

# Official Loses Feet, But Not His Spirit

By Greg Waxberg

You might think that losing both feet would cause a person to feel dejected, but not Matt Perillo. "I haven't shed one tear. There's no reason to be negative. I'm alive," he says.

Perillo, 47, a football and basketball referee in Lancaster, N.Y., thought he had the flu in early January, but his doctor diagnosed septicemia, or blood poisoning. Bacteria invaded his body, and the blood system went into septic shock. In an instinctual response to preserve life-sustaining functions, Perillo's body circulated blood to vital organs, and his feet were cut off from the blood supply.

"Most people don't live through septicemia because blood pressure bottoms out and the body shuts down. I was as close to death as a person can be, but the doctors at the hospital kept me alive," Perillo says. He was in a coma for two weeks.

Perillo was flown to Kalamazoo, Mich., where a doctor amputated his legs just below the knees. As of early May, Perillo was waiting for the incisions to heal before being fitted for prosthetic legs.

To work on his goal of walking again, he has been undergoing physical therapy with the assistance of Daemen College's Physical Therapy Program in Buffalo. "Daemen's PT faculty are donating their time, energy and professional care to Perillo," says Associate Professor and Chair of Physical Therapy Dr. Gregory S. Ford. Physical therapists are working with

Perillo each week at his home and at off-campus clinics.

Fellow referees from the Western New York Certified Football Officials (WNYCFO) have been indispensable to Perillo's recovery. "They were the first ones at my family's door and have been there throughout the process, as have my colleagues from my basketball association, IAABO (International Association of Approved Basketball Officials) Board 53," Perillo says. "The support has been above and beyond what you could even imagine."

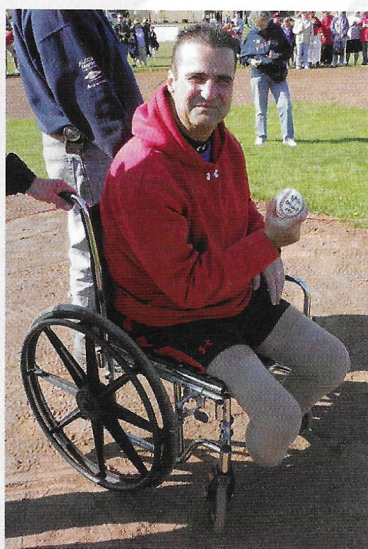
Both organizations have been coordinating fundraisers to help Perillo's family with medical bills, gas, hospital parking, costs related to his rehab and other expenses. The largest of three fundraisers, a prize-oriented benefit, took place June 9 in West Seneca. Go to [www.matthewperillofundraiser.com](http://www.matthewperillofundraiser.com) for more.

Perillo was described as "one of New York's finest basketball and football officials" by WNYCFO Chairman Matt Palma.

"He had a near-death experience. He wasn't supposed to make it," Palma said. "He knows he's lucky to be alive."

Perillo works for the Lancaster Recreation Department, operating youth basketball and football programs and summer camps, as well as overseeing playgrounds and working with senior centers. His position with the department led to his officiating more than 17 years ago. "Every day is special," he says.

*Greg Waxberg is a writer and editor for The Pingry School, Martinsville, N.J. □*



**Matt Perillo threw the opening pitch on May 5 for Lancaster Depew Little League Baseball.**



## TASO Baseball Umpires Give More Than \$4,000

Members of TASO and the Collin County, Texas, baseball umpire chapter contributed more than \$4,000 in game fees to the second annual Strikes Against Cancer (SAC) youth baseball tournament recently held in McKinney, Texas. The total represents more than 100 donated game fees from more than 60 umpires.

Strikes Against Cancer, a 501c3 organization, was founded by 11-year-old Geordon Cox (now 13, pictured on the left), the son of member Adam Cox, as a way to do something for his mother who is battling cancer. Founded in December 2010, the first SAC tournament was held in 2011 with 171 teams participating and throwing more than 20,000 strikes. This year more than 240 teams participated and more than 31,000 strikes were thrown.

The 2012 goal was \$20,000 for the V Foundation. That goal is expected to be exceeded through money raised from donations by umpires, parents, corporate sponsors, as well as team entry fees and merchandise sales. For more information on this event and to sign up for next year's event, see [www.strikesagaincancer.org](http://www.strikesagaincancer.org).

## UMPS CARE Raises \$73,000

Caring corporate sponsors and individuals raised more than \$73,000 during the seventh annual UMPS CARE Charities Golf Classic in support of the UMPS CARE Charities youth mission in January at Raven Golf Club in Phoenix.

UMPS CARE Charities is a non-profit organization established by MLB umpires to provide financial, in-kind and emotional support for America's youth and families in need.

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