

## Sports medicine assists by turning injury into goals

Athletes of all ages can receive the medical care they need locally through Perham Health's sports medicine physician, Dr. Nick Esala.

Dr. Esala sees patients in Perham every Thursday for a variety of sports medicine and occupational medicine needs, including non-operative orthopedic patients and athletes with various types of injuries.

A fellowship in sports medicine at the Medical College of Wisconsin in Milwaukee provided Dr. Esala with the privilege of working with athletes of different ages and various levels. He has worked with the Milwaukee Brewers, Milwaukee Ballet, the U.S. snowboard team, and several high schools and colleges as part of his training.

Twelve-year-old Logan Robinson is one of Dr. Esala's recent patients. Logan was referred to Dr. Esala after breaking his hand last October at an evening sports practice in New York Mills.

"I think I sprained my hand in gym during the day," Logan explains. "I went to the school nurse and got an ice pack. Then I went to hockey practice that night, took one slap shot, and my hand started hurting really bad. As soon as that happened, I knew I had to get off the ice right away."

Logan's dad, who was a hockey coach for the team, called Logan's mom to bring him to the emergency room at Perham Health. Dr. Chad Thiel first examined Logan's hand to determine the extent of his injury.

"Dr. Thiel made us feel comfortable right away," Logan's mom, Tina Gritz, says of their emergency room experience. "X-rays were then taken of Logan's hand and we found out it was broken."

Logan sustained a fracture to his fourth metacarpal, which is a bone in his left hand. This type of fracture is often seen in active individuals, occasionally as the result of a fall. In Logan's case, he fell with his fingers

flexed. The force of his body landed directly on his hand, causing the fracture.

After a brief time with a splint on his hand, Logan scheduled an appointment with Dr. Esala to get a cast. Logan laughs when recalling his reasoning behind choosing the color pink for his cast, "I broke my hand at the beginning of seventh grade and everyone liked pink, so I guess that's why I just chose pink."

Even though Logan missed being able to participate in some sports-related activities because of his injury, he tried to make the most of the time his hand required in the cast by having all of his friends sign the brightly colored cast. He says he didn't get too much grief about the color he chose.

During the month his hand was in a cast, Logan had weekly follow-up visits with Dr. Esala where his progress was closely



After breaking his hand playing hockey last fall, 12-year-old Logan Robinson is thankful to once again be enjoying the sport he loves. Logan credits Dr. Nick Esala, Perham Health's sports medicine physician, with helping him recover quickly and completely.

monitored. "Dr. Esala would make sure the cast was alright and check how I was feeling," Logan recalls. "He also showed me a few exercises that would help me get back the strength in my hand."

Dr. Esala explains, "With hand fractures especially, the immobilization in a cast or brace can cause some stiffness. Therefore, once the cast is removed, we can begin simple range-of-motion exercises. As a patient feels more comfortable, we can also work on his or her overall hand strength. This can be anything from squeezing a tennis ball to using small weights to get patients back to their normal abilities."

"Dr. Esala was very nice and really did an excellent job communicating with Logan," Tina mentions. "They also took an X-ray every time Logan had an appointment to make sure his hand was healing correctly."

According to Dr. Esala, one of the greatest initial concerns is whether the fracture shifts during the healing process, which is called displacement. This was monitored with X-rays. Logan's symptoms were also monitored, such as whether his hand swelling was decreasing and his pain was improving over time.

"I work a lot with the radiologists at Perham Health, as they also look at X-rays I order. Especially in the case of a fracture like Logan's, it is important to monitor the



After breaking his hand, Logan Robinson had weekly appointments with Dr. Esala where his progress was evaluated and X-rays were taken to examine how his fracture was healing.

healing process and determine whether the hand is healing in an adequate manner. Our radiologists are great at what they do. I am able to discuss individual films with them to gain more insight into my patients," says Dr. Esala.

"Occupational therapy can be a great resource as well. Occupational therapists are available to help with custom-fit bracing, allowing patients to get back to their activities sooner. They can also help in the rehab process, helping patients regain their range of motion and strength after being in a cast or splint for a long period of time."

One month after fracturing his hand, Logan's cast was removed. He went to Perham Health's occupational therapy department and was fitted for a brace. After two weeks with the brace, Logan's hand was healed and he was given approval to start playing sports again.

"I had a hockey game the week after I got it off," Logan recalls. "I was kind of worried and so was my mom, but it didn't hurt at all. After the cast came off, my hand felt great. I could still skate with the cast on, but I wasn't allowed to do any stick work. When I started up again, I was just happy."

Not only was Logan's hand healed and ready for hockey season, but also baseball season and games with the church softball team he recently joined. "The worst part with the cast on was that I had keyboarding class in school. I had to wait the whole semester to catch up with that," Logan admits. "I was so happy to get the cast off."

"Logan healed quite well, which was great to see," remarks Dr. Esala. "A lot of people assume that kids are very resilient and heal well, but they still need to be managed in an appropriate manner with good follow-up care. That's why we are as thorough as we are."

For Dr. Esala, the most rewarding part of his job is being actively involved in helping his patients reach their goals. "People are seen in our clinic with injuries that limit their daily life, and I really enjoy finding ways to keep them active," he says. "It is incredibly rewarding to see patients like Logan get back to sports or activities they love after an injury."

This commitment to providing excellent patient care is something Logan says he really appreciated. "Dr. Esala is a great doctor. He handled my hand with care," the young athlete says.

Logan and his mother also mention how convenient it was for them that Logan could receive the specialized care he required in the same town they live in. The initial emergency room visit, Logan's X-rays, his occupational therapy appointment, and his weekly follow-up visits with Dr. Esala all took place at Perham Health.

"It truly is nice that there's a sports medicine specialist like Dr. Esala at Perham Health," Tina says. "Especially when you're raising three kids, it is difficult to make the trip all the way to Fargo. We really appreciated getting the care we needed right here."



Dr. Nick Esala finds great satisfaction in helping young athletes like Logan Robinson heal from their injuries and get back to actively participating in the sports or activities they enjoy.

# A race for all ages

Perham Living recently hosted the Mature Mile & Family 5K Fun Run/Walk on Saturday, June 7. Over 200 people of all ages participated in the community wellness event.

"This was the inaugural year for the event," explains Katie Lundmark, vice president of long term care at Perham Living and chair of the committee organizing the event.

"The committee whole-heartedly agrees this event will continue for years to come. The event was planned for participants

ages one to 100, encouraging people to include wellness in their life at any age. We had numerous families participate, multiple generations, and racers with a variety of experience levels," Lundmark reports.

The Mature Mile was designed for those 60 years and older. The purpose of this untimed event was to encourage participation from both men and women who can walk and those who rely on the use of assistive devices such as walkers and wheelchairs. The Mature Mile race route started and ended at the Perham Living campus and weaved through several community blocks.

"I got the idea of the Mature Mile from my 89-year-old grandma who lives in St. Louis, MO. She has participated in the Mature Mile at least four times and has told me about it each year. From there I took the idea and thought, 'we can do this here in Perham,'" Lundmark says.

The Family 5K Fun Run/Walk incorporated Perham Health's new Wellness Trail and the community Wildflower Trail; both completed last summer. The race also started and ended at the Perham Living campus.

"Something unique to our race is a partnership with the Perham-Dent School,"



Lundmark mentions. "The school added 5K race training to its physical education curriculum in the spring. Several kids showed up on the day of the race because of the 5K training at school."

A total of 114 racers competed in the 5K event. The first place female finisher was Brittney Johnson from Perham. Johnson finished with a time of 25:06.5. The first place male finisher was Nick Lintstrom, also from Perham, with a time of 21:40.9.

"I want to thank the community for its strong support of this year's inaugural event. We had sponsors, in-kind donors and volunteers who all helped to make this an outstanding event," Lundmark adds. Sponsors included Perham Health Foundation, Sanford Health, United Community Bank, Bremer Bank, and Perham Women of Focus.



# Gift shops offer something for everyone

Perham Health's gift shops have been called "some of the best kept secrets in town." Unique Boutique, located in Perham Health's atrium, and the Perham Living Gift Shop are open to the community throughout the week.

"There truly is something for everyone—clothing, including plus sizes; the latest trends in home décor, baby items and gifts, a wide variety of fashionable jewelry, handbags and scarves, and an array of unique inspirational items," says Gift Shop Manager Karla Kupfer.

Unique Boutique sells fresh flowers provided by a local floral shop, and will deliver upon request to patients and Perham Health employees. Both shops take orders for balloons and gifts for onsite delivery for birthdays, anniversaries, Mother's Day, Christmas, Valentine's Day, etc. Phone orders are also accepted.

The gift shops participate in most of the community's retail events including Harvest Fest, Chocolate Saturday, Spring Up, and the PACC Liquidation Sale. They will also have a downtown presence at this year's Crazy Days August 8 and 9.

Unique Boutique is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Perham Living Gift Shop hours are 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.

"Volunteers are instrumental as they are the ones who work in the shops assisting customers. It is because of our wonderful and dedicated volunteers that we are able to have the two gift shops," Kupfer says, adding that they are currently seeking additional volunteers.



People interested in volunteering should contact Kupfer at (218) 347-1619 or [karla.kupfer@perhamhealth.org](mailto:karla.kupfer@perhamhealth.org).



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## Perham Health Scholarship Recipients

Perham Health is pleased to announce the recipients of its Health Care Career Educational Scholarship. Five area students pursuing careers in the health care field were each awarded a \$1,000 scholarship. The scholarship program is awarded to high school seniors or post-secondary students residing in the Perham Health service area. Congratulations to this year's recipients.



**Elizabeth Fudge**  
Perham High School

Elizabeth is enrolled at St. Scholastica, Duluth, in the physical therapy program. Her parents are Chris and Angie Fudge.



**Kayla Heier**  
Perham High School

Kayla will study Pre-Pharmacy at North Dakota State University. Her parents are Timothy and Barbara Heier.



**Marlee Helmeke**  
University of North Dakota

Marlee attends the University of North Dakota majoring in biology as a Pre-Medicine student. Her parents are Brad and Pat Helmeke.



**Josh Still**  
Perham High School

Josh will pursue physical therapy at Concordia College, Moorhead. His parents are David and Dana Still.



**Tyler Ukkelberg**  
Battle Lake High School

Tyler will attend the University of Minnesota, Morris, as a psychology major and further graduate in physical therapy. His parents are Ross and Theresa Ukkelberg.