

the chronicle

FEBRUARY

Your only weekly community newspaper serving the communities of Portage, Valparaiso, Chesterton and Hobart

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Inside this week

Erwin Bircher: A YMCA Legend

by Mike Siroky

Chances are, if you have attended any sporting event at the Hobart YMCA that includes the use of a ball and running around, you have seen the legendary Erwin Bircher. For the seasons of basketball and soccer, indoor and out, Bircher is the main referee. He is the guy who will stop a game in mid-flight to explain the rules or to help a little one learn positioning on the field or on the court, to gently let everyone – including parents – know that a game is not a game without rules and sportsmanship. “And I still do a little baseball,” he said. “And I have done 16-inch mushball and softball.” In his active playing years, he was a hardball phenomenon.



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February is American Heart Month

by Mike Siroky



About every 25 seconds, an American will have a coronary event, and about one every minute will die from one. Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States and is a major cause of disability. The most common heart disease in the United States is coronary heart disease, which often appears as a heart attack. In 2010, an estimated 785,000 Americans had a new coronary attack, and about 470,000 had a recurrent attack. The chance of developing coronary heart disease can be reduced by taking steps to prevent and control factors that put people at greater risk. Additionally, knowing the signs and symptoms of heart attack are crucial to the most positive outcomes after having a heart attack.

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Along the road of life

Hobart cancer survivor shares his journey

by Mike Siroky

It is a simple sign on one of the main streets in Hobart. “Cancer Free. Honk” And the people driving by honk in appreciation of a survivor. And so the story continues. It starts with John Unrue. He was well along in his carpentry career, “Just something I got into,” he said. “Any kind of wood work. Floors, frames, anything.” A little more than a year ago, he had diverticulitis, which is a rather common ailment affecting the large intestine. There is pain, maybe bloating and maybe vomiting. Pouches (diverticula) form on the outside of the colon. Diverticulitis results if one of these diverticula becomes inflamed. Then there is nausea, cramps and basic pain on the left side of the abdomen. Doctors run a Computed Tomography. We all know it as a CT scan. While looking at the colon to assign a cure, Unrue found out he had colon cancer. And liver cancer. So the search for a common ailment turned up a more-dangerous, if not uncommon one. “Hobart has very good doctors and a very good hospital,” he observed about his hometown. “They did the surgery and got it.” They also got 14 inches of colon and part of his liver. “The growth on my liver was about the size of a hardball, a little bigger than a golf ball,” he said. The liver can regenerate itself – “It’s the only organ that can,” Unrue said – and so that was another doable part of the journey. It did not start as well as he would have liked. There he was early on, in a hospital room with his sisters, wife Leslie and a young niece.



“This doctor walked in and said, ‘You have cancer.’ And then he just walked out,” Unrue said. “My wife and sisters started crying. My little niece started crying. I think he could’ve waited until we were alone.” But Unrue was finding himself to be quite a fighter, able to roll with the punches, and he overcame that insensitivity. He also overcame using a colostomy bag to help process his waste. That lasted a year. In fact, the reverse colostomy was just performed this month, which meant he could lose the bag. “Another victory, a big one for me,” he said. He also did chemotherapy for the past eight

John and Leslie Unrue found great comfort in friends and families in his successful cancer fight.

months, every other week. And that is when he noticed more changes. He would see younger patients in the chemo waiting rooms and find himself trying to comfort them. “There was this one young girl; I tried to sit next to her and tell it’s alright, it’s going to be Ok,” he said. No one knows, of course. But Unrue was finding out more than he ever imagined. The operations inside his body had begun to change his outsides as well. “There are so many kinds of cancers,” he said. Like many patients, he became a voracious reader of all things cancerous. “Blood cancer, brain cancers, cancers on every part of the body. I couldn’t have imagined,” he said. A lifetime carpenter, Unrue works at Four Winds Casino. A good friend at work, Jack Nix, stepped up. “He’s the lead carpenter at Four Winds,” Unrue said.

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Gourmet does not always mean fattening

Newest upscale import combines healthy and tasty

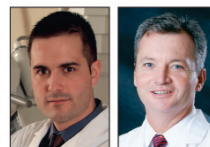
Whenever people use the term gourmet, we always tend to think of rich, fattening foods – the kind that we will pay dearly for both with our wallets and our waistlines. But Jan Meyer, a purveyor of fine food and CEO of New Zealand’s Rutherford & Meyer which is a maker of gourmet fruit products, believes that gourmet should not necessarily mean unhealthy. “Gourmet foods are traditionally well-prepared foods made for a refined palette,” Meyer said. “But today, people are trying to eat healthier, which means in many cases they have to turn their back on the finer foods they’ve grown accustomed to enjoying. I think that’s sad. That’s why we believe in approaching gourmet sweet treats and cooking with fruit in a different way that’s more fun, affordable and natural.” Meyer’s company has created a whole new category of gourmet



fruit product called “fruit paste,” which is essentially a combination of all natural fruits and sugar that can be sliced like a wedge of cheese. The fruit pastes are wheat free, gluten free, dairy free and contain no added colors or preservatives, which is important to Meyer. “One of the hassles of entertaining guests is being able to put something on the table that everyone can enjoy,” she said. “With all those who are either lactose intolerant or have allergies to gluten or nuts, putting together a party platter can be an exercise in bland. Our fruit pastes are all natural and don’t contain dairy, nuts, wheat or gluten, so you can put them on the serving tray with a clear conscience, knowing that everyone will be able to enjoy them.” What’s more, according to Meyer, is that they are as fun to serve with cheese as they are to use when cooking. “Fruit pastes are the perfect accompaniment to cheese, because their flavors are a perfect foil for most cheeses, and they are easy to serve,” she said. “They make a wonderful addition to any cheeseboard or antipasto selection. They can also be used in cooking and make a flavorful addition in many recipes.”

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Anthony Levenda, MD David Musgrave, MD

Hip or Knee Pain? Let’s talk.

Learn about common causes of hip and knee pain as well as the latest treatment options from two of the region’s leading orthopedic surgeons.

When: Saturday, March 12, 9 – 10:30 a.m.

Where: Porter Education and Rehabilitation Campus Classrooms A & B 1401 Calumet Ave. • Valparaiso, IN

Questions?
Call 219-263-4971

The Joint Center

