

LOCAL NEWS

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Paralympian medallist guest speaker at Paraplegic Association event

EDITORIAL STAFF
The Guardian



Paralympian silver medallist Kelly Smith is the guest speaker Thursday night at an event sponsored by the P.E.I. branch of the Canadian Paraplegic Association. The motivational speaker's theme is Attitude is Everything. The event takes place at Confederation Centre. Submitted photo

An evening with motivational speaker Kelly Smith, who overcame a crippling accident to become an Olympic silver medallist for Canada, is coming up Thursday in Charlottetown.

His Paralympics wheelchair marathon second-place medal came in 2004 in Athens, culminating eight years of hard work and training.

An avid outdoorsman, Smith was a promising member of the Canadian speed skiing team when in 1991, he sustained a spinal cord injury as a result of a rock-climbing accident.

This became a defining moment in his life and forced him to reassess everything precious to him, including his athletic and career goals.

The Canadian Paraplegic Association, P.E.I. branch, sponsors Thursday's event at 7 p.m. May is Paraplegic Awareness Month.

"I'm looking forward to coming out and meeting everyone," said Smith in an interview Monday.

The theme of his remarks will be Attitude is Everything. Tickets are \$10 and everyone is welcome at the Confederation Centre of the Arts (Studio Theatre).

Smith, who retired from the national team in 2006, has an ability to motivate and inspire others. Though he admits to being 'just an average person,' he is a proponent of extreme living and his life exemplifies how ordinary people can achieve extraordinary things with confidence, hard work and a positive outlook.

Earlier Thursday, Smith will visit the Queen Elizabeth Hospital to do the rounds and meet some people.

Friday, he meets with Islanders who served in Afghanistan and visits a facility helping troops.

Smith works as an air traffic controller in the Vancouver area.

Finding his life on an entirely new path, Smith quickly realized that his attitude — and not his injury — would determine his quality of life experience. Smith said it's a topic he's been delivering for approximately 10 years.

Smith said he mostly delivers his remarks at rehab centres and schools and shares with anyone going through an injury.

"It's a process of enjoying life and challenging yourself. There are endless possibilities for anyone going through challenging times. I've enjoyed many had positives and feel fortunate in a big way. If you quit, you guarantee you won't succeed. We have one crack at life and make sure you keep moving forward, it's a journey and an adventure as well."

He participated in two Summer Paralympics also has a number of Canadian wheelchair racing records, several wheelchair

marathon victories and a Paralympics silver medal.

Smith recounts for audiences the two key challenges that have shaped his life: the accident that broke his back, and his decision, in the wake of this, to become the very best athlete he could be.

From there, he empowers audiences to recognize and focus on their strengths, to set goals and to maintain a positive attitude in their efforts to achieve them.

For more information, contact Myrtle Jenkins-Smith at 626-9523 or to purchase tickets please contact Alicia at 569-8692 or email Alicia@eventsinc.ca.

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