



Now that we're past the "new normal" six-month mark, it's a good time to reflect on some of the "Creative Challenge Activities" that have cropped up in 2020.

If my social media is a reflection, challenges revolving around exercise have ruled the day. Pushups and sit-ups accomplished, stairs climbed, and miles walked or run--with or without charitable fundraising attached--have been ubiquitous activities.

Yet my favorites have been in other realms.

The challenges to read substantial books (which in this time of "hieroglyphic communication" is an endangered capability) and poetry (a perennially endangered art form) have been particularly good to see. Improving nutrition, with all its associated dimensions--planning, shopping, prepping, cooking, presenting--has been another worthy challenge realm.

Acquiring, or re-acquiring, a foreign language--perhaps the most underrated of all YouTube promises!--has been another excellent goal. And reducing in various ways--whether donating raiment, tossing stuff, or shedding pounds--have all been worthy pandemic-inspired challenges.

But the challenge posed by my family to me--a fundraising consultant of three+ decades and former college wrestling coach--was different. Would I (they challenged) cut down to the weight at which I last wrestled competitively--136.5 lbs.--and also, within six months, contribute 136.5 hours of pro bono consulting to small and start-up nonprofits?

In order to understand this one-two punch, some background is in order.

First, my usual "static-electricity-assisted" height is 5'6", and my usual weight, at which I appear "athletic," is 150 lbs. While 13.5 pounds doesn't sound like much, it's not an insignificant percentage of my weight. One other relevant tidbit: despite regularly being pegged much younger, I'm no spring chicken, answering, as I do, to three grandsons when they shout the name "Baba"!

Second, for over 30 years I've served the nonprofit sector as a marketing and fundraising consultant. Among my firm's achievements are bringing the field of walkathon fundraising to scale, creating and/or helping develop four of the nation's 10 largest special-event fundraisers, training over 13,000 nonprofit staff, and directly generating over \$1.5 billion. It would be good, my family thought, if, in this time of crisis, I helped a handful of emerging initiatives.

Since mid-March, here are some of the rising stars I've had the privilege to advise:

- * [Beat the Streets](#), whose mission is to reach schoolchildren in urban America through the sport of wrestling, and to nurture their social, emotional and educational well-being.
- * [CLAWS Conservancy](#), whose mission is to reduce conflict between people and predators worldwide.
- * [What's Your 50?](#), a "gateway-to-philanthropy" project which encourages everyone to collect 50 items or give 50 minutes of time to a favorite nonprofit.
- * [Wrestle Like a Girl](#), whose mission is to empower girls and women to become leaders in life.
- * [rubiRelief](#), whose mission is to assist those in need through a variety of initiatives, including providing safe transportation for essential workers, school children, and seniors.
- * [Elevate Theatre Company](#), which provides audiences and artists the space to explore health and well-being through the art of storytelling.

I've also had the privilege of weighing in on the plans of a major academic medical center's national grassroots fundraising campaign to support frontline workers, and an international charity's work in the areas of combating loneliness and supporting families facing bereavement.

BUT, you might ask, did my pro bono service over six months add up to 136.5 hours? It did not. It added up to about 120 hours, which means I'm still on the hook... and ready and able to help! Call me or email. I'll get back to you ASAP.

As for the other part of the challenge, I succeeded.

On September 8th, just about six months after I began social isolating and social distancing, I weighed in at 136.4 lbs, one-tenth of a pound below the challenge goal--my college and elite wrestling competitive weight! Can I prove this, you ask? Yes, I can. If you reach out to say hey, I'll send along a couple photos that, if I also share my age, may send you in search of your favorite trainer! Wrestle, anyone? (Post-pandemic, of course!)

Steven H. Biondolillo
Biondolillo Associates, Inc.
781-254-0044 (m)