

## Lee Miller: Heart of Gold

After spending 19 years in a wheelchair, Medford resident Lee Miller is back on his feet, and he will be using them to help raise support and awareness on Saturday, October 17 at the Brain Injury Association of New Jersey's Walk for Thought / Cycle for Safety.

After being involved in a serious motor vehicle accident in which he sustained nerve damage, spinal cord damage, and a brain injury, Lee's doctors said he would never walk again. And for a long time he couldn't. But after taking on a whole new attitude and spending hours upon hours at intense physical and cognitive therapy sessions, Lee said goodbye to his wheelchair for good.

"I was just really tired of that darn chair," Lee said. "So I had to challenge myself. It was hard, but I wanted things to change for me."

And change they did. Not only is Lee walking now, but he's also running...for Gold medals!

Once he felt strong enough to walk on his own, Lee decided he wanted to get more involved in activities. He contacted Jeanne Bozicek, Special Olympics coordinator for adults at Bancroft Neurohealth and asked if he could participate in some way. With Jeanne's encouragement, Lee decided he would start training for races.

From that point on Lee and Jeanne started training together once a week by running around a track. "He's extremely dedicated," Jeanne said of Lee. "He decided he wanted to do this and was out there every day and never quit. He's a very positive person."

After training for several weeks, Lee was ready to compete in the All South Jersey Special Olympics in Blackwood. Unfortunately on that day he had yet another obstacle to overcome. He had just had tubes put into his ears and it was making him feel dizzy. But that didn't stop him.

"What's the worst that could've happened?," Lee asks. "Maybe I would fall but I've already done that plenty of times."

Not only did Lee go ahead with the race, but he won! He finished first in his division in the 800 meter walk and 100 meter run, taking home two gold medals. He also qualified for the Special Olympic Games at the College of New Jersey, which featured winners from throughout the state. And Lee's winning continued there, as he took home a gold and silver medal in his events.

"I wouldn't have even cared if I got a medal or not," Lee said. "It was the fact that I could run and walk right for the first time in years that made me happy."

Lee seems to be a positive influence on whoever



*Lee Miller won three gold medals and a silver medal at the Special Olympics.*

he comes in contact with. His doctors, nurses, co-workers, family, and neighbors all admire him. "He has made a remarkable recovery," said Anne Nagle, a receptionist at Temple Neurology who Lee has become friendly with. "He is a wonderful individual. He is truly an inspiration to all of us."

Lee is now living on his own in Medford. He enjoys watching movies, photography, and fish tanks. He will also start giving talks about brain injury and his experiences at various organization meetings. But lately he has been spending much of his spare time collecting donations and support for the Walk for Thought / Cycle for Safety.

"Even if everything I am doing helps just one person it will all be worth it," Lee said. "I'm not doing this for myself. I want to be able to help others."

To find out more information about the Association's Walk for Thought / Cycle for Safety, or to make a donation in honor of Lee or one of the other participants, please visit [www.bianj.org](http://www.bianj.org).