

Shriners Help Teen Athlete Win A Medal

(NAPSA)—The performance of a young athlete is helping to re-define the concept of fitness. Tatyana McFadden, 15, of Clarksville, Md., was the youngest member of America's Paralympic track and field team this year. She was also the youngest to win a silver medal in the 100-meter race. The teen also captured bronze in the 200-meter event.

The focus of the Paralympics, like many other sports opportunities for people with disabilities, is on the athlete and the person, rather than the disability. This philosophy is similar to that of Shriners Hospitals for Children, which emphasizes helping patients become as able and capable as possible.

Tatyana has been a patient at the Philadelphia Shriners Hospital for nine years. Her adoptive mother, Debbie McFadden, credits Shriners Hospitals with helping Tatyana discover her potential.

"Shriners helped her be the best she can be. Everyone there assumes that each patient is going on to great things," said Debbie. "Their attention to individual needs has helped her be able to become an elite athlete." Tatyana echoes that thought.

"Shriners helped me do what I want to do," said the teen.

Debbie, founder and president of International Children's Alliance, an international adoption agency in Silver Spring, Md., found Tatyana in an orphanage in St. Petersburg, Russia. Six years old at the time, and diagnosed with spina bifida, a birth defect that results in damage to the spinal cord and surrounding area, Tatyana used her hands to walk.

After surgery at the Philadelphia hospital, Tatyana was able to stand, and walked for six months. Today she uses a wheelchair. What the treatment at the Philadelphia



Tatyana McFadden, the youngest American on the U.S. Paralympic track and field team, recently won the silver in the 100-meter race.

hospital gave Tatyana was a better quality of life, and an ability to be more independent, said her mother.

Tatyana also competes in basketball, swimming, table tennis and ice hockey, and has also won national junior titles in many of these sports.

For more information on Shriners' network of 22 hospitals that provide medical care and services totally free of charge to children with orthopaedic problems, burns and spinal cord injuries, write to Shriners International Headquarters, Public Relations Dept., 2900 Rocky Point Dr., Tampa, FL 33607 or visit the Web site at www.shrinershq.org. Treatment is provided to children under age 18 without regard to race, religion or relationship to a Shriner.

If you know a child that Shriners can help, call 1-800-237-5055 in the United States or 1-800-361-7256 in Canada.