



# Mike Johnson Scholarship Foundation

Helping Good People Do Great Things!

## Annual Scholarship Awarded to Oregon State University College of Forestry

By: Durinda Johnson, Board Co-Vice President



*Left to Right: Brian Johnson, Board Treasurer, Zak Hansen, OSU Foundation representative, Durinda Johnson, Board co-Vice President.*

This year, the Mike Johnson Scholarship Foundation awarded a \$2,000 gift to the College of Forestry at Oregon State University (OSU). On behalf of the Board of Directors I would like to say, we are extremely happy with how this grant was put to good use!

On September 5, 2013, Brian and I had the opportunity to make a trip down to Corvallis and meet with Zak Hansen who represents the College of Forestry at the OSU Foundation. We presented a \$2,000 check with the expectations that the grant would be put toward a good cause within the College of Forestry, whether that be equipment and materials for the college or in the form of a scholarship.

We received word in early October that a \$2,000 scholarship has been awarded to Evan Brown, a native Oregonian and Marine Corps veteran pursuing a Recreation Resource Management degree with a Law Enforcement option. His love of the outdoors and country made him a clear candidate for this award.

We learned that Evan grew up in Corvallis, OR and spent much of his time hiking, camping, hunting and fishing all around the state. After graduating from Corvallis High School in 2004, he attended classes at a local community college but wasn't sure what he wanted to do for a career. After taking some time off from school and working full time, he decided he needed to make a change. He wanted to broaden his horizons and serve his country in the US Marine Corps. His military experience began in 2007 at the age of 21. After completing Boot Camp in San Diego, CA and Ground Communication Repair School at Twenty-Nine Palms, CA, he served as a Radio Repair Technician at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, NC. Evan says he learned many important skills and values while serving in the military, such as personal responsibility, the importance of team work and taking the initiative to go beyond the expectations of his superiors. His service ended in 2011 and he returned to his hometown of Corvallis with his wife and son. His hope is in that through a career in Recreation Resource Management, he will be able to ensure that present and future generations have the same opportunities to enjoy our public lands as he did. Upon degree completion he plans to seek out a permanent Park Ranger position within Oregon.

The Mike Johnson Scholarship Foundation is thrilled with the OSU Foundation's decision to put this gift toward such a deserving and hardworking candidate. We wish Evan and his family the best of luck throughout his educational and professional career.

# Running Wild: A story of an accepted challenge and an enduring spirit

By Dan Johnson, Board Co-Vice President

As the spring carried into summer I found myself running outside more and venturing to new spots to explore around my recently established niche, Portland, Oregon. I quickly found Forest Park and more specifically Wildwood Trail. For those that don't know, this glorious trail runs from Washington Park, on the outskirts of downtown Portland to just over 30 miles northwest of the city. I became obsessed with running different lengths and multiple sections of the trail. I found that city running could not hold a candle to the challenges that Wildwood provided. High stepping over large rocks, jumping over logs and roots, and pushing mile plus hill climbs was much more to my liking than



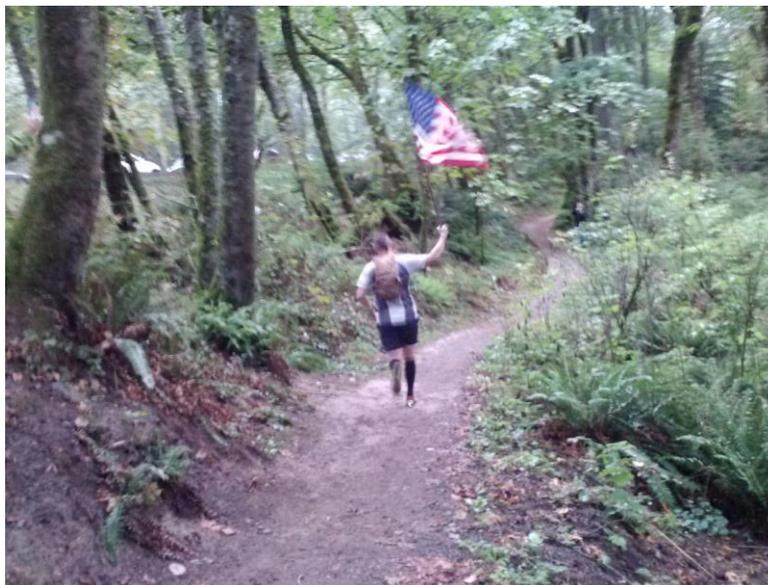
Shoulder-checking the vagrants that wander aimlessly through the downtown area (although that had its perks). I would set out for runs (nothing long, about 4-7 miles each), fall into a slightly uncomfortable pace, and let my mind free-flow about anything and everything. As most runners know there is an absurdly wide, random, and weird spectrum of thoughts that go through your head while trail running. For me it varies from my fiancé, family, friends, God, work, the unfortunate correlation of increasing age and decreasing metabolic rate, the heart burn that that cup of coffee is now giving me, minimizing my heel striking, a medium rare rib eye steak, snot rockets, etc. This could go on for days... but what has always taken up a majority of my thoughts in life and especially when running through natural areas, was Mike. I constantly wished he was able to be there running beside me and a lot of times I would imagine that I was leading the run with him on my heels. I would ask myself, besides daily actions, how could I honor Mike? How could I relay the extreme quality of man that he was? How could I be a contributing member to Mike Johnson Scholarship Foundation and help continue the legacy, that at only 25 years old, Mike was able to achieve?

While running the trail in mid-July, as numerous ideas and fundraising thoughts went through my head, I finally came upon one that I thought just might work. It was either going to be epic or an epic fail... I liked my chances. Ever since the time of Roman Gladiators, around 200 BC, all the way to present day hockey games where fights break out, people have paid money to watch victory and/or struggling for entertainment. (I'm not saying I'm a gladiator... Those are your words, not mine). I decided that maybe this concept of pushing limits, combined with no overhead by using a public park, and throwing in pride for my country would be a great way to raise money for an outstanding foundation. I would bring my friends and family a story of struggle along a journey and hopefully triumph. After some research, I found a website called [activegiving.com](http://activegiving.com) and started plotting the best way to structure this journey that would hopefully lead to solid fundraising, the betterment of already great people and ultimately the betterment of the world. While I'm leaving out a good part of the introduction, the below article is how I proposed to do my part for the MJSF:

*CARPE DIEM! This was a motto that Mike lived his life by and this is a motto that I plan on fundraising by. That being said.... On September 15th at 9am I pledge to run one mile for every 100 dollars donated to the Mike Johnson Scholarship Foundation. My goal is to raise 2,500 dollars. I'm putting a cap on the miles at 20 and if I get to my goal of 2,500 I'll be running the trails with a 3x5ft American flag on a wooden dowel. So, if my math is correct, you can potentially have me running 20 miles while carrying an American Flag for the better part of that morning! So what do you get out of this? The satisfaction of donating to a great charity (that also happens to be a tax write off) and the pleasure of knowing that because of your donation I've got to run that much further in the largest urban recreational area in the United States (about 70 total miles worth of trails).*

## Running Wild: A story of an accepted challenge (Continued)

Going into the run I knew it was going to be mentally and physically tough and I didn't think my training was where it should have been. But alas, the day was upon me and it was time to "suit up!" I arrived at the designated start line at mile 10 of Wildwood trail where I would continue northwest over peaks and into valleys. Zig zagging my way to the finish at mile 30 over a grueling 20 mile course. I had planned out two check points before the finish that were easily accessible to spectators and supporters that were helping me with aid stations enabling me to replenish fluids and nutrients. I was greeted at the starting line by a group of amazingly enthusiastic family and friends. Lots of pictures were taken



*Dan Johnson, Board co-Vice President, enduring thunder, quad cramps on the last leg at Wildwood Trail*

and I was even pumped up by a choreographed cheer captained by my Mom, her sisters Cindy, Melodie and Ann, and my fiancé Natalie. After lots of awesome positive support I got the count down and I was off. Falling into my pace I was feeling great! Around mile 5 or 6 I was realizing that the drag being created by the flag was much more fatiguing than I anticipated and my perceived rate of exertion forced me into a slower pace than I had planned. However, coming into aid station 1 at mile 9 I was still feeling fresh. I was greeted before the first aid station by Dustin (Durinda's fiancé) and Brody (their golden retriever) and was glad to have an escort down to the remainder of the team where my support manager (aka my fiancé) had a fresh shirt and replacement fuel waiting for me. Cindy and Durinda provided me with smiles and laughs and I was off again. It turned out the second leg was going to have some surprises in store for me. Along this stretch I received all elements of weather that an Oregon September could provide. Amidst the rain, high wind gusts, and thunder I was also blessed with fairly severe quad cramping. At this point all I could do was smile because I could picture Mike looking down on me, pointing, laughing and with a big grin saying "you didn't think I was going to make this easy did you?" I kept pushing forward, mainly because it would be silly to turn around at this point. When I reached aid station 2 at mile 15 I couldn't be happier to see everyone. I was also wondering to myself, "What the Hell were you thinking?... This would have been the perfect place to end the run... But noooo, you had to go with 20 miles didn't you? Idiot." But what I said out loud was "Let's role chaps... CARPE DIEM!" Then I was off on my last leg of quad cramps and walk/slow-run intervals through what turned out to be a harder leg, terrain wise, than I had planned for. Finally, I was blessed by a small crowd of rogue supporters to push me for the last mile. Hearing the rest of the teams yell from the top of the hill, aka the finish line, I dug deep and let out one final "LET'S DO THIS!" as I sprinted to the top. They had set up a red, white and blue finish tape for me to cut through, and cut I did.

Crossing that tape was one of the best feelings of the year and as per usual we (Natalie, Claudia, Durinda, Dustin, Greg, Ann, Cindy, Melodie, Cole, Monique, and Hudson) celebrated with a frosty NW Microbrew. I know I could not have done it without my outstanding support team, all the amazing contributors, and the other guy that ran the 20 miles with me... Mike.

Thank you so much to everyone who donated! Because of you we surpassed my goal of \$2,500 and the Mike Johnson Scholarship Foundation raised \$3,350! God Bless America, the men and women of the armed forces and our fallen heroes/loved ones.... CARPE DIEM!

# Captain Will Swenson Receives Medal of Honor at White House Ceremony

By, Steve Johnson, Board President



On October 18<sup>th</sup> 2013 my family and I were invited to attend Capt. William Swenson's long overdue Medal of Honor ceremony at the White House. The memorable day started off with a police escorted motorcade from a hotel in Arlington, Virginia to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. This gave us a brief glimpse at how it must feel to travel like the president. No traffic or stoplights and everyone wants to take your picture.

When we arrived at the White House we had to go through a series of security check points totaling at least five prior to entering. Upon entry we had a brief reception where they were serving wine, beer, and water to the guests. As I looked around the room at all the high ranking officials, people that I had regularly seen on TV it started to sink in on how prestigious this ceremony would be.

After chatting with some familiar Marines for a bit we were ushered into the ceremony room. As we entered the room I noticed all the Gold Star families had reserved seats at the front with our names on each chair. I thought that was a very nice gesture. Shortly after we sat down they announced the Vice President and as soon as Joe Biden took his seat, the familiar song "Hail to the Chief" started playing, everyone stood up and the President, Will Swenson, and the First Lady entered the room. The President with Capt. Swenson at his side took to the podium and spoke about the mission 4 years ago, the Battle, and the heroic actions performed by so many during one of the most intense battles of the Afghan War. Capt. Swenson courageously led troops through a seven-hour firefight traversing the "kill zone" four times to rescue the wounded and search for my brother and his fellow soldiers.

This was only the second in history where two soldiers from the same battle received the Military's highest honor. Marine Dakota Meyer received his Medal 2 years earlier for his actions during the battle. The most memorable part of the ceremony for me was when Will dedicated the Medal of Honor to all the soldiers that lost their lives that day. You could see on his face how emotionally attached he was to each one of those heroic young men that gave everything. After the ceremony concluded my family and I were invited to a smaller room near the front of the White House. As we walked in the room awaiting us was the President, First Lady and Will Swenson.

*(Continued on next page)*



## Capt. Will Swenson Receives Medal of Honor at White House Ceremony, (Continued)

We had a chance to meet and talk with them for a short period of time. I got to personally thank Will for trying so hard to help my brother and his men. The President and First Lady gave each family member a heartfelt hug and offered their condolences. The President was very personable and thought it was cool that I was a nuclear inspector. Michelle Obama was sweet and said for us to make ourselves at home and stay as long as we'd like. Which I found out a couple hours later wasn't true because we were told very nicely that it was time to leave. After the meet and greet with the President we joined the rest of the attendees at the reception where they served up some delicious food. At that time we had a chance to talk to a few Marines that had served with Mike that I have gotten to know over the last 4 years. The best part about these events that we have been to over the years is to hear new stories about Mike. Mostly funny or fitness related but always positive and it just reminds me of how lucky I was to have spent so much of my life with such an amazing person and brother. Those memories will never be forgotten.. With our bellies full and bodies emotionally drained we got back on the shuttle and headed back to the Hotel. It definitely was one of those special days, the ones that you will carry with you, and never forget for the rest of your life. My family and I found comfort in knowing that Mike fought alongside men like Will, men that would risk everything to ensure no one is left behind. Thanks Capt. Swenson you are a true Hero!

## The 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Mike Johnson Scholarship Foundation Peninsula Pig Party

*By, Brian Johnson, Board Treasurer*

Every year, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday after Labor Day, we hold the "Mike Johnson Scholarship Foundation – Peninsula Pig Party." With this event we celebrate Mike's life with live music, games, raffles and a tasty pig roasted by our friends at Bourbon Street Bar & Grill in the Clarion Hotel at Williamsburg, VA.

This year was our best ever. Local businesses and individual donors came through big time, donating almost \$4,000 in goods and services. Brandon Wilson brought his band and provided great music all night long and the weather was perfect, as it usually is this time of year in southeastern Virginia.



### Party Pics!

(Left) Early in the evening Brandon Wilson warmed up the crowd with a mix of original music and cover songs. (Below right), FM99 donated this statue and more through the Hero of the Week Program



(Above) Over 100 items were put together for the auction! This was the ultimate outdoorsman package with backpacking gear.

We want to say a huge THANK YOU! To everyone who showed up to support us, and for those who missed it, we hope to see you next year! Carpe Diem – Semper Fi!

# Celebrating America and Fitness on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July

*By Molly Gray, Board Public Relations*



For the greater part of my childhood, I spent my Saturday mornings on lush green grass on soccer fields in the suburbs of East Portland. I quickly learned that playing on an absolutely horrible team meant that I would run a lot. As a right mid-fielder, I learned that the defenders and forwards relied on me to run back and forth to help both of their lines. My ability to run for 90 minutes on a drizzly, overcast morning came as easily to me as telling a long-winded story with a disappointing ending. I was a natural endurance runner.

My love for running might have started within a little 7 year old girl, but it fueled with age. By the time I was 23 I decided it was time to sign up for a marathon. On March 30<sup>th</sup>, I called Mike to wish him a happy birthday, and told him I was signing up for a marathon. With enthusiasm in his voice, he said that he and Durinda were going to run one too! For several months we swapped training plans, sob stories and accomplishments. The day before my race, Mike and Durinda called to wish me well and took turns singing their well wishes. I was polite and thanked them, but thought they'd better focus on running, as neither of them had a chance at becoming a chart-topping pop star. Ultimately, we both ran our races and praised each other for our victorious 26.2 miles.

Six years later, Steve, Emily and I sat around their dining room table and brainstormed ideas on how we could honor Mike on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. We realized that there wasn't any sort of "annual" 4<sup>th</sup> of July run at the Oceanfront, and quickly took advantage of the situation. We invited family and friends to bring a flag to run or walk with to show support for America the Beautiful. While most events we organize through the foundation are to raise funds, this one was simply to gather. With a community of proud Americans, runners and foundation friends our goal was to build community and spend some time outdoors engaged in a physical activity that Mike would be proud of, in this case it was a 5k (3.1 mile) run on the boardwalk. Steve addressed the group of red, white and blue clad runners and reminded us all that it was America's birthday and that we had our heroes to thank for our freedom. We approached the starting line at 31<sup>st</sup> street and with a push of a button on an air horn we commenced the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Flag Run! We dominated the boardwalk with people of all paces and abilities. Adults, kids and pets came out to show support for this great event. While the weather was absolutely hot and humid, I couldn't help but look at the waves crashing on the shore thinking, "Mike would be so happy that so many people came out for this."

Since running in the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Flag Run, I have continued to run around neighborhoods of Virginia Beach. One section in particular is more meaningful than any other spot. When I run by Ocean Lakes Elementary School, I remember all of the school children lined up along the fence saluting us during the funeral procession to the Dam Neck military base. It is impossible to run by that fence and not think about that day. Whenever I run by, I know he's running with me. At the Flag Run I knew he was with us and the wind was just him waving a flag above us.