

BULL RUN OBSERVER™

Friday, March 5, 2010

WESTERN PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY'S FAVORITE HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER

Vol. 11 No. 14 ONE DOLLAR

She's headed for Paralympics as a volunteer

By **SUDHA KAMATH**
Observer staff

A Manassas resident prepares to head northwest to make her dreams come true. Kimberly Evering has been selected as a volunteer at the alpine skiing venue at the Paralympic Games March 12-21 in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Evering caught the Olympic bug in 1996, when she attended the Summer Games in Atlanta for her communications job. "I met many wonderful volunteers at the different venues who all seemed to be having a lot of fun. It really made an impression on me," she recalled.

Evering applied to volunteer at the Winter Games in Park City, Utah in 2002, and later to volunteer for the Winter Games in Turin, Italy in 2006, but was not chosen. She didn't give up.

Evering learned she had to apply years in advance, to secure her own housing and to pay her own travel and lodging expenses. But with the support of her husband Chris and her close friend, Melissa Derecola, she stayed on course. "Having to wait every four years was heartbreaking. I put into action everything I found out from my past attempts," Evering said.

She applied to volunteer at the Winter Games in Vancouver. Just before Christmas last year, she learned she'd been accepted from 70,000 applicants from around the world.

When Evering was told that volunteering at the Olympic Games would require a nearly four-week break from work, she opted to volunteer for a shorter, two-week time period at the Paralympic Games.

"The Paralympic athletes do the same runs that aren't modified simply because of disabilities," she asserted. "Blind skiers follow the runs by following a guide's voice. The fact that they're doing all this with a handicap is amazing to me," she said. "I became so emotional, I was crying."

The Buffalo, N.Y., native is no stranger to cold climates but concedes she'll have to get used to frigid temperatures again after living in Manassas for five years. "Going from working in a cubicle in Virginia to working outside the Coast Mountain range of British Columbia where the average winter temperature is between 11 to 23 degrees Fahrenheit, I'm sure will be a shock to my system," she said. Evering will work eight-hour shifts with only one day off as a specta-

tor. She bought a ticket to the opening ceremonies.

Evering, a web communications manager, hopes to continue to spread the Paralympics' message of determination, even after the games. "I want to stay involved and champion the cause," she said.

Determination has been a constant theme for Evering as well. She cites her greatest accomplishment as living her life to the fullest, even if that means grabbing opportunities outside her comfort zone.

One of those opportunities arose two years ago at Olympic Park in Park City, Utah. Evering completed a run on the official bobsled course that was used during the 2002 Winter Games. "It's the only facility in the U.S. where you can go down the full Olympic bobsled track used by the athletes," she described.

Evering knew risks were involved. "My head with my helmet on would feel like 50 pounds due to the G forces and that EMTs [emergency medical technicians] would be at the finish line as a precaution," she said. "The reality of my actually doing this activity kicked in. My heart was pounding with anticipation."

Evering said the only modifi-



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Kimberly Evering, sporting the official colors of the Winter Games outside her snow-covered Manassas home, prepares for a dream to come true at the Paralympic Games in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Sudha Kamath / the Bull Run Observer

cation made to the sled for untrained riders was that the rear brake had been moved to the front. Also, instead of running and jumping into the bobsled like Olympic athletes, Evering secured herself in the bobsled, which then was pushed by two assistants. "Off we went down the 8/10 of a mile course around 16 swift curves in 53.08 seconds at 78 miles per hour," she declared.

Other adventures include riding motorcycles, skiing, ice skating and traveling. Evering also is an avid photographer and a

freelance writer. She started her own blog as part of her master's degree program at American University a few years ago. She will continue to chronicle her Paralympic quest at www.kimberlysgrapevine.blogspot.com.

Will Evering aim for the Winter Olympics in 2014 in Sochi, Russia? Stay tuned...

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