

Overcoming the impossible

FORMER CCC WRESTLER HAS BEEN ABLE TO FIGHT ADDICTION, NOW SHARES STORY OF SUCCESS

photos contributed by Be a Champion In Life



Richard Jensen visits a school in New York to share his story and interact with students.



Jensen speaks in front of the students for Be a Champion in Life.

BY DOUG FRY

Richard Jensen may not be a name that you will remember, but once you know his story you will remember it forever.

Jensen grew up in a home with a good family, values and morals. At a young age, he began wrestling and from there it would stick with him for life.

"I was very hyperactive, had a tough time paying attention, very distracted and when I found wrestling, it was like medicine," said Jensen.

After graduating high school Jensen left to go fishing in Alaska. Troubles came about when the lack of structure, wrestling, left his life. He was exposed to the world, in an environment with drugs and alcoholism. The lifestyle on and off the boats was work hard, play hard.

"It really beat me up fast," said Jensen. "It took me to that place where things were real foggy. I got just enough off track that I couldn't quite get back on track and go to college."

After being caught in the lifestyle, Jensen describes the struggle with addiction as something that evolved and slowly took the life out of him. Addiction

took away his dreams, his visions and his aspirations, making everyday life much more difficult.

Over a 15 year period, Jensen found himself in and out of prison and separated from his family. When in jail, Jensen was constantly thinking about wrestling, knowing how it helped him stay on track. After trying treatment over five times, Jensen never found any luck.

In 2003, after being at the lowest point in his life, Jensen found himself in the Oregon State Penitentiary. Shortly after being in prison Jensen learned that his mother had cancer. After a month into his sentence, he heard the news of his mother passing.

"I believe she's watching me, but if I could sit down and have her for a minute, that would be incredibly awesome," said Jensen. "I would say I'm sorry for putting her through those nights of worrying and thank her for my upbringing."

Jensen was released from prison in 2004 and knew that if he could have wrestling in his life again, he would have a chance at sobriety. In 2006, Jensen knew that

he wanted to be part of a team again, he found that team at Clackamas Community College.

"I didn't expect to win a lot of matches," said Jensen. "The goal wasn't to get my hand raised. It was to win my life back. It was much bigger than a wrestling match."

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Jensen talked with former athletic director, Jim Jackson, about joining the team and learned how difficult it would be to make the team at age 36. Knowing

that this had to be done, Jensen accepted all feats that would follow. In 2006-07, current wrestling coach Josh Rhoden was in his first season as head coach at Clackamas and recalled the first meeting of the season.

"The mood was instantly lightened in our first team meeting when he walked into Randall 101 ahead of me, the 26-year-old 'new coach,' and he was asked, 'Are you the new coach?' Richard, 10 years my senior, says, 'No I'm here to try out for wrestling,'" said Rhoden.

Not only is it difficult to make a college wrestling team, but doing it on a Top-10 nationally ranked team and at the age of 36 with limited physical activity for 15 years, it is nearly impossible. In his first season, Jensen struggled to find wins, but after a long offseason he came back in the best shape of his life, winning more matches in the first tournament of his second season than he did all of his first season.

"You get a few windows of opportunity in your life and this was mine," said Jensen. "I needed to compete on the mat