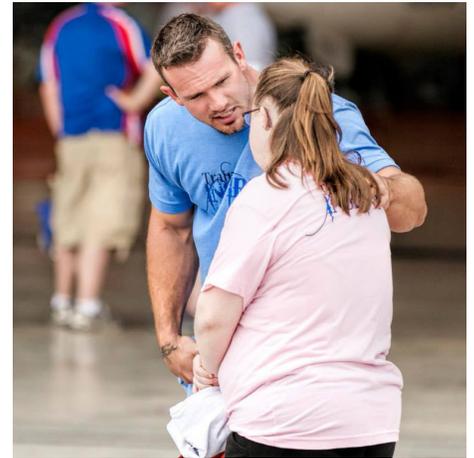




>> Above, the Train to Inspire Special Olympics Plane Pull team, sponsored by Carpenters Local 106 and Anytime Fitness of Altoona, IA. At left, Local 106 member Joe Hogan, founder of Train to Inspire, coaches a plane pull participant.



Joe Hogan: Train to Inspire program for disabled adults flourishes

Des Moines Local 106 member Joe Hogan never thought he would be up at 4:30 a.m. doing paperwork, taking business calls on break in a portable toilet or applying for grants. However, a man named Dave Mathis entered his life and changed all of that.

Dave has Noonan Syndrome, a disorder that affects multiple chromosomes in the body. Dave has outlived two life expectancies, wears a platform shoe and leg braces to support him while he walks. Several years ago, when Joe was working as a personal trainer at a gym, Dave came in to sign up for membership and personal training. After working with Joe, Dave shared that he had participated in 5k runs and half marathons, but always with his doctor pushing him in a wheelchair.

Joe asked how Dave felt about running his own 5k and Dave agreed without hesitation. They trained together and surprised his doctor when he showed up to push Dave in the race. At that point, Joe said he realized he had the ability to change someone's life.

Following his experience with Dave, Joe began doing group activities with people with special needs. Each month, they get together for activities such as laser tag, paintball, go carting, fishing, barbeques and group fitness classes. They sit down as a group each month and decide what they would like to do, and what they might like to accomplish.

In the beginning, Joe was paying for these activities out of pocket and held events sporadically.

When he reached out for grant assistance, he realized that if he wanted to have access to funding and truly be able to support the group with regular activities, he needed to start a nonprofit organization.

"This was not my plan, this was not at any point in my life what I had envisioned, but now it is my dream and my passion," said Joe. However, he admits the work can be challenging.

The Carpenters have set the bar for Union philanthropy in supporting this group.

— JOE HOGAN
Local 106

Train to Inspire launched its most recent program to support children with terminal ailments in June. Joe hopes to continue expanding his organization by eventually launching programs for orphaned children, people suffering from addiction and women affected by domestic violence. Although many nonprofit groups focus on a particular cause or demographic, Train to Inspire focuses on changing lives of all kinds.

Joe juggles his commitment to Train to Inspire, his work as a second-year apprentice with the Carpenters Union, and his life as a single father. He attributes donations from the Union as a jumping off point for his organization.

"Local 106 and the Council were my first sponsors," said Joe. "I cannot express into words how thankful I am for their donations. Without that money I would not be able to change the lives I've changed."

You can follow Train to Inspire on Facebook at www.facebook.com/Train-To-Inspire. 