



by Jackie Perrone

Ernie Yarborough

Ernie Yarborough lives by a motto that he shares with the world: “Every day is an opportunity to make a difference.” Believing this is one thing, living up to it means quite a bit more, and this Lexington citizen takes it seriously indeed.

“I subscribe to the F3 Nation,” he says. “That’s Fitness, Fellowship, and Faith. It’s a way of life that I’m glad I found.” This businessman started his own agency with Nationwide Insurance in Columbia in June of 2000. Through these years, he has won local and regional awards for community service, from his company, and from Rotary International and the Midlands Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. This year, he was awarded the Nationwide National Community Service Award.

Early in life, Ernie developed a devotion to physical fitness. You might think his initial E stands for Endurance. Triathlons, marathons, and mud runs join swimming feats as a regular participation for him. Swim around Key West Island? Eleven-mile swim around Lake Murray? Not a problem. After some years of building strength and endurance in such events, he found a way to merge it with his other passion: the cancer wing at Palmetto Health Children’s Hospital. He believes God led him to this way of life.

He can be found every Thursday visiting with the cancer patients, and he matches his participation in endurance events to fund-raising and awareness for them. “People may think I inspire them,” he says. “It’s really the other way around. I am inspired every week by their courage. They should be out playing ball and goofing around, instead of facing a routine of treatment and medication. They face it bravely and look forward to recovery. We play games together, sometimes do crafts and paint, and enjoy each other’s company. It’s the highlight of my week, every week.”

He is on the Leadership Committee for the SC Midlands chapter of the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society and on the board for Palmetto Health Children’s Hospital Foundation. In 2017, he was named Midlands Leukemia Man of the Year.

In case you think marathon running and swimming are enough physical activity for one man, Ernie Yarborough has also been a NASCAR driver and a sky diver. He won various medals in those fields, and these days he gives them away to his kids at the cancer wing when they complete their treatment regimen.

An active member of Riverland Hills Baptist Church, he says the two best decisions he ever made were accepting Jesus Christ into his life and marrying his wife Nicole Yarborough. They have two daughters: Chesley, 15, and Ella, 12. ■

