

Joshua Mendlowitz

By Katie O. Engen

Some might say Joshua Mendlowitz is a bit of a gym rat. He pursues personal health and adaptive fitness goals through regular workouts with his primary trainer, Sam Allen, at SPIRIT Club in Kensington. Joshua uses a wheelchair for most ambulatory activities due to a spinal cord injury, so these personalized workouts help him maintain and enhance endurance, strength, and flexibility.

For the past two years, Joshua has repeatedly earned scholarships from the Spirit Club Foundation (SPF), a group with close ties (but different ownership) to his gym. As just one location that brings to life the SCF mission, SPIRIT Club welcomes community members with and without disabilities to celebrate and pursue both diversity and wellness. Here are Joshua's insights into the experience:

"They're very positive over here. Everyone is very spirited and encouraging. They don't make it too hard. If they see that it's getting too hard, they do know my limits. In the past I've gone to other places that made me work like a dog and have no mercy, but not here." Joshua adds, "One thing I really like about Spirit Club is when they count for the exercises. When they get to '8,' instead they say 'great.' That's very uplifting."

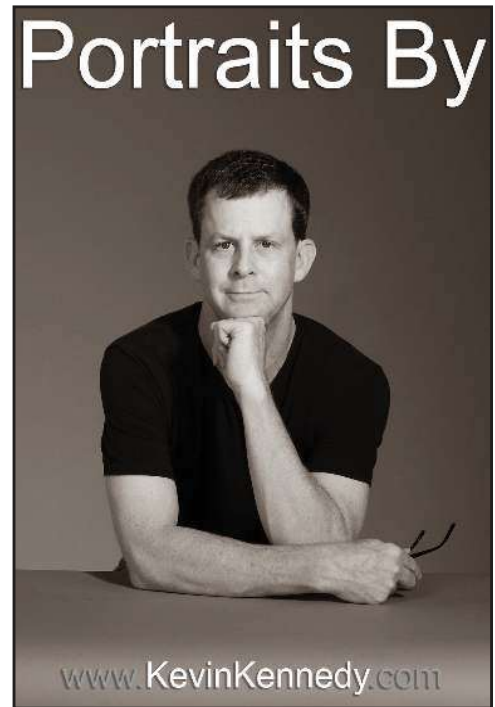
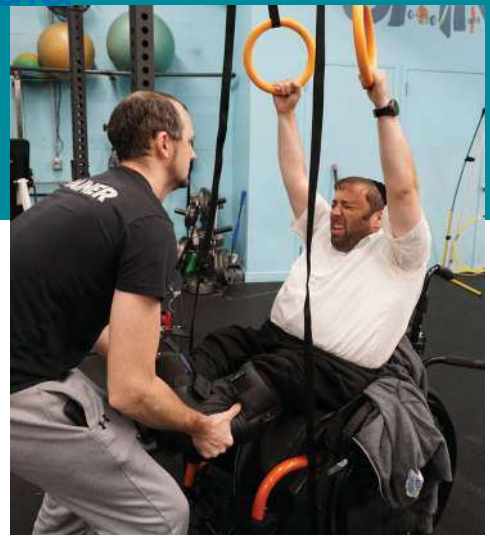
Joshua reports that pull ups are the hardest part of his workouts, so he turns this difficulty into motivation. "I've always wanted to get myself out of my wheelchair somehow," explains Joshua, "and this is definitely a good way to do it." He credits much of his progress to Trainer Sam, calling him, "Legend." Joshua adds, "I do whatever Sam tells me to do." Most sessions begin with battle ropes. Sam says waving them up and down, right to left, and in figure 8s make for, "Nice quick movements. Not too taxing, but good to get the heart rate up and the shoulders loose before doing more."



When starting an activity, or even starting as a newbie at SPIRIT Club, Joshua advises, "Go for it! Especially if you want to give yourself a nice workout with pleasant surroundings. It's a great place and I definitely feel welcome. I can talk to all the coaches and they're all very friendly." Joshua adds with a laugh, "And [thanks to this magazine] they're making me famous right now."

When he's not working out, Joshua enjoys watching the Orioles and calls himself a "major fan." He also plays the keyboard. Joshua recounts, "I'm a musician myself. There's a pianist named Yaron Gershovsky. [His many musical accomplishments include being Musical Director and pianist/keyboardist for The Manhattan Transfer]. I would like to be like Yaron one day. My muscle tone is not so great, so my fingers are never gonna move as fast as he does. But it's a dream."

To learn more about adaptive and inclusive fitness visit www.spiritclubfoundation.org and www.spirit-club.com.



SPIRITED SUPPORT: SCHOLARSHIPS & SO MUCH MORE

The Spirit Club Foundation (SCF) promotes accessible fitness opportunities for individuals with disabilities, a mission that includes 6-month scholarships for gym and training fees for athletes of all ages with special needs. By reducing the cost of programs and advocating for policy changes, SCF empowers people of all abilities to pursue meaningful exercise, improve their quality of life, and engage with the community.

With SCF support, folks like Joshua and his family can affordably maintain a fitness regimen. SCF works with many trainers and adaptive fitness organizations around Maryland so scholarship recipients can workout at the location of their choice.