

Currents

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Health News and Information for Oregon's Coast



evolution of
care

Cancer Patient

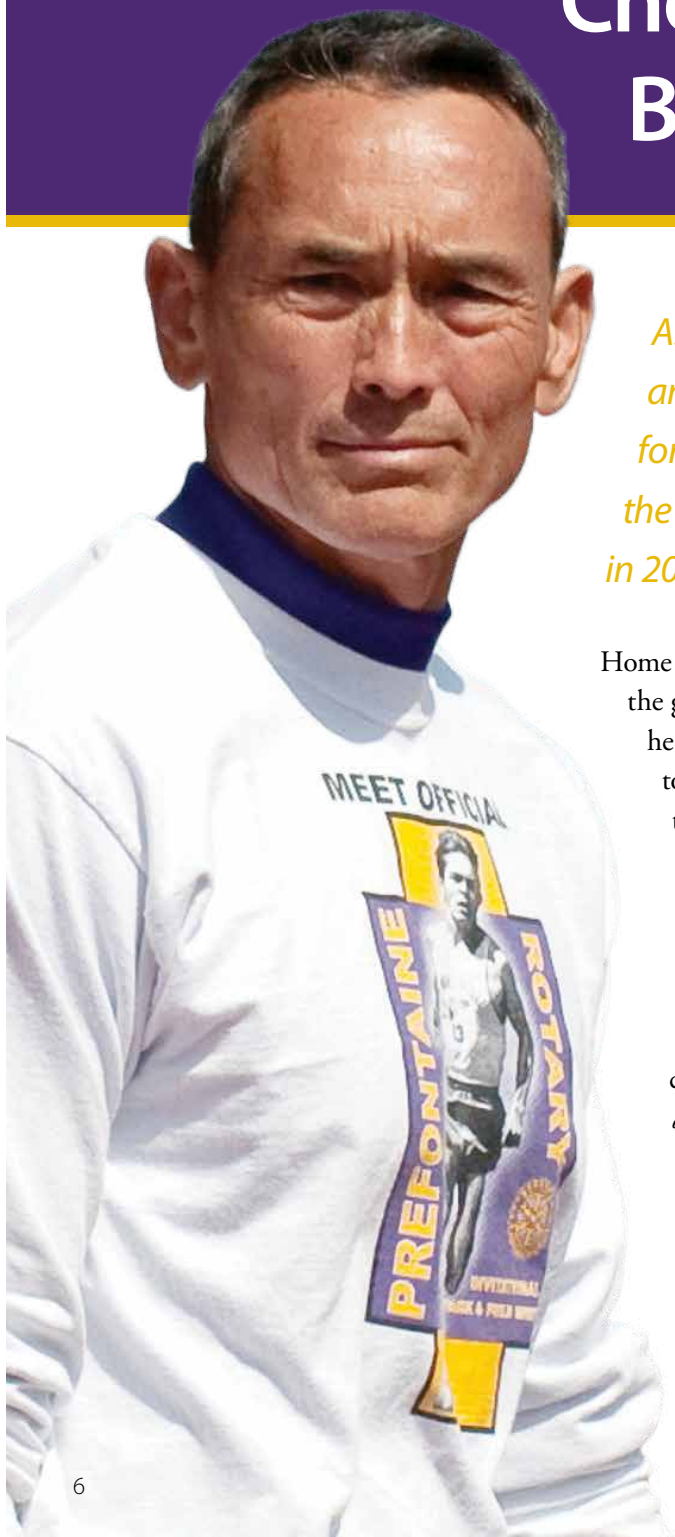
Chooses to Fight His Battle Close to Home

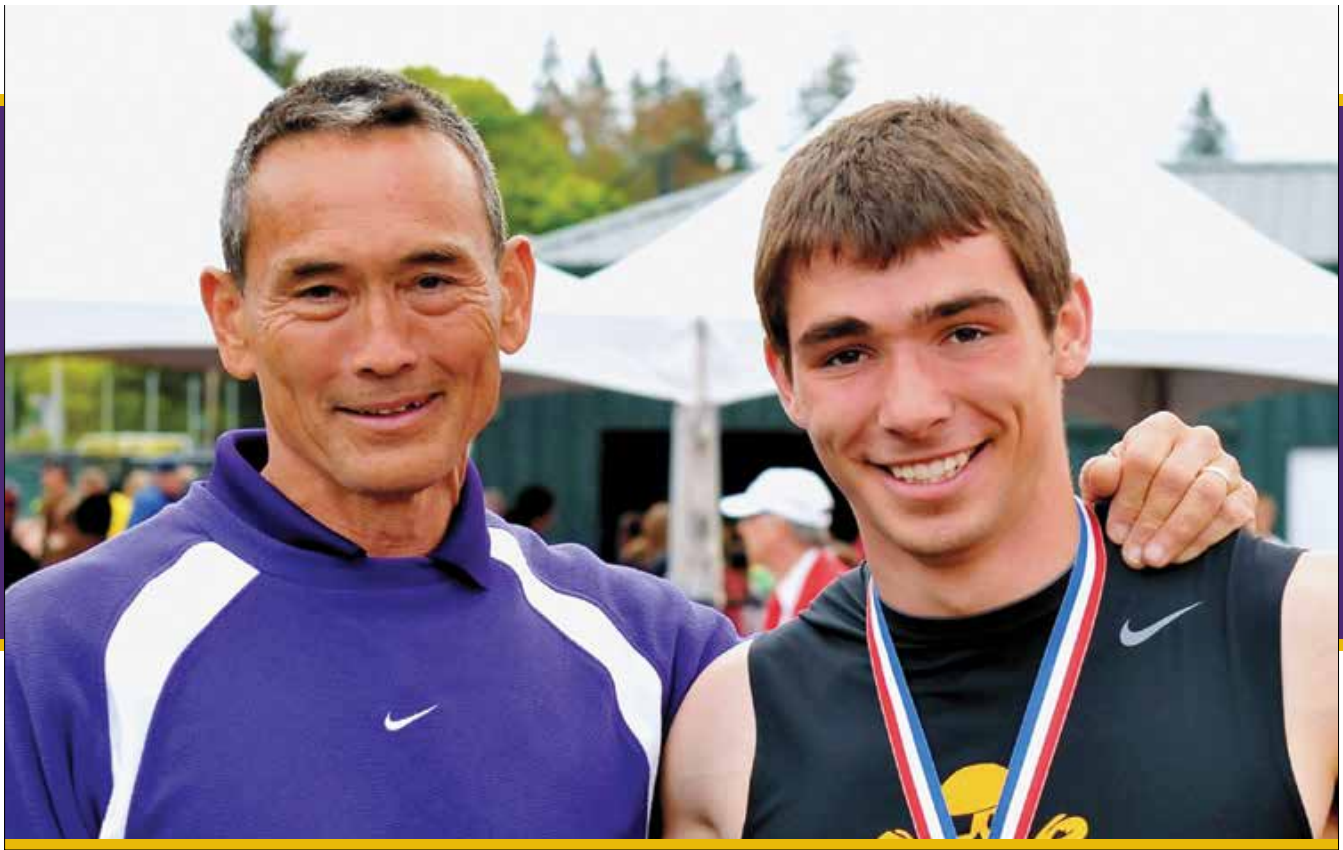
As a US Air Force brat growing-up and later an F-15 pilot during his own long career in the air force, Richard "Mac" McIntosh has seen much of the world. But when cancer rocked his own world in 2015, he chose a battleground close to home.

Home for Mac is Coos Bay, where as a teenage track athlete he met the girl of his dreams at Marshfield High School. After graduation he and Linnea Wright would go on to marry and chart a course together that included a number of stops around the country, but they always knew they would be back to Oregon to retire. For Mac true retirement didn't last long. In 2009 he returned to his roots and became the head coach of the Marshfield High track team—a team he leads for a ninth season this spring.

But the past couple of years have been a little different. In September 2015 Mac was diagnosed with Stage IV pancreatic cancer. Says Mac, "Some people look back and say, *What if I had done that?* or *What if I had known earlier?* I've lived my life with the mantra, *What could've happened did.* I refuse to look back. Now I'm here. Now what do I do with what I've got?"

A few months earlier, Mac's Rotary Club had happened to tour the new Bay Area Cancer Center facility. He was impressed, but he never thought he would be thinking about seeking treatment there. When the cancer spread, however, and





Coach Mac with track student, Blake Kemp.

"I refuse to quit. I've never quit anything in my life. I refuse to quit this as well."

radiation and chemotherapy were the next course of action, he fought to go out of his insurance network to get his treatment at Bay Area Cancer Center—and he hasn't looked back.

"It is world-class," says Mac. "I tell everybody that. Here's why: I've become a semi-expert in Internet lore in pancreatic cancer because, like everything else, I'm all in. I'm going to become an expert; I'm going to read about it and understand it. I've learned that the procedures I'm going through at Bay Area Cancer Center—the chemotherapy protocol, the regimen that they are putting me on—are exactly what they are doing at the Mayo Clinic and at all the great cancer centers. They're standard protocols of treatment. There is nothing different that happens here."

Mac also gives high marks to his doctor, Bret Cook, MD, the nurses, and the office staff. It is much more than just proximity to his home, though that helps, as well.

"There are three legs to my treatment protocol. One is the medical staff and the world-class treatment that I'm getting there. Another is the support system: I've married the woman of my dreams, and there is no one better. Outside of that my family is very supportive, and the local community is very supportive. Beyond that, the guys I was in the air force with are all pulling for me. There is a group of people who I know care, and I don't want to disappoint them. I just don't want to let them down.

"Spiritually, you've just got to have faith in something. I have faith in the medical protocol, but I also have faith that there is something bigger at work. If I can somehow harness that—that is the third leg. For me my journey, at least, is enhanced by my attitude. "I refuse to quit. I've never quit anything in my life. I refuse to quit this as well."