

OLYMPIC GLORY

by Sally Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

Oh how I loved watching the Olympic Games. They were so inspirational in many, many ways. If only we knew the stories that got those kids to such a point of excellence. We can learn some great lessons from the Olympic Games. Consider the persistent dedication that each person must have had to be so good at what they do. There must have been massive sacrifice on their part and on the part of parents who took them to track or to the pool in the early hours of the morning, come rain or shine. Think of the conditions they must have trained under - winter and summer for hours and hours, while their friends were out having the good time that 'normal kids' do. I wonder if athletes can sustain long lasting friendships with those not involved in their sport? It seems they are so out of circulation because of the driving need to perfect their skills.

I remember reading about the singer Barbra Streisand and her total focus on music. She believed that it was impossible to get to a desired skill without being totally 'one eyed' about it. She threw everything she had into that voice of hers and sure enough, she really did make it to the top.

Why is it that I am always so disappointed when my sports heroes retire? It is probably because I have built them up so much in my own mind that I imagine they should be my inspiration forever.

I believe that heroes play a special part in everyone's life. Here are mere mortals that have passed their own and everyone else's expectations. They all have tales of failure. But unlike many of us, they don't accept failure as the end. They have a higher goal and use their disappointment as a lesson to learn from and get better. Excellence doesn't come from wishing, hoping and being jealous of others' successes. It comes about by having a personal vision or inspiration. It also comes from the support of family and friends who believe in us, cheer us on, pick us up when we fall and celebrate with us when we make it.

Yes, we can learn from our heroes. We can learn about good and poor sportsmanship, from the U.S. women gymnasts who showed great sportsmanship when one tied for the gold with an opposing team member and then was relegated to second, to the wrestler who threw his bronze medal in the middle of the ring, stomped off in a rage because he didn't win and had his medal confiscated. We learn from the gracious comments by athletes who readily admit that they misjudged the race and didn't succeed as they expected to. How wonderful to see Michael Phelps so humble and unassuming as he won gold after gold, thanking his team and his mother for being such a necessary part of his success.

What can we pass on to our kids after watching such a fantastic display of skill? We can teach our kids that if they want something badly enough, they can achieve too. We can encourage our kids to pursue their own dreams and support them 100%. Kids can learn from watching sport about how to be a gracious winner and also a good loser. They can learn that losing one race, doesn't mean you won't win the next. I remember at the last Olympics watching Paul Hamm trying for gold in the men's all round gymnastic competitions. He was in a hopeless place one minute and got the gold medal the next. How fantastic was that?

Being focused on a healthy hobby or sport has a number of good side effects. It keeps us busy. The exhilaration of success and the encouragement that brings, makes us strive harder. Our self-esteem is built up when we prove to ourselves and others that we can achieve our dreams. Your kids can, and so can you. Just because you wear the label of parent, doesn't mean to say that you have to give up your own dreams. No, I have already proven there is plenty of time to achieve your goals. I know, because I have done it. We are all capable of reaching higher goals. Let's do it together – as families. Start now, while the inspiration is still running in your veins.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.