

# May 2009 Success Story

## MATT WAHLEITHNER



"A journey of a thousand miles  
begins with a single step."

*Lao-tzu*

Matt Wahleithner is an integral part of the YMCA community, because he serves as both a member and staff. Matt wears a variety of hats here: He greets other members with a smile at five AM as a member services specialist; he inspires members to make healthy decisions as a Commit to be Fit trainer; and he motivates members to keep moving as a group fitness instructor. Matt's contribution to the YMCA family throughout the past year and a half has been so valued by members and co-workers that the YMCA even nominated him for this spring's University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point's Student Employee of the Year.

Matt has inspired all of us to work hard and stay committed with his unbeatable optimism and courage, but he, too, has also had to struggle to overcome his own fitness challenges. During his senior year of high school, Matt gained weight, and since then he has worked hard to lose over 90 pounds. He has even met his goal of running a marathon! Matt says, "Exercise has given me the ability to do things I thought I could never do like run a marathon.... I have worked so hard to get to where I'm at and I couldn't be happier. All thanks to exercise." Although Matt keeps himself busy both at work and at school, he always makes time to exercise. "I fit it in because it's so important," he says. "You need to take time for yourself each day, and planning my meals, eating right, and exercising is how I spend my time. I just make it like a job in my day. I schedule things around it like a meeting."

Matt's health has improved tremendously since he committed himself to a healthier lifestyle, but when he joined the YMCA, just after moving to Stevens Point, he also found himself joining a family. He says, "Stevens Point, and especially the Y members... have opened up to me and made me a part of their great community. Of all the places I have lived, Stevens Point has the best community; it's more like a big family." Matt says he has been most inspired by the early morning members who are able to make him smile even when he's feeling down. "They motivate me to stay positive," he says.

Matt is leaving Stevens Point at the end of the summer to begin the next exciting phase of his life, but he will be missed by members and co-workers who have enjoyed chatting with him during his regular shifts or when he visits during his own afternoon workouts. We have all enjoyed his stories and sense-of-humor, and are sad to be losing such a bright part of our family. Matt says, "I want to thank all the Y members and staff for making me feel at home. Stevens Point has been an amazing home for me and the Stevens Point YMCA has been a huge part of that. *Thank you all!*"