

Positively Speaking

By Mark Wilson

02/05/10

Ski with a Cause

Wisconsin Wilderness Campus is a one year college program located on Lake Owen in Cable, and is an extension of Philadelphia Biblical University. Limited to an enrollment of 35 students, this unique school in the northwoods offers students a dynamic one-year accredited university experience that builds a foundation for further academic study, character development and spiritual growth. Several of the students, faculty and staff attend Hayward Wesleyan Church, where I serve as Senior Pastor.

Each year, the WWC students ski 40K (25 miles) on the American Birkebeiner Trail for physical education. On February 16 this year they are skiing for a cause. They are skiing to raise money for Transitions Global which works to help women and children escape the snare of human trafficking in the United States and around the world (particularly Cambodia and Vietnam.)

Seth Fisher, the event organizer explains:

Keep in mind that most of them have never worn a pair of cross-country skis prior to coming to WWC. Each student learns how to ski, and trains for this long distance test in a five week period. Not only is the training regiment rigorous, but the actual ski event is held on a world class ski trail in our backyard called the American Birkebeiner Trail.

*For most of our students their day on the trail is unforgettable. After finishing, some vow they will never put on a pair of ski's again, while others look for new ways to participate in the sport. But for all of them the memory stays with them long after they leave northern Wisconsin. **The race really isn't just about skiing**, it's an opportunity to overcome what was at one time unthinkable. Students don't just traverse hills, they traverse personal thresholds, whether they be physical, mental, or emotional. I think our students would admit that they draw confidence from this experience when faced with other seemingly insurmountable obstacles later on in life.*

*This year the Student Birkie will be different. The tangible aspects of the experience will be the same- 40K on the American Birkebeiner Trail. And, we always hope and pray that the intangible outcomes spoken of above will result as well. But the question has surfaced; **can we ski with a purpose?** Several ideas have collided and what is emerging is a race with a cause.*

The person responsible for this new dimension to our ski event is Katie Nolan who attended our program in 1998-1999. Katie passed away in a climbing accident while summiting Mt. Hood in December. Katie's life was filled with many rich experiences on different continents across the world, including working with the poorest of the poor in Calcutta. The people she met changed her life and opened her eyes to places of injustice and great need. Her retelling of these experiences and her passion for the causes she discovered had a significant impact on members of our WWC family in which she corresponded.

*Over the past year Katie was in conversation with Mark Jalovick, our director, about connecting our Student Birkie to a cause. It is common in many of the ski races in our area to "ski for a cure" but Katie's suggestion was **"what if we ski for freedom?"** Katie had gotten involved with an organization called Transitions Global (<http://transitionsglobal.org/history.php>) that is working to provide services, support and rehabilitation to people caught in the world of human trafficking. Transitions Global began their work in Phnom Penh, Cambodia working with women*

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between the ages of 8-18 involved in human sex trafficking. Transitions efforts have been very successful and they have become a model for many other organizations with similar missions in various parts of the world.

So this year we will be skiing for freedom. Our hope is to raise awareness of the oppression involved in human trafficking both here and abroad. We trust others will join with us as we ski with a cause.

Kudos to the WWC skiers for this excellent way to raise awareness and support for a very important cause.

For more information or to donate: <http://www.firstgiving.com/wwcbirkie> To cheer the skiers in: Bring a cowbell and show up at Fish Hatchery Park in the early afternoon on Tuesday, February 16.

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