

Community Views

A2 • WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9, 2008

Covering what matters most

Rock crawler addresses P.A.N.I.C.

Namon Bills
EDITOR

Clay Egan knows about challenges. At 22 he was in a motorcycle accident and broke his neck. He's been in a wheelchair ever since, but that hasn't stopped him from "pushing the limits."

Egan has been to four world championship rock crawling competitions, and he has finished as high as seventh in the nation. As the only quadriplegic competing in the extreme sport, Egan uses hand controls in a specially-equipped jeep to conquer the tough terrain.

But, according to Egan, the toughest terrain he ever faced was before he lost the use of his legs. He spoke at the P.A.N.I.C. meeting on Wednesday, April 2, and, as a recovered addict, encouraged those who are dealing with substance abuse issues to face their challenges.

"Going through rehab was tougher than the wheelchair," he said in an interview on Thursday, April 3. He finished rehab about a year before he broke his neck.

In some ways, the challenge of losing the use of his



Courtesy photo

PUSHING THE LIMITS: A wheelchair hasn't stopped Clay Egan from rock crawling competitions.

legs became Egan's greatest strength.

"Since I've been in the wheelchair ... my life's just gotten better as time goes on," he said.

A large part of that has been learning to deal with the challenges he's faced.

"Everybody deals with

challenges and obstacles," Egan said. "With every obstacle we overcome, we gain strength."

He said that something good has come out of everything he's overcome. His past experiences give him confidence to face new challenges.

"Now when something big comes up, I've already survived worse," he said.

Egan's advice to others reflects his own optimistic attitude in dealing with the many challenges he's faced.

"Plug forward," he said. "Look for the good that you can and you plug through it."