

Shriners Hospitals Help Teen Reach Gold-Medal Heights

(NAPSA)—A teen who has overcome a lifetime of physical challenges, now excels in athletics and it has much to do with the attitude of his mother.

When life hands you lemons, says Melanie Dawson, it's best to make lemonade. That was Dawson's outlook 13 years ago, when one of her twin sons, Derek, was born with Veter's Syndrome, a condition that left him with severe hand deformities and other orthopaedic problems.

But as it turns out, life also sometimes doles out gold medals. That was the result in June as 13-year-old Derek competed in the 2001 Sports Festival, a national track and field competition sponsored by United Cerebral Palsy Athletic Association in New London, Conn.

Derek claimed nine gold medals competing against other young people with disabilities, taking first place in the 100 meters, 200 meters, 400 meters, 800 meters, 4x100 relay, shotput, long jump, discus and javelin.

Derek's accomplishment is considered to be particularly impressive considering he has endured 21 surgeries in his young life, including hand surgeries at Shriners Hospital for Children in St. Louis and brain surgeries, ear tube implants, and a tonsillectomy performed at other hospitals.

One of the primary orthopaedic conditions faced by Derek is called radial club hands. Radial club hand is a deformity of the forearm, in which one of the forearm bones is missing, making normal functions such as grasp and two-handed activities difficult, according to Loray Dailey, occupational therapy director at the St. Louis



In a recent national track and field competition, Derek added nine gold medals to his growing collection.

Shriners Hospital. But with proper surgical correction and therapy, the cosmetic and functional deformity is improved and patients can lead normal lives.

And sometimes, as in Derek's case, they can excel.

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 Shriners can help, call 1-800-237-5055 in the United States, or 1-800-361-7256 in Canada.