

Sports

‘Nothing really is impossible’



Kacey McCallister plays with his daughter Anna, 9, at their home in Monmouth on June 20. McCallister, a double amputee, competes in marathons, Spartan races and is a motivational speaker. PHOTOS BY ANNA REED/STATESMAN JOURNAL

Double amputee Kacey McCallister continues to inspire through obstacle course races, marathons

Gary Horowitz Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

MONMOUTH – Kacey McCallister rarely finds a challenge he can't conquer.

Whether it's building a backyard playground for his children, installing new gutters, replacing the siding on the house, remodeling the kitchen or transforming the shed into a home office, McCallister finds a way to get it done.

He also finds time to compete in Spartan Races, a series of obstacle races of varying distances and difficulty. The courses, which range from the Spartan Sprint (4 to 5 miles) to the Spartan Super (8 to 9 miles) to the Spartan Beast (13 to 16 miles), include climbing up a cargo netting, rope climbs and a fire jump.

McCallister, 31, plans to compete in a Spartan Sprint on Saturday in Boise, Idaho.

"None of them are easy for me," he said with a smile.

Double amputee

They wouldn't be easy for anyone, but when you factor in that McCallister is a double amputee, his accomplishments as a handyman and athlete – he walks/runs on his hands and knuckles – border on incredible.

But McCallister doesn't view it that way. He simply learned to adapt.

"I look at things as either I can do 'em, or it's just something I haven't done yet," McCallister said.

"It's just about my attitude and how I look at it. Nothing really is impossible."

Well, almost nothing.

When you're 3-foot-1 and 140 pounds – McCallister estimates that he would be approximately 6-3 with legs based on his reach, and the height of his brothers – some career paths are blocked.

"He realized he couldn't be a bronc rider, that was his only thing. He wanted to do that," said Jennifer McCallister, Kacey's wife of 10 years.

"Other than that he's like, 'I can do anything.' That's been his mentality."

McCallister views not having legs as "a gift" because it provided him a platform to help other people overcome their challenges.

Life-changing accident

McCallister spent the early part of his childhood in Kemmerer, Wyoming.

On a family vacation in Roosevelt, Utah, at the age of 6, he ran across a divided highway and was struck by an 18-wheel semi-truck. His left leg was ripped off at the scene and the right leg was amputated a short time later. He was lucky to survive.

McCallister has little memory of the accident.

"For a while I remembered a white flash, that's about all I remember," he said. "I don't remember the pain."

Adjusting to life with a disability was a matter of trial and error.

"When I left the hospital the doctor told my parents, 'Don't do stuff for him, he needs to do anything that your other kids are doing,'" McCallister said.

"So I had to do all the chores they made everybody else do. I had to figure out how to do the dishes. I got wet a lot. I had to mow the lawn. I had to do the



Kacey McCallister and his wife Jennifer with their kids Jack, 4, from left, Patrick, 7, Alex, 8, Anna, 9, and Declan, 1, at their home in Monmouth.

laundry. I had to do everything. I had to figure out a different way to do it."

The family moved to Keizer when McCallister was 8 and he went on to become a three-sport athlete at McNary High School, competing in cross country, track and field, and wrestling.

In wrestling he was state runner-up at 103 pounds as a senior in 2004, and was inducted into the Oregon Chapter of the National Wrestling Hall of Fame in 2011.

A partnership begins

During high school McCallister met Jennifer Sullivan, who competed in cross country at North Salem.

They'd run into each other at cross country meets and church functions, and became friends at an LDS mission training center in Provo, Utah, before embarking on 2-year missions. Kacey was based primarily in Tucson, Arizona, and Jennifer was sent to Costa Rica.

They stayed in touch by writing letters to each other during their missions, and began dating when they returned

home. Five children, three dogs and a cat later, life is bustling at the McCallister household.

Jennifer never thought about Kacey in terms of his disability.

"He can do more stuff than I can," she said. "I'm like, 'Hon, do this for me' and he does it. He's not afraid to do anything."

When Jennifer was eight-months pregnant with their youngest child Declan, who is now 1½, the couple adopted a 6-year old boy from Ukraine. Alex, 8, is blind and has cerebral palsy.

"We saw his picture and felt like he really needed a family," Jennifer said.

Jennifer runs the household when Kacey is on the road competing, or busy with his main job as a motivational speaker. He's also co-director of World Wheelchair Sports based in Eugene.

Motivational speaker

Because McCallister spent most of his life overcoming obstacles, becoming

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Sunnyside Park near Foster is worth a stop



Fishing
Henry Miller
Guest columnist

Truth be told, the discovery of Sunnyside Park on the eastern edge of Foster Reservoir was quite by accident.

A decade and change ago, I was en route to Green Peter Reservoir for a story when I saw the sign on the entrance road to the Linn County Parks recreation site off Quartzville Road and decided to stop.

Well whaddaya know?

I'd seen "Sunnyside Park Pond" listed on the Oregon Department of Fish and

Wildlife trout-stocking schedule for years, but didn't think to check it out.

The first thing you notice is size-wise, Sunnyside is a whopper at 98 acres, according to the web page on the Linn County Parks (https://linn-parks.com/parks/sunnyside/)

The next thing is that it's the full-meal deal with everything from a boat ramp, rental moorages and campsites ranging from RV hookup to tent down to an enclosed, off-leash dog park, playground and reservable group picnic site with shelter.

For online reservations (\$12 non-refundable fee), go to <http://travel.linn-parks.org/Campgrounds-and-RV-Parks/All/Sunnyside-County-Park/Reservations>

Trout stocking at the aforementioned pond happens about a half-dozen times from about late February through around Memorial Day weekend, after which the warming water temperatures and weeds put the brakes on deliveries.

But fish such as bass, yellow perch and kokanee are available in Foster Reservoir, and trout stocking runs April and May. Note that only kokanee and fin-clipped rainbow trout can be kept.

The boat-ramp access is open year-round, although it's mostly for bank access during the low-water draw-down. And the fishing can be pretty good, and definitely less crowded, in the off-season.

Most sunny summer weekends, Sunnyside Park is a beehive. Holiday week-

ends? A swarm.

But you can find a spot most week-days at one of the first-come, first-serve campsites.

And the playground equipment makes it fun for kids.

Sunnyside also appeals because it's a good base camp for other recreational opportunities such as fishing at Green Peter Reservoir or on the South Santiam River below Foster Dam.

Then there is Lewis Creek County Park, another Linn County gem on the north side of Foster Reservoir.

From Quartzville Road, turn on to North River Road (turn at the Fish Hatchery sign) and watch for the park

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