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The December Bulls Eye Feature: Tim Fox

He was a janitor during his high school years, riding a moped with a vacuum cleaner and a feather duster hooked on the back from account to account...swam a mile when he was just six years old... was born in Sheffield, England and spent good portions of his childhood in the Middle East—just outside Dubai and in Doha, Qatar—but graduated from Cherry Hill East in 1989.

He grew up as a 'motorhead'...now races an Aston Martin competitively up and down the East Coast...loves to ski and kayak...met his wife of 14 years through a mutual friend at M Street in Voorhees...and presented her with rose and a dozen peaches the next day.

He's Dr. Tim Fox, a practicing physical therapist and the founder and CEO of Fox Rehabilitation.

The just-turned-40 Fox has to be one of the most engagingly "wired" people you'll ever meet. The man is alive with energy—which has to explain, at least in part, why Fox Rehabilitation is so successful. Today, the company that Fox founded in 1989 employs more than 400 clinicians who make 9,000 geriatric house calls per week to the elderly in seven states.

And that is probably the second reason for Fox's success. Not only does he understand the unique rehab needs of the elderly (his firm's average patient is 88!), his therapists actually make house calls.

"After delving into the law, I realized we could do house calls under Medicare Part B. This model would allow each patient to receive the correct intensity and duration of care as indicated by need," Fox explains.

In addition, Fox Rehabilitation also holds the nation's sixth Post-Graduate Physical Therapy Residency Training Program in Geriatrics and Fox Rehab is the first to possess this distinction as a private practice.

Fox sits on the Thomas Jefferson University Board of Trustees and on the Scientific and Academic Affairs Committee. He has also established two endowed scholarships with TJU. The first is The Fox Rehabilitation Scholarship for the Advancement of Occupational Therapy, in memory of Margaret Sood. The second is the Fox Rehabilitation Scholarship for the Advancement of Physical Therapy. Fox and wife Nicole live in Mt. Laurel, with their two children Margaux, 11, and Adison, 8. Self-described as “honest, with a sense of individualism, enthusiastic, idealistic, and committed,” Fox says that Adison recently described him as “despicable and loving, while Margaux described him as “loving, caring, and efficient.”

“By the way, Fox is pretty sure that his son doesn’t know the meaning of the word “despicable” and “probably just liked the sound of it “so he added it to his vocabulary.

But like everything else Fox reveals about himself and his company it all comes out with a huge smile and an undercurrent of almost peripatetic energy.

Fox’s parents died within six months of each other when he was 19—both from cancer. “My mother died of ovarian cancer and my father of lung. They both smoked. So, if you smoke, STOP NOW!” he says in his own engaging but demanding way.

“It was a very trying time in my life. They were relatively strict, though now I see why. They taught and prepared me for the challenges that lay ahead. My mother was a stay-at-home mom and my father was in the auto body and paint industry. He was trained back in the old days as a panel beater. As panel beater he would take sheet metal and work it into custom body panels for barn find restorations of pre-war Aston Martin Lagonda's.

In fact, he was so successful that he soon started an export business to the Middle East, which is how Fox ended up in the United Arab Emirates and Qatar.

Fox has one older brother, Julian, who lives in Santa Cruz, CA and is the service manager of a Harley Davidson dealership.

The Fox family is big on pets—two bulldogs, two hairless cats and a Chihuahua—and exercise. No surprise there.

"Movement is the medicine for creating change in a person's physical, emotional, and mental states," says Fox. And, of course, he ought to know with two degrees in the subject from Thomas Jefferson University, a Master of Science, Physical Therapy in 1995 and a Doctor of Physical Therapy in 2009. Fox is also Board Certified in Geriatrics by the American Physical Therapy Association.

His first job was as a staff physical therapist at Jeff and from there he "moved on pretty fast into a leadership role for a large skilled nursing organization." There Fox assisted the management team in gaining the facilities' first JCAHO (Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations) Accreditation for Sub Acute and Long Term Care. And, after that, he started Fox Rehabilitation where he is CEO and manages 600 employees, including 400 clinical staff.

His business philosophy is to "Give people the tools they need to succeed and they will never cease to amaze you," while his personal motto "Do right and fear no man." Fox believes that it's important to Reward and recognize work well done. And to immediately confront, correct and handle adverse issues and problems. As he likes to say, "We ourselves are cause, cause things to go right."

"Happiness and general satisfaction is how I measure success. Material assets and money mean nothing without it," adds Fox.

He sees his toughest challenge as figuring out "how to aggressively forward the organization's viability and strategic plan of caring for the exponentially growing elderly population." Which is complicated, he says by the need to plan "how to handle the upcoming infusion of another 33 million individuals into that population while navigating the volatile nature of our government's proposed methods of lesser and reduced reimbursement for our services."

His greatest fear used to be of dying. But, "today I feel so lucky to have experienced my family and life in such magnitude that I feel so grateful and at peace with the abundance I have received so far," he says.

He counts as his mentors "two nationally recognized authorities: The late Rick Flaster of Flaster Greenberg was my moral and business mentor and

Mary Sinnott PT, DPT, M.Ed of Temple University is my moral and clinical mentor.”

Fox describes Flaster as “a genius. He was able to apply reason and a sense of humanity to very complex legal, tax and business issues. He was kind and gentle but effective and easily able to gain positive influence over complex situations.”

The most important lesson he has learned, Fox says, is to “always be honest and tell the truth.”

His favorite person is wife Nicole because “she is a good advisor and, better than that, makes me laugh. “

In addition to racing, skiing and kayaking, Fox’s hobbies include cooking, gardening, and “the beach.”

His favorite vacation spot is Bachelor Gulch, CO, among his favorite books is Joel Osteen’s “It’s Your Time,” his favorite movie is “Conan the Barbarian,” and when Fox watches TV it’s Formula 1 racing on “Speed TV.”

One question he hopes he’s never asked is “Which do you want, the guillotine or the noose?”

His epitaph (as he would like it to be written) is “A man that truly loved his family, his work, and the people he worked with. Do not be sad: celebrate, laugh and toast my memory with a smile.”

By: Mike Willmann

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