery to offer a whole continuum of care.”

The treatment program will begin the second week of August. Appointments will be available from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily.