

Tri-State man urges disabled to be active

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HUNTINGTON — Dick Traum wants to see more disabled people in the Tri-State running.

That's why Traum, founder of the Achilles Track Club that assists disabled runners, announced Tuesday that he is starting a chapter in Huntington.

"We have nothing in West Virginia," Traum, 64, said. "Plus, there are a lot of students in this area with various disabilities."

Traum, who spoke Tuesday at Marshall University as part of DisAbilities Week, lost his right leg after a car accident when he was 24. Traum began running to stay in shape after the accident and, in 1976, he became the first amputee to complete the New York City Marathon. He formed the Achilles Track Club in 1983.

"I was on the board of the New York Road Runners Club," Traum said. "I



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Dick Traum speaks Tuesday at Marshall University as part of DisAbilities Week.

just felt that one of the things we should have done is expand to include people with disabilities."

Sandra Clement, coordinator of disabled student services at Marshall, said the track club for people

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with disabilities will be an asset to the area and for students. She said students with disabilities often don't participate in athletic events because there is no one who looks like them.

"I think that having this club will be a good place for people with disabilities to socialize," Clements said. "Right now, we don't have anything like that on campus."

Clements said she is curious to see how students will take the new club.

"It all depends on how it's marketed," Clements said. "If nothing else, it will give our disabled students a group of people to work out with."

Paul Sloane, executive director of the Cabell-Wayne Association for the Blind, said the club will benefit everyone in the area with a disability. He said people tend to forget about the blind when they talk about people with disabilities.

The club "will be a welcomed addition," Sloane said. "Maybe there will be some participation from the visually impaired."

Sloane said his agency has hosted

a 5K Run for Sight for the last two years. He said he is looking forward to the establishment of the track club for the disabled because it could increase participation in their race. He said those in the blind community will make use of the club.

"They always like to join in a lot of functions and activities," Sloane said. "This will just be another option for them."

Clements said the university has held DisAbilities Week off and on for the last 15 years.

"We try to do something every year," Clements said. "We try to get speakers in and hold different programs for people to attend."

Clements said she is happy Marshall's faculty and staff are more knowledgeable about disabled students.

"Since I have been here, I've noticed that a lot of professors do try to assist their students as much as possible," Clements said. "Most of the faculty bend over backward to accommodate our disabled students."

Traum said he is excited about bringing his club to West Virginia. He said he hopes there will be some state representation in the New York 5K Marathon for the disabled.

"I want to get five people from it to run in New York in June," he said.

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