Beat: Miscellaneous

Break Through ALS Challenge 2016

Kevin Thompson Board Breaking Challenge

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USPA NEWS - Ocean State Grand National 2016, hosted by Grandmaster Don Rodrigues and wife Christine, sponsors "Board Breaking Challenge" to raise awareness for ALS Campaign. Featured in this year's Extravaganza show are Martial Forms Champion and film star Cynthia Rothrock and Grandmaster Kevin Thompson.

With heartfelt fanfare, Team Paul Mitchell Executive Director Chris Rappold gave tribute to former champion Grandmaster Kevin A. Thompson. On April 11, 2015 Grandmaster Thompson was honored for his past achievements as a martial arts champion, as well as for the ï¬ght he is presently undertaking now. Mr. Thompson is battling ALS. Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), otherwise known as Lou Gehrig's disease, is a disease of the central nervous system. ALS is a progressive neurodegenerative disease that affects nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord. As the motor neurons die, the brain loses its ability to control muscle movement.

Mr. Rappold talked about how the muscles of people with ALS tend to atrophy in a similar manner to those muscles that are conï¬ned in a cast after an injury. With ALS, however, the body is unable to re-strengthen the muscles again. Eventually, in the later stages, the disease often paralyzes it's victims and leads to death. There are over 30,000 people in the US battling this disease; approximately 5200 - 5600 people in the US are diagnosed with this disease per year. ALS claims lives everyday. It can strike any gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic class; only 5-10% of people with ALS are genetically linked. There is no cure or treatment that halts or reverses the effects of ALS however, clinical trials are being held that hold promise.

Mr. Rappold reached out to the whole martial arts community, including family, friends, and spectators, to join together in the ï¬ght against ALS. The martial arts community wants to encourage everyone to make a stand; a movement was created to do such a thing. It is called “The Kevin Thompson Board Breaking Challenge and ALS Awareness Campaign.“ Mr .Thompson´s family is working closely to coordinate with the ALS Foundation to ensure that all proceeds collected through this movement, the Board Breaking Challenge/Campaign, dollar for dollar, will go directly to research. Mr. Rappold emphasized, “What we cannot do should not stop us from doing what we can do.“

He requests three things of the martial arts community, their families and friends:
1) To do your best to love their brother as much as the martial arts community does,
2) Get on social media https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uzQrHgbFwW8&feature=youtu.be and break a board stating “I broke through ALS“, and
3) Go to the link, http://webgny.alsa.org/site/TR?px=7011090&fr_id=11151&pg=personal make a donation, and challenge two others to do the same.

Tonight the “Break through ALS“ campaign begins. Grandmaster Kevin Thompson “kicked“ off the campaign himself. Seated, with the support of family and friends gathered around him, he was able to muster up the strength to kick through the ï¬rst board. With Grandmaster Thompson´s inspiring feat, many stood to take his challenge. He was followed by Team Paul Mitchell Executive Director Chris Rappold, Head Coach and Co-Founder Don Rodrigues, members of Team Paul Mitchell, Mr Thompson´s brother Earl Brown, former world champion and teammate Christine Bannon-Rodrigues, and Head Coach and Co-Founder Steve Babcock.

Mr. Rappold reminds the martial arts community, “One of our highest responsibilities is this. We learn martial arts to take care of ourselves and to protect those we love. Write ALS on the board and break the board for the 30,000 that have lost the ability to break the board for themselves. As a martial arts community, let´s make a dent in ALS for Kevin Thompson.“ Coach Don Rodrigues put together a commemorative Master´s plaque of Kevin Thompson with a picture of Mr. Thompson and a red belt signifying the 10th degree level as a grandmaster of martial arts; this item was offered that evening on sale to those attending the event as a fundraiser with the proceeds going to Kevin´s family.

Kevin Thompson addressed the audience with one last reminder,“I know this is heavy on everyone´s hearts and we must come together as a family. You are my family. As family members do, they are grateful, they are humble, and they are thankful.“ He thanked his wife, children, brother, all his teammates, coaches and friends. He expressed his gratitude for all the help he has received

in his ï¬ght. Kevin reports “I am working hard everyday“¦ So please ï¬ght with me. Fight with me. Repeat after me: I am my brother´s keeper, I am my brother´s keeper. Throw those hands in the air. I am going to walk again. I am going to beat it.“ Mr. Kevin Thompson“¦What a champion, what a ï¬ghter, what an inspiration!!!!!

Special guest, former NFL Hall of Famer from the New England Patriots and Master Black Belt, Andre Tippits jumped right in, took the challenge and broke the board for ALS. This is where the challenge begins“¦ Who is willing to make a stand? Who is willing to “break through ALS“?

This year's 2016 Ocean State Grand Nationals Martial Arts competition will kick off another fundraising season for Grandmaster Kevin Thompson and his fight with and against ALS.

The Crowne Plaza Hotel in Warwick will host this three day event, April 8-10, featuring some of the best upcoming martial artists from across our nation, Canada and abroard. Grandmaster Kevin Thompson will be making special appearance on Saturday night to rally competitors and their families, friends and fans, as well as the entire martial arts community in joining together to take a stand, "break a board", and pledge funds in support of the fight against ALS. It is time to take care of our "brothers"!! So, please join us for a wonderful day (or three days) of phenomenal martial arts competitions as well as an evening on Saturday filled with love, laughter, a few tears, brotherly fellowship and fierce fundraising. Hope to see you there!

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