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Chronicling the Campus Community and Beyond Since 1971

From Red Cross to Cross Country: Zach Sollie's Inspiring Story

by Jacob Horton

If you were to ask anyone who knows him, they would tell you without hesitation that AUM Cross Country runner Zach Sollie is a man of many accomplishments.

Whether it has been on the field or in the classroom, Sollie has put together an impressive body of work here at AUM. He is a decorated member of the AUM Cross Country team, who also holds several records for the school. He has put together some of the best 8-kilometer (5-mile) times in school history, and has been the only runner at AUM to place first in an event. He's also been named to the Southern States Athletic Conference All-Academic team on multiple occasions. Sollie has been a member of the Provost Honor Roll every semester he's been at AUM, which has resulted in being selected for numerous awards and leadership opportunities.

The list goes on and on. Out of all these accomplishments, there's one in particular that trumps all the others combined; and it didn't take place here at AUM, or even in high school for that matter. This one took place at a medical center during the earliest possible stage in Sollie's life.

As a seven-month-old infant, Sollie was diagnosed with a very rare form of cancer. Sollie said that the identification of this disease even surprised the medical staff that performed the biopsy. "The doctors,



Cancer Survivor Zach Sollie runs for the AUM Men's Cross Country team.
Photo courtesy of the AUM Athletic Department.

they took a biopsy," Sollie said. "When they found it, they originally thought it was something easy. They thought maybe something like Hodgkin's - something that could be easily treated. After they did the biopsy they found out it was a very rare form of cancer. It's called a rhabdoid tumor, and it was in my left kidney. They told my parents that it was so rare that there were only 50 cases known in the world. They said that with chemotherapy they could stretch my life another year. Without it, I wouldn't make it further than 9 months."

Sollie fought as hard as he could, and with the help of some aggressive chemotherapy, he overcame the odds and beat the disease. He had to receive 15-20 units of blood over the course of his treatment, which took a massive toll on his young body.

Fortunately for Sollie, he does not remember much from his bout with

cancer since it happened to him at such a young age. Most of his memories lie within the routine checkups he was required to take over the next few years of his life.

"Most of the stuff has been related down to me from my parents," Sollie said. "My personal memories are more from the follow-up visits. After I did several rounds of chemotherapy and the cancer was gone, I had to go every six months for a few years just to check up and make sure that everything was still good. Following that I had to go every year, up until the age of 12 or 13, just to make sure. With cancer, there is always a risk of it recurring, or the possibility of chemotherapy at such a young age. That's what they checked me up for."

Sollie went on to live a normal childhood, with little to no physical limitations. As a student at Beauregard High School in Beauregard, Alabama,

Sollie excelled at cross country and track and field. He was named student athlete of the year, while also graduating valedictorian in his class of 2012.

Sollie's story came full circle in the year 2014 when he was selected as one of 13 athletes in the entire country to participate in the 2014 NAIA Leadership Program in Washington D.C. According to NAIA's website, the program, now in its seventh year, continues to inspire, motivate and create a new and diverse generation of American Red Cross volunteers and leaders through exemplifying the five core values of the NAIA Champions of Character program. For Sollie, this experience was something that he says he'll never forget.

"That was a really incredible experience," Sollie said. "I would say that until I got there that I didn't know how important it was, I just thought it was another program. Once I got there, it sort of dawned on me. I'm one of the 13 NAIA student-athletes across the nation that got accepted into this program. Leadership training was the primary focus of it. The application of leadership was running blood drives on our campuses. It was an incredible experience getting to meet other people that were also aspiring to be leaders."

This event was sponsored by the American Red Cross, an organization that helps distribute donated blood to those who need it. The Red Cross was essentially the organization that helped save Sollie's life. He admitted that working with them was a little bit of a surreal experience.

"For me, I was able to show them a real-life example that they're not just giving blood to give it and check something off of the list," Sollie said.

As a result of attending the leadership program in D.C., Sollie is now responsible for coordinating all of the blood drives that take place on campus. He has done three so far at AUM, with the goal for each drive being to collect around 75 units of blood. Sollie noted that giving blood is one of the easiest ways to help save lives and that fear of giving blood should never hold anyone back.

"Fear is not a reason not to give blood," Sollie said. "What's that little bit of fear of being stuck by a needle compared to saving someone's life?"

Weigh the importance of that. I try to tell people the importance of giving blood and that fear should not hold you back."

Sollie's successful battle with cancer has helped him put things into perspective. He has already done something that most people do not ever do in their entire life. He's beaten an awful disease that claims millions of lives every year.

“Fear is not a reason not to give blood...”

So when the stress from everyday challenges rears its ugly head, Sollie remembers how far he's come and is thankful for the opportunities he's been given.

"It helps me at times to not take things for granted," Sollie said. "There are times when I can get bogged down with things, and when the stress builds up, I can look at it and say 'don't take this decision for granted.' I do have an opportunity here. Let's make the most of this opportunity, because those opportunities don't come for everybody."

RSD: Walking Through the Fire

by Erin Mills

It is unrelenting - the burning or stinging, recurrent swelling and constant lack of sleep. These are just a few of the symptoms of Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy or RSD. According to the Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy Association, or RSDSA, RSD "occurs when the nervous system and the immune system malfunction as they respond to tissue damage from trauma. The nerves misfire, sending constant pain signals to the brain." The pain of RSD, also known as Complex Regional Pain Syndrome or CRPS, can be heightened by even the slightest touch,

like the wind blowing on the skin of the affected area. It has been compared to the pain of childbirth. And yet, there is no cure.

RSD onset occurs after a traumatic injury or surgery; the wound itself heals, but the nerve damage causes the pain to remain and grow more severe over time. According to the RSDSA, around 200,000 people are affected each year. Because of its rarity, the disease often goes undiagnosed. The window for complete healing is only about six months, and once it has passed, patients usually suffer for life.

AUM alumnus and Army Veteran Danny Boyle developed RSD after a surgery for a service-related injury. On a normal night, he may find only a few hours of uninterrupted sleep at best, leading to complete sleep deprivation. The lack of sleep feeds the pain, keeping the horrific cycle in place. "It is like burning yourself with the steam from a pot of boiling water, but it never goes away," Boyle said. "You know what it's like when you have a sunburn and accidentally get into the shower with the water too hot? That is what it feels like for every shower." He is able to walk now, but many patients are unable to use the affected limbs altogether. With physical therapy and use of the minimal pharmaceutical treatments available, use of the limb may be restored.

There is no cure - not yet. But there is hope. RSDSA has a new website, and it is one of the first of its kind; information about the new research is posted as it develops. To learn more and donate, please visit RSDS.org, and help make a difference for those who are walking through the fire every day.

Associate Professor of Theatre and Director of Performance Studies Shares His Story

by Jameice Turk



Dr. Neil David Seibel is an Associate Professor of Theatre and Director of Performance Studies at AUM. Photo courtesy of ND Seibel.

While there are many intelligent and intriguing professors at AUM, there is one in particular in the Department of Communication and Theatre that chose to share his story and offer a little advice. When asked to describe himself in one word, Neil David Seibel referred to himself as "complicated." "I believe every human being is complicated to some extent, not necessarily from a negative (connotation), but in general," he said.

Seibel, who likes to refer to himself as "ND," is a native of Cold Spring, Kentucky. He started out as a free-lance actor in Denver, Colorado, and made his way to Alabama in 2008. "There wasn't much of a difference in the transition from Kentucky to Alabama," Seibel said. "In fact, there were actually some similarities." Some similarities between Kentucky and Alabama included Southern hospitality and foods.

When asked what he missed the most about residing in Kentucky, Seibel replied: "Sidewalks." "Since I've been in Alabama, I've put on a few pounds because I'm used to walking or cycling every day to work. Here, I haven't been able to do that as much because there are limited sidewalks," he said.

Before getting to where he is

now, Seibel encountered a number of obstacles. "In order to overcome a setback one must remain focused and not become bitter," Seibel said. "Setbacks are a part of life - they're going to happen." As for his career, Seibel explained that he has three main goals.

As a human being, it is his goal to get up and make sure he takes the opportunity to appreciate the things that he has. As an educator, it is to get a light bulb to go off in a student's head. As a producer, it is "to get in and get to the next step or comprehension of a project," he said. "It is important that I do my job to the best of my ability and make sure each student understands what is expected of them, and sometimes that means being tough."

As a former student of Seibel's, I can honestly say he is a man who genuinely cares about his students. On the first day of class, he told us one of the most important things that I will never forget: he said not to be so concerned with what letter grade we would be getting out of this class. Instead, Seibel told us to focus more on what we would be taking away from the class mentally, and that is what made him stand out the most.

AUM Pep Club: A Place to Let Your Spirit Flag Fly

by Brianna Goodman

It has been said that laughter can be contagious, but can that also be true in the case of school spirit? AUM's very own cheerleading squad does a fantastic job at keeping school spirits high during the different sporting events, both on campus and during away games. As does AUM's 3-year-old mascot, Curtiss the Warhawk, who keeps the laughter and cheers coming not just at sports games, but also at many other events on campus. In addition to these, AUM now has a new source of school pride: the newly-founded AUM Pep Club.

The AUM Pep Club was created thanks to the hard work and dedication

of three students - sophomore Eva Valentine, senior Matthew Robinson and graduate student/faculty member, Kyle Lisenger. Although there had been an unofficial pep squad, the students used it as a foundation to build the new club. "We wanted to expand on what was already there, and take it to the next level by making it official," Valentine said.

The steps it takes to starting a new club or organization on campus are not difficult, as proved by the founders of the Pep Club. All it takes is 10 signatures, a faculty sponsor and a constitution. "We first started asking different students to see if there was enough interest in the club in the student body," Valentine said. "Once we were certain that we had enough students interested, we sat down, wrote out our constitution and filled out the paperwork. Soon after we submitted it, we were approved."



The AUM Pep Club cheers on AUM athletes. Photo courtesy of the AUM Pep Club.

So what does being a part of the AUM Pep Club entail? "The group has attended a lot of home games, and even sponsored a few giveaways during the events," Valentine said. "Have you seen any enthusiastic and painted students at the games? If so, that was us." Currently, there are about 40 official members of the Pep Club (give or take a few), and many more students that are interested in joining. "We communicate mainly through e-mail," Valentine said. "We will send out a mass e-mail with all of the upcoming campus events, and see how many members are available to attend."

There are not any requirements for joining the club. Anyone that is an AUM student is free to join. "The only requirement is to be full of school spirit," Valentine said. "We would really like to see more students get involved." Being in any club or organization, like the Pep

Club, is rewarding in many ways.

"Joining is always a good way to make friends, especially if you are interested in going to games and events but do not have anyone to go with," Valentine said. "Obviously, it is also a great way to show school spirit, get involved on campus and create memories that will stick with you for the rest of your life."

How can you join the Pep Club? "We are always interested and happy to have more students join our club," Valentine said. "We are also very open to any new ideas they may bring with them and new ways to spread school spirit throughout the student body." That being said, if you are interested in joining, send an e-mail to warhawkspirit@aum.edu to become the newest member of AUM's Pep Club today! If you are not sure whether the club is a right fit for you, you can also search for "AUM Pep Club" on Facebook to find more information, photos and videos.

Lessons by the Camp Fire

by Rachael Fairchild

Summer breaks in high school were made for lounging by the pool trying to get the perfect sun-kissed skin tone and working a minimum-wage job to earn some extra money. College summer breaks are slightly different and come with a few more concerns; students have to decide whether to take summer courses, intern with a company they hope will hire them after graduation, or work a tireless job in order to pay bills. However, some students, like myself, still choose another option - we choose to spend summers working at camp. And looking back on the past three summers of camp ministry, I would not trade a single day of sleep deprivation and exhaustion for anything else.

During the summers following my freshman and sophomore year of college, I packed my car full of T-shirts and Nike shorts and made my ten-hour trip to Tyler, Texas, to work as a camp counselor. If you are imagining large T-shirts with animal faces on them, high socks, and backpacks with water bottles clipped to them, then camp is exactly what you imagine; I spent many hot days jumping around and sweating bullets under the Texas sun surrounded by thousands of second-through-fifth graders, and summer nights trying to sleep in between little voices at my bed side whispering about tummy aches and bad dreams.

The summer of junior year was spent a little differently, but was round three of camp. Instead of packing up and heading to Texas, I stayed closer to home and made my way to Birmingham to work as an administrative coordinator for a summer camp ministry. I was not outside in the sun, but in my own personal office. I spent the days talking with youth ministers, finalizing details of upcoming weeks of camp, and sending all the paperwork and materials to the teams that traveled on the road all summer and actually facilitated and put on camp.

Working at camp taught me so many invaluable lessons that I could not have learned from a traditional

summer retail job. Experiencing three summers working in camp ministry has prepared me for the work force in more ways than many believe. Here are four of my biggest takeaways:

1. You have to be flexible.

- As a counselor, we had a strict schedule that was nicely laminated and attached to every counselors backpack. Timeliness is key when you are in charge of eight little ones who always seem to have a shoe untied or need to take an "emergency potty break." Much like Alabama weather, the Texas forecast was also never accurate or predictable, which meant that many times planned activities and theme nights had to be altered. Flexibility meant that as plans changed, our attitudes never did. Counselors never allowed campers to see the frustration and worry that occurred with every torrential downpour and windstorm, but instead showed an ease of transition to the new schedule of events. Flexibility meant being excited about the new game that you just created, and pretending like the lights going out during the storm was all a planned-out prank. As an administrative coordinator, flexibility meant being prepared for anything including driving four hours to work from beach camp without a question on a moment's notice. At camp, flexibility was more than being able to change shifts every once in a while when a co-worker called out, flexibility was necessary for survival.

2. Patience is learned daily.

- It is common knowledge that you will have to work with or encounter difficult people, but working at camp is like being introduced to every kind of difficulty imaginable. Patience was another survival necessity at camp; how else would you get through three months of second-through-fifth graders, overbearing and protective parents, youth pastors who don't believe in deadlines, and every weather curveball imaginable?

Patience was so much more than dealing with a complicated order or disgruntled customer once every hour or so. Patience was the calm voice that talked the frightened camper down from the top of the rock wall for 35 minutes without getting frustrated, even though you were drenched in sweat, blinded by the sun, and late to your own staff bible study - (the one-

hour a week you had free from your campers).

Three-time camp counselor Lauren Zakhary explained that for her, patience was forced. "Since I worked with second-through-fifth graders at camp, I've been asked the same question about five million times within the same hour," Zakhary said. "The only way that I could avoid exploding was to learn patience, and fast."

The patience I learned at camp was a daily discipline there, and is now something embedded into every interaction I have with difficult people.

3. A strong work ethic. -As a camp counselor, I was engrained with a strong work ethic. It is unquestionable that camp counselors learn and maintain a selfless and enduring work ethic. As a counselor, I worked around the clock, made about \$2,000 over the course of three months, and had only 24 hours off a week, during which I made phone calls home, washed laundry, and made countless Wal-Mart runs. There are no forty-hour work weeks or shifts; everyone was exhausted, emotionally drained, and in dire need of a "shift change," but regardless of how tired we were, counselors never quit serving the campers and other staff. While the environment changed from the outdoors to the office, the summer after my junior year, the work ethic instilled as a counselor remained and was just as essential. That summer I did work a typical forty-hour week, there were days I came in early, stayed late and skipped lunch. When an entire week of camp with thousands of attendees rests in your hands, you are more than willing to do whatever it takes to make sure camp runs smoothly and with excellence. In reality, camp staffers are the overachievers of the work field, and they fully understand that every second counts.

"Camp prepared me for unexpected circumstances," two-time camp counselor Josh Million explained. "I always knew nothing but the best was acceptable regardless of how limited resources were, and now I am able to work diligently to succeed even when circumstances change and I don't have all the supplies I think I need."

4. Value everyone regardless of differences. -Working in camp ministry taught me the importance of valuing differences

and embracing uniqueness. People often try to conform to what society considers "normal" and shun those who do not meet those standards. However, working with and encountering people from a variety of backgrounds, cultures, life stages and situations, I learned that our differences are what keep life exciting and interesting.



Campers run to take part in one of their favorite theme night: Buffalo Hunt.

After two summers as a camp counselor and one summer as an administrative coordinator for camp ministry, I would not trade the experiences for any other internship or summer job. I stand firm in my decision to turn down two communication and marketing internships the summer before senior year in order to work in camp ministry. While I have no doubt I would have gained experience at either internship, my time spent in camp ministry has led to invaluable life lessons, numerous long-distance friendships and a web of connections. I feel more prepared for the career field knowing that I have essential life skills and can gain internship experience during the fall and spring semesters.

Being involved in camp ministry for three summers has helped mold me into who I am today. It has taught me countless practical life lessons that will apply in any future career field, and given me friendships that will last a lifetime. I would recommend a summer as camp staff to any college student and hope that future employers see the value in hiring graduates who have worked at a summer camp.

TV Studio Upgrade Coming Soon

by Robert Lemons

Many students at AUM are unaware that the Department of Communication and Theatre has a television studio, which has been in use despite its out-of-date equipment. Now, an upgrade that has been in the works since the spring of 2014 is set to take place. This is a milestone for the College of Arts and Sciences, as the additions made will rival the studios of other institutions in the area.

The complete overhaul will consist of two high-definition cameras, multiple monitors, new sound equipment and a digital switcher. The renovation will be overseen by Raycom Media Group.

"This is a big opportunity for us," said Larry Moore, Lecturer in the Department of Communication and Theatre. "I'm excited that we are getting a state-of-the-art high-definition digital studio. The addition will also help to prepare students for what they will actually see working in the field of broadcast journalism."

"I'm delighted about the upgrade," said Michael Burger, Dean of College of Arts and Sciences. "It will position the department to help students produce polished video work that can be more easily broadcast-online or on television. Seeing their work viewed out there in the real world will be a great experience for them. Indeed, my hope is to see regular features of both campus events and off-campus news coming from the department's students. We are very grateful to Raycom Media and the Office of the Provost for realizing these possibilities for our students."

The goal is to eventually start a live newscast to stream across campus. The studio is expected to be ready for use in the fall of 2016.



Warhawk Squawk:

A Look Back

January 2015

Q: What is your New Year's resolution, if you have one?

A: "To be better than the year before."

-Samuel Hoffmaster

In celebration of the new year, the AUMnibus staff looked back at the Warhawk Squawk responses of 2015. Below are some of our favorites.

April 2015

Q: Spring break is behind us and there are only a few more weeks left in this semester. Some may already be on the right path towards a great GPA, but others need to boost up their grades during the remainder of the school year. This time around, I asked students, "How do you rebound from a setback?"

A: "The first thing that I do is get my thoughts together. I go back to my goals, aspirations and dreams of what I want to accomplish and achieve in my life. I look back at my setback just as a trial to overcome it sooner or later. The next time I get the opportunity to step up. I can look back at that set back and say, 'You are what helped me build up to what I am today. You are the reason why I have reached success, or achieved those goals and aspirations.' That's how I overcome it."

-Makayla Matthews

A: "You have to look and see how you were doing things beforehand, and then you have to make your adjustments. Like with me, I know I need to change my study habits and actually study a bit more to bring my grades up a little higher."

-Charles Heffner III

November 2015

Q: At the end of November, families across America celebrate Thanksgiving. It is a time for giving thanks for all that we have. Students were asked: Do you find irony in Black Friday being the day after Thanksgiving?

A: "I find irony in the fact that Black Friday is the day after Thanksgiving because on Thanksgiving, we are supposed to be reminded of the attitude we should have all year long – one of thankfulness. But the next day is about greed and getting what we want. I think Black Friday takes away from the importance of thankfulness every day, and not just on Thanksgiving."

-Meaghan DePace

Thank you to Jacob Saylor, LaTara Holloway, Holly Watford, Takeisha Jeffers and the students above for helping to bring the AUM community together.

The AUMnibus staff wishes all AUM students and faculty a joyful and prosperous year in 2016.
Happy New Year!

March 2015

Q: This March we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Selma to Montgomery march, a pivotal moment in the civil rights movement and in the history of the United States. What do you think has changed since 1965?

A: "The main thing I think that has changed is the culture in the United States. Back then, the mistreatment of blacks and minorities was common, and it was accepted. But because of the march that day, it really changed the conscience of the country and was able to get the civil rights act moved through."

-Marren Ellis

A: "I think we're kind of gradually heading towards a better direction in terms of equality and fairness. I wouldn't think that there is 'equality' yet. Things could be better, but based on things I've read and heard, that's my interpretation and how I feel. I don't know if that's true or not."

-Andrew Parrish

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