



The Arc
XXXVII
Boilermaker
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Charity Bib Runner Vincent Femia



Vincent Femia, 29, resides with his parents, Patricia and David in New Hartford, NY. He is currently employed by *Progress Industries*, assembling and packaging products as part of a vocational program offered by the The Arc, Oneida-Lewis Chapter.

Vincent's progress during his first year of life was normal in regard to early milestone development, including smiling in the first few weeks, rolling over at six months, sitting alone at seven months and walking by one year. At that time he had a working vocabulary of around 20 words along with appropriate names for familiar faces. By 18 months we noticed he stopped acquiring new words and began a vocabulary regression resulting in the loss of all language. He remains entirely non-verbal to this day.

At the age of two Vincent was examined by a local pediatric neurologist and was diagnosed as "*developmentally delayed with autistic tendencies*". A subsequent work-up by an international group of neurologists at the Harvard Medical School confirmed this finding and concluded Vincent's pathology was "*autism of unknown etiology*".

After the initial, numbing shock of learning that you are a parent of a disabled child, you are thrust into a new world of sensitivity. You find many common words and their meaning take on new significance. In particular, the word *special* becomes, well..., *special*. Your child, you are told, is *special*. He has *special* needs. He

requires *special* education. What you are not told is that because of this you will become aware of other *special* people, those without disabilities; people who have decided to devote their life's work or time to provide services and help those with "*special* needs".

For Team Femia this notion manifested itself in the form of two wonderful organizations, *Special Olympics New York* (SONY) and the *Oneida/Lewis ARC*. Vincent's relationship with the Special Olympics was and continues to be the perfect vehicle for his love of all things athletic. He is a three sport athlete participating in cycling, swimming and Nordic skiing. While his accomplishments are many, his crowning success came in 2008, when he was selected to represent Team USA for the 2009 Special Olympic Winter World Games in Boise, ID. He exceeded all expectations and won three medals, a Bronze, Silver, and Gold respectively in the 5K, 7.5K and Relay. Subsequently, he was acknowledged by then United States Congressman Michael Arcuri who read Vincent's World Games achievements into the Congressional Record.

Vincent graduated from Sauquoit Valley Central High School in June 2006 with an Individualized Education Program Diploma. Subsequently, he began employment with *Progress Industries* packing and assembling products as part of a vocational program offered by The Arc, Oneida-Lewis Chapter. Under their guidance Vincent's transition to the work world was seamless. From the very beginning we received consistent reports of his positive attitude and remarkable work ethic. His work days are characterized by enthusiasm to go in the morning and miles of smiles when returning home. Last year, he was recognized by New York State Industries for the Disabled (NYSID) by receiving the William B. Joslin Outstanding Performance Award.

Unquestionably, because of these caring organizations, Vincent enjoys a meaningful, productive and purpose driven life. What loving parents could ask for more?

We now look forward to this wonderful opportunity for Vincent to participate in this year's Boilermaker 15K. It is especially exciting because our family has a rich history with the event. His father ran 25 consecutive Boilermakers starting with the second in 1979. His mom ran several 15K Boilermakers in the 90's and recently has competed in the last three 5K Boilermakers with top finishes in her age group. To think Vincent will be a contributing member to *Team Femia's* Boilermaker tradition will be beyond gratifying.

Thank you to our sponsors!



Tim Carey
PHOTOGRAPHY

Visit www.thearc.org and click on "Charity Bib Program" to make a donation to support Vincent Femia today, or call 315.272.1529.