

SUU President Wyatt gears up for 2018 G2G

By Susana Young

Scott Wyatt, President of Southern Utah University (SUU), is an avid hiker. He has found that in order to keep in shape, he needs to keep an epic goal in front of him—like climbing Denali in Alaska or Kilimanjaro in Tanzania.

"If I just say I'm going to stay fit, then I'll put it off for another day," Wyatt said.

People often say to him, "People who do what you do must not be quite right in the head!" He says maybe that's true.

Kelly Stowell, Executive Director for CEBA in Kanab, introduced Wyatt to Colin and Tess Geddes, the founders of Grand to Grand Ultra (G2G). Colin suggested Wyatt consider getting a team of three from SUU, including himself, to run the race and raise money for a philanthropic purpose. Wyatt thought that was a great idea and immediately started looking for two more people.

He first asked Johnny Oh, from South Korea, SUU Director of Global Collaboration, 22-time marathon runner, and black belt in Taekwondo. Oh said "yes" before the invitation was finished.

While looking for the final person, Wyatt posted his intention online. Bill Heyborne quickly responded that he had always wanted to do the race. Wyatt extended an invitation, and the team was complete. Heyborne was born and raised in Kanab, PhD in biology, SUU Professor of Biology, and avid trail runner.

"How exciting will it be to spend seven days in the desert with a biologist who knows everything about where we are?" said Wyatt.

Because of their challenging schedules, the team hasn't been able to train together often. But they also have different needs.

Heyborne and Oh are trying to figure out how to run marathon distances with heavy packs on their backs. As a hiker, Wyatt is accustomed to carrying a backpack. When he climbed Denali, he carried a pack and pulled a sled behind him in the snow that together weighed almost as much as he did. Wyatt says, "I am learning to pick up my pace. I do not want to finish last in the G2G. Especially on the long stage, I don't want to be dragging into camp at 11 a.m. the next day."

Wyatt has done hikes comparable to the "long stage" of G2G (50+ miles). He's done the rim-to-rim-to-rim of the Grand Canyon in one day, for example. What will be different is getting up each day for a week and going at it again? He says already he'll be bringing ten black toenails to the race. And he does wonder about food. "Usually when I hike long distances I lose my appetite and bring home a lot of food."

In the next few weeks he will be ensuring he has the required food he'll need to sustain him each day, while still keeping his backpack weight around 22 pounds.

But in Wyatt's mind, these are not big issues. A deep motivation is that he wants to be an example to

the 11,000 SUU students. When he talks to students, one of his messages is to just keep going, one step at a time, one day at a time. "Even though it may be a struggle to do hard things, you CAN do hard things. Consider a 170-mile ultramarathon. No one can run that far! Yet people do, one mile at a time."

He observes that young people don't yet have the perspective in life to realize they can keep going, even when it is tough. And at SUU, the campus strives to be there for every student, encouraging each one to do their very best.

This is why Wyatt and his team are passionate about raising funds for SUU4Hope. The goal of SUU4Hope is to make getting an education more possible for students who have young children and inadequate funds for childcare. They will build an on-campus daycare facility at SUU so, as Wyatt says, "Our students won't have to choose between finishing school and having children anymore. Regular daycare is simply too expensive for most students. We want to make it possible for these students to finish their education and finish on time."

The drop-in childcare facility near campus will be combined with an academic space for a practicum lab for students studying child development. This is an unprecedented approach for a university in Utah. SUU plans to have the center operational by the fall of 2019. To learn more about the project and how you can contribute, go to suu.edu/childcenter.



Kelly Stowell (in gray jacket) introduces Scott Wyatt, President of SUU (in green jacket), to Colin and Tess Geddes at the finish line of the long stage last year. Wyatt will compete in G2G 2018, along with two colleagues: Kanab native Bill Heyborne and Johnny Oh. Photo courtesy of G2G.

Updated AARP Livability Index for every community in the U.S.

Despite continued suburban sprawl, communities across the nation are taking steps to become better places to live and age in, according to data analyzed from the newly updated AARP Livability Index.

More communities are enacting policies to improve livability with notable increases in housing trust funds that set aside revenue for a variety of affordable housing strategies—now in over 200 counties. Along with overall livability trends, AARP identifies the top ten large, mid-size and small cities.

This is the first, full index update since its launch in 2015. Based on the seven categories of livability

measured in the index—housing, neighborhood, transportation, environment, health, engagement and opportunity—19 of the 30 top-scoring cities in 2015 made their respective top ten list again in 2018. Half of the top-scoring cities are also members of the AARP Network of Age Friendly States and Communities.

"The majority of older adults want to stay in their current homes and communities as they age," said AARP Utah State Director Alan Ormsby. "The livability index is a valuable tool to help community leaders and individuals improve their communities and better meet the needs of people of all ages as the number

of older adults in America continues to grow."

The index uses more than 50 national data sources to score every neighborhood and community in the U.S. based on seven categories of livability, which includes areas such as affordable housing, public transportation, social engagement and more. New features include updated data with the ability to see change over time among the different categories of livability.

To find out your community's score or for a full list of the top ten large, mid-size and small cities in America, visit www.aarp.org/LivabilityIndex.