

## BRIDGET GRIFFIOEN

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Coach Jen, who also works as a physical therapist at HealthTrac, gives Bridget a big high five. The rest of us applaud her incredible effort and skill. It was amazing to see, especially if you have ever attempted a walking hand-stand and know the high level of strength it takes to maintain balance while moving forward—even an inch.

“This is the first time I have reached 7 feet,” Bridget says all smiles. “I started working on hand-stand walks when they were programmed into a CrossFit workout a while ago and I couldn’t even kick up into a handstand. Leaving the gym that day, I knew it was something I wanted to learn how to do, so I added hand-stand work to my accessory work log. Since that day, I’ve worked many different hand-stand walk scales to slowly build my strength and confidence. It’s still a work in progress, but it always brings a smile to my face when I can walk a couple of yards before toppling over.”

Having reached that goal, Bridget will continue to push on. There seems to be no limit to her energy and love of athletics, working out, competing and staying fit.

“I feel I’m getting stronger and even more fit,” says the 39-year-old wife and mother of two children who grew up in Three Rivers. She played basketball, volleyball and ran track in high school, and played point guard on the woman’s basketball team at Kalamazoo Valley Community College.

“Sports have always been an important part of my life,” she says. “I am able to connect with people through sports. I’ve always been active—always out and on the go with a lot of energy, riding my bike, playing football with the boys at the park when I was younger, playing basketball, being active for as long as I can remember.”

Bridget’s son, Evan, who was an all-state wrestler, is a junior in college and avid power lifter. Her daughter, Abigail, is a sophomore at Three Rivers High school and also enjoys sports. Her husband, Rob, a union pipefitter by trade, often works out with her at HealthTrac.

“Being an active family is a part of who we are, so my kids don’t think of my active lifestyle as anything special. I love that they are active as well because it allows us to spend time together and gives us something to talk about around the dinner table or in the car.

“My husband is a huge supporter of my athletics. If I have a desire to compete in a race or competition he will absolutely support me. Working out may not be as exciting to him, but it gives us

time together. He likes to work out with me, which is time we have together, and as you know time is at a premium.”

Bridget stands five feet three inches tall and knows her weight only because she can bench press it. Lean, strong and spring loaded, she has recently recovered from an injury to her IT band, which is a multipurpose tendon running down the length of the outer thigh, from the top of the pelvis to the shin bone. “My primary fitness goal right now is to increase my strength and build back my stamina. Working through my IT band tear really limited the amount of running I could do. I’m slowly working back into my running regimen.”

Teaching third grade at Ruth Hoppin Elementary also keeps her busy. She says much has changed in the 17 years since starting her career. “There’s a lot more paperwork involved, such as writing individualized plans for students. One of the more demanding aspects of my job is differentiating student needs. I feel like the gap has widened between ability levels in my classroom and I work hard to meet each student’s specific needs. Relationship building is key in helping my students reach their fullest potential.”

Though Bridget genuinely enjoys teaching, like any other demanding profession she says it can bring on stress. Do her athletic pursuits—competing in marathons, duathlons and biking or running a triathlon relay bring relief? “Oh my goodness, yes, this is my outlet. It makes a difference in my attitude for sure. I look forward to these events. I really love the camaraderie, too. Of course, it is way easier to be motivated when you have a partner or friend—or my husband—to workout and train with.”

She regularly trains with HealthTrac instructor Julie Allen along with Tammy Shuler, Kathy Griffin and Jodie Walker. “We can go for a long bike ride or run and say very little or talk a lot. They understand you in a way your husband doesn’t even though he says he does,” she adds with a chuckle.

Races in which she has competed include the Boston Marathon and marathons in Chicago, Indianapolis and Detroit – just to name a few. She also teamed with Julie, Tammy and Kathy for the Van Buren County trail run relay, as well as other relay races. “I think I have traveled more with Julie and Kathy than my own family. My favorite was the 2014 Boston Marathon. I was pleased with my time. Afterwards, we saw the Red Sox play, took a boat tour and went to the market. I had never been there. It was such a great time.”

Training for the prestigious Boston Marathon, which occurs the second Monday in April, involved toughing it out through the cold, dark days of winter. “A lot of mornings I would not have woke up if it weren’t for my running mates. They were waiting for me. I had to show. Marathons are a grueling test of physical and mental toughness. I had to get comfortable with being uncomfortable because I know those are when the best moments in life happen.”

A member of CrossFit for six years—now located at the Pit Fitness Ranch—Bridget typically arrives every morning at 5:00 am to attend the gym’s Workout of the Day (WOD). “I love the camaraderie, the variations in the workouts, the fact that I have to do things I’m not good at, and the gains I’ve made in every aspect of my fitness journey.”

Watching her perform chest to bar pull ups, rope climbs and hand-stand push-ups at CrossFit is a sight to behold. The WOD, designed to challenge participants with a variety of high-intensity exercises, also fosters both a competitive spirit and culture of encouragement and support. “Some of the new exercises I’ve learned are the hand-stand push up, the vertical variation of push-up, rope climbs and double unders—a jump rope exercise where the participant needs to jump up higher than usual while swinging the rope twice under her feet.”

After she completes the WOD, her daily workout is not yet finished. She remains at the gym to continue her own regimen, methodically tracking her progress. At the top of her log is a row of exercises: Bench Press, Front Squat, Back Squat, Shoulder Press, Dead Lift, Push Press and Hand-stand Pushups. In each box for the week she indicates the number of sets and reps she completes for each. She tracks other exercises, too, such as wall balls, rope climbs, bar dips and lunges.

“I work my core every time I workout. It’s made me stronger, increased my balance, and improved my lower back health.”

She does not, however, track her weight, heart rate or other measurements such as body mass index. “I don’t regularly use measurements. I can’t even tell you the last time I weighed myself. I monitor that by how loose or tight my jeans fit.”

Although Bridget does her best to “eat as clean as possible,” she doesn’t fret over diets. “When I don’t eat healthy, I can tell because it impacts my performance in all aspects of life—being a mom, being a teacher, and being an athlete.”

After putting in a full day of

work in the classroom, she often teaches running class in the evenings or works the fitness floor on the weekends at the HealthTRAC.

“For a small town, we are very blessed to have the fitness centers we do,” she says. “CrossFit is high intensity. I also do workouts at HealthTrac with my husband that involve interval training. For example, we may do a 30-minute EMOM (every minute on the minute) with three different movements such as kettle bell swings, box jumps, and wall balls. I also interval train along with my running when I’m training for a race. I like interval training because I feel like I get the most bang for my buck. Interval training helps improve my endurance and strength all at the same time and I don’t have to spend two hours at the gym to feel like I got a good workout.”

Her advice to women who want to start a workout regimen: “You must make it a priority. It’s a choice. If fitness is something you truly want to do, you’ll find the time. Sure, it’s not fun when your alarm goes off at 4:30 a.m. But you don’t feel as well if you don’t make the effort. My day hasn’t started until I get to the gym and get rolling. I don’t think there has been a single morning where I said I wish I had slept in. It has become a routine, and I would not call myself a morning person by any means.”

Along with her fitness routine, family life and career, Bridget makes time to volunteer. Last summer she traveled to Guatemala with her children as part of a mission program on behalf of Riverside Church to assist communities in need there. “Part of our team worked on a construction project for a local church in Jalapa while others worked in a medical clinic seeing about 700 patients in five days of outreach. I also serve in the children’s ministry at Riverside Church and help with band and sports boosters through the high school.”

What’s next for a woman who believes the best is yet to come? “I would love to do a triathlon some day. I’ve done many duathlons, but am not a strong swimmer so I’ve never done a triathlon. My time training in the pool has increased my confidence in the water and swimming abilities so it may be something I tackle in the future.”

No doubt she will tackle swimming and triathlons the same way she tackles walking hand-stands: With determination and willpower—and beaming with delight as she reaches her next goal.

## TROOPS

Continued from page 1

The strike marked a major escalation in the conflict between Washington and Iran, as Iran vowed “harsh retaliation” for the killing of the senior military leader. The two nations have faced repeated crises since Trump withdrew from the 2015 nuclear deal and imposed crippling sanctions.

The United States urged its citizens to leave Iraq “immediately” as fears mounted that the strike and any retaliation by Iran could ignite a conflict that engulfs the region.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo defended the strike as “wholly lawful,” saying that Soleimani posed an “imminent” threat against the U.S. and its interests in the region.

“There was an imminent attack,” Pompeo told Fox News. “The orchestrator, the primary motivator for the attack, was Qassem Soleimani.”

The White House did not inform lawmakers before the strike. It was expected to give classified briefings to members of Congress and staff in the afternoon. Defense Secretary Mark Esper notified House Speaker Nancy Pelosi of the strike shortly before the Pentagon confirmed it publicly.

Pompeo called world leaders Friday to explain and defend Trump’s decision to order the airstrike that has sparked fears of an explosion of anti-

American protests as well as more violence in the already unstable Middle East.

The State Department said Pompeo had spoken Friday with top officials in Afghanistan, Britain, China, France, Germany and Pakistan.

In his calls with the British and German foreign ministers as well as China’s state counselor, Pompeo stressed that Trump acted to counter an imminent threat to U.S. lives in the region but also that the U.S. is committed to “de-escalation” of tensions, according to the department’s summaries of the conversations.

De-escalation was not mentioned in the department’s summary of his call with the French foreign minister, nor in his calls with Afghanistan’s President Ashraf Ghani or the Pakistani military chief of staff. In those calls Pompeo

“underscored the Iranian regime’s destabilizing actions through the region and the Trump Administration’s resolve in protecting American interests, personnel, facilities and partners,” the department said.

Trump opted not to play a round of golf on Friday, and he was not expected to be seen publicly until he travels to Miami for an afternoon event for his reelection campaign.

## OBITUARY

### INEZ SALINAS



Inez Salinas, age 71, of Mendon passed away on Tuesday, December 31, 2019 at Borgess Medical Center. She was born in Weslaco, Texas on March 22, 1948 the daughter of Martin and Maria (Bernal) Mireles.

Inez was united in marriage to Mario in 1964. Together they moved to Mendon, Michigan from Donna, Texas shortly after they wed. Inez enjoyed the peacefulness of working outside, which is one of the reasons she worked at Lyons Nursery for many years and later at Hacienda Nursery in Mendon where she resided. She especially enjoyed her large family gatherings with the music playing while playing bingo, laughing and joking with all her kids, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. Inez will be missed by all her family that will continue to love her without end.

She is survived by her husband Mario Sr.; children

Mario Jr., Joe (Theresa), Robert (Kelli), David (Chris), Maria (Tom), Ida (Nasario), Adam (Rachel) and Rudy; many grandchildren and great grandchildren.

In accordance with her wishes cremation will be conducted and a memorial mass will be held on Monday, January 6, 2020 at 11 a.m. at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church of Three Rivers.

Memorial donations may be directed to the National Kidney Foundation or the Mendon Kiwanis. Envelopes available at Hohner Funeral Home in care of arrangements. Online condolences may be shared at [www.hohnerfh.com](http://www.hohnerfh.com).

### OPEN HOUSES SUNDAY JAN. 5

Sun., Jan. 5 2-4 p.m.

58608 Winterwood Ln-Three Rivers  
\$259,000



New Construction! 3 BR, 2 BA, 1519 sqft, open concept, vaulted ceiling, His and hers closets, main fir Laundry, 2 car att. garage, full bsmt  
Dir: From Sixth Ave, S on Pond View Ln, Right on Autumnwood, S on Winterwood

Hostess: Cassandra McWatters, 269-535-0968

Sun., Jan 5 12-2 p.m.

58686 Winterwood Ln-Three Rivers  
\$269,000



New Construction! 3 BR, 3 BA, 1501 sqft, Open concept, vaulted ceiling, full fin. bsmt w/egress, main fir laundry, 3 car attached garage  
Dir: From Sixth Ave, S on Pond View Ln, Right on Autumnwood, S on Winterwood

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