

http://www.collegiatetimes.com/lifestyle/crossfit-trainer-cope-with-adversity/article_73f068cc-377b-11e4-acfb-0017a43b2370.html

FEATURED

CrossFit trainer copes with adversity

Katrina Spinner-Wilson, lifestyles editor Sep 8, 2014

Steph Hammerman, the first female certified CrossFit trainer with cerebral palsy, visits Tech to speak at the 11th annual leadership dinner hosted by the Jewish student organization Hillel.

Courtesy of Steph Hammerman

Steph Hammerman, nicknamed “The Hammer,” is the first female certified CrossFit trainer with cerebral palsy — a debilitating genetic disorder that limits nervous system and brain functions.

On Sept. 9, Hammerman will share her story and inspire students and the community at the 11th annual leadership dinner in the GLC multi-purpose room, hosted by the Jewish student organization Hillel.

Originally born in Long Island, New York, she currently resides in Palm Habor, Florida.

Hammerman, who has a twin brother and nine other siblings, is the only one in her family with what she describes as “a physical difference.”

After seeing a picture of herself on Facebook during her sophomore year at Lynn University, Hammerman decided she wanted to become more fit and healthy. She began training with a group of hand cyclists, which ultimately led her to CrossFit training because of its challenge and her desire to get more physically active.

“I love the sense of community that it (CrossFit) brings to both athletes and coaches,” Hammerman said.

So far, Hammerman has competed in nine CrossFit competitions and has been awarded the spirit of the games award, exemplifying her effort in an environment where she doesn’t compete against people, but with people.

As both a CrossFit coach and athlete who trains almost every day, Hammerman loves serving as an example for others.

“I love that every day it’s something different and you get to help people who can do things that they never once thought possible,” Hammerman said. “And so it doesn’t matter if I happen to use a wheelchair or happen to use crutches, at the end of the day, I’m both an athlete and a coach, so coming from two different perspectives is a challenge, but also an amazing opportunity.”

More recently, since the end of 2013, Hammerman has been embarking on a speaking tour, traveling across the country sharing her story.

Hillel leadership co-chairs, Hannah Roth and Danielle Knust, who helped organize the dinner, discovered Hammerman by searching online for leadership and motivational speakers. After watching her YouTube videos and considering the dinner’s theme of “fitness,” Roth and Knust decided Hammerman was the one.

“She’s very, very enthusiastic about working with students and that’s something we really wanted to focus on, even though it’s an event for the whole community...” said Knust, a junior majoring in industrial and systems engineering.

Although Hammerman has never been to Virginia Tech before, she is aware of the campus’ strong sense of community and is excited to engage in its presence.

Roth, a junior majoring in computer science, said the purpose of this dinner is to give people inspiration, particularly freshman who may be having some doubts and who are searching for a “push in the right direction to keep going forward.”

“I hope people will gain motivation — hopefully to get out there and get involved, if anything else, maybe take on some leadership roles in the community,” said Roth. “There’s many things out there at Virginia Tech.”



The best piece of advice Hammerman has been given and continues to give is to stay true to yourself and not be afraid to challenge yourself, because you can learn a lot if you step out of your comfort zone.

“I really hope that they are just motivated and encouraged to try new things and not let limitations hold things back,” Knust said. “I think that (Steph) speaking will really show them that sometimes we think we can’t do things because of boundaries we set ourselves and really we don’t have those boundaries, we just think that we have them.”

Hammerman's social media presence, YouTube videos and “Adapt and Conquer” T-shirts allow people to see, watch and spread her story.

The idea for “Adapt and Conquer” began when Hammerman asked a friend who owns the apparel company Box Junkie to make her one T-shirt to compete in for a CrossFit competition. As Steph said, one T-shirt led to another and now it’s become “a labor of love that I’m very proud of.”

With CrossFit competitions approaching and speaking events ensuing, Hammerman is optimistic that CrossFit will remain a huge part of her life.

“I’ve been a big believer that things happen for a reason,” Hammerman said. “I don’t technically have a five to 10 year plan, but I hope CrossFit happens to be a big part of my life.”