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June 22, 2007

## Why They Inspire

by Ken Embly, Dir. Outreach Services, CPPA

"Why They Inspire," the USA TODAY May 29, 2007 cover story, got me thinking— "They" are each of us regular folk when we are in the service of others and in pursuit of a valued vision of success.

The story by Wendy Koch begins "They changed us. They inspired us to do better, be braver. They make us think. They give us hope."

They did what many cannot fathom. One gave up riches as a football star to fight and die for his country (Pat Tillman). Another won the Tour de France seven consecutive times after chemotherapy and brain surgery (Lance Armstrong). Another emerged not bitter or broken after 27 years in prison for fighting racism, but determined to find peace (Nelson Mandela).



They are among 25 people who moved us during the past quarter-century, as selected by the staff of USA TODAY. Many have been famous and influential, but others were regular folks with private lives. One remains anonymous: the lone man who faced a column of tanks during pro-democracy protests in China's Tiananmen Square in 1989.

It seems to me that each of us "regular folk with private lives" can inspire people when we are in the service of others and in pursuit of a valued vision of success. My good friend Dennis is a baseball man. His service is to provide the opportunity for youth to play the game and his vision is for players to have a competitive, yet positive, baseball experience ([www.rmsb.com](http://www.rmsb.com)). Dennis is just "regular folk" but he is a man who inspires people and does so because he is in the service of others and in pursuit of a valued vision of success.

Last summer, Dennis asked me to help at a baseball tournament. As I recall, this was a typical tournament with over 200 teams from the Intermountain Area with players ranging in age groups from eight to eighteen. As usual, every player and every parent had dreams of "walk-off" hits, complete game shutouts, trophies and winning smiles.

However, as we all know, sometimes reality gets in the way of dreams. As is typical with reality, the dreams of success dash when a strike out produces batter frustration, a bad hop results in a bloody nose, and parents begin to describe umpire judgment calls in terms clearly understood by a military drill instructor yet somewhat foreign to most the grandmas in the crowd. Sad to say, but reality for this tournament also had a game where parents on competing teams engaged in fisticuffs. Dennis was devastated.

The day after the fisticuffs event, I was at Wendy's in Heber City jamming the drive-up line buying umpire lunches: thirty junior cheeseburgers, ten orders of fries, all packaged into ten separate take-out bags. As I pulled forward, to the relief of people in line, I noticed Dennis sitting in his truck. I stopped and as I approached I could see that he was oblivious to his surroundings. He seemed a little vulnerable, yet determined—not unlike the look of an eight-year-old batter at the plate with two strikes. I knocked on the window. Dennis hesitated—I am not sure he realized I was there. Another knock and he looked up; the air

conditioning breezed by my face as he lowered the automatic window. We greeted each other in a manner fit for the occasion; neither of us said a word.

Dennis, chewing on a toothpick and looking at nothing in particular wondered aloud, saying something like "Is it worth it?" an obvious reference to out-of-control parents. Silence again filled the cab of his truck, yet spoke volumes about the condition of youth baseball and the threat to his vision.

He slowly turned to me and the look in his eyes told the story. The look was simple but profoundly laced with resolve and determination—the look in his eyes was inspiring! I knew without a doubt that youth baseball was safe with Dennis leading the way. Dennis mumbled, "Got to go—thanks."

People who inspire change us. They inspire us to do better, be brave. They make us think. They give us hope. There is something else, people who inspire are just "regular folk," they are people like Dennis; they are people like you and I. What makes us "regular folk" inspire others? It is when we are truly in the service of others and in pursuit of a valued vision of success.

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