



WOUNDED WARRIOR WEEKEND

On August 4th the Union League Club hosted a group of young servicemen and women wounded in Afghanistan and Iraq who came to New York to participate in a five-mile road race staged by the Achilles Track Club. The participants, most of who were single and double amputees, were primarily from Walter Reed Army Medical Center. Our involvement with the program grew out of our relationship with the Soldiers', Sailors', Marines' & Airmen's Club (SSMAC) which has been serving the men and women of the Armed Forces since 1919. SSMAC hosted a group from Walter Reed for the NYC Marathon last year and found themselves unable to accommodate the demand. They asked if we could spare ten rooms and we were happy to do so. The Board of Governors then authorized a complete laying out of the welcome mat for the August event.



High fives after the race



The USO troupe serenades FDNY volunteers at dinner in Lincoln Hall

We provided a hospitality suite and buffet dinner on Friday evening, thirty-two rooms for the soldiers and their family members through the weekend, and a gala dinner on Saturday night complete with a performance by the New York City USO Troupe.

There are not words to describe the overwhelming sense of gratitude, indebtedness and respect that one feels when surrounded by these young men and women.

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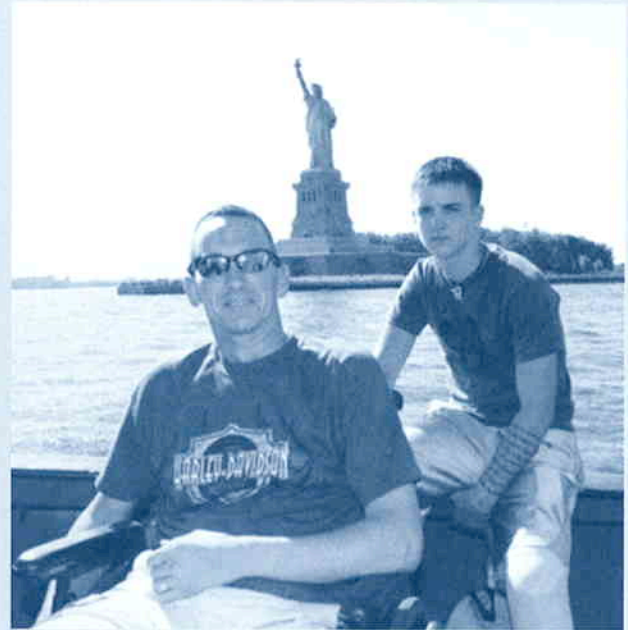
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The ULC staff did a remarkable job of catering to the unique needs of our guests. While some of the participants have attained marathon-level fitness since their injuries, the group also included some with recent trauma, like the 19-year-old soldier who lost an arm during the first week of July. The common thread running through this very diverse group of young people was an unwillingness to let their injuries slow them down.

The SSMAC organized a full weekend of activities and called on an extraordinary group of volunteers from



Rolling to a fast finish in Central Park



Aboard the fire boat at the Statue of Liberty

FDNY for assistance with logistics. The SSMAC clubhouse at 37th and Lexington has no elevator, so a squad of New York firemen stood by there throughout the weekend to carry wheelchairs up and down three flights of stairs. FDNY, though Chief Dan Daly, also provided transportation all weekend to move the group around town.

The weekend included a private sunset viewing from the observation deck of the Empire State Building, a trip to the Statue of Liberty by fireboat, and of course a Sunday morning five mile race in Central Park. We served as home base for the troops and for the FDNY volunteers throughout.

We will continue our involvement with the SSMAC and the Achilles Track Club in November when another contingent comes up from Walter Reed to participate in the 2006 New York City Marathon.