

# WTG *Achievers*

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## About the WTG

*The twenty private, or independent, colleges and universities of Wisconsin operate without taxpayer support, but provide an invaluable public service to the state, educating more than 57,000 students a year. Many of Wisconsin's best and brightest need financial help to attend the college of their choice.*

*The State of Wisconsin created the Wisconsin Tuition Grant (WTG) in 1965 to help qualified Wisconsin citizens to succeed. Fully one-third of the low-income students who apply for the WTG are turned away every year for lack of funds. Each month **WTG Achievers** brings you success stories of Wisconsinites for whom the WTG has made a significant difference.*

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## Silver Lake student shows grit, determination



*Ben Salentine of Kewaunee, a senior at Silver Lake College*

*Editor's note: Ben Salentine, a senior psychology major at Silver Lake College, has been significantly assisted by the Wisconsin Tuition Grant*

*Program in pursuing his undergraduate degree after a 2001 car accident.*

*Ben's remarkable story of determination and perseverance is excerpted here with permission granted by reporter Barb Ludlow of the Algoma Record-Herald and Kewaunee News.*

Ben Salentine, in a wheelchair since 2001, is a young man with a lot of resolve. He is determined to fight the odds and walk away from his wheelchair, and has family and friends to help him reach that goal. Fundraising efforts

are underway for a special bike that stimulates Salentine's nerves with electrical impulses and, eventually, may again establish the connection between his brain and legs and enable him to walk.

Salentine has been to a noted Midwest medical research facility at the recommendation of the Christopher Reeves Foundation, according to Don Kickbusch, one of the fundraising organizers. "Ben's spinal cord is compressed, not severed," Kickbusch said. "He can walk around the track at All Aboard Fitness Center in

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## WTG recipient at Wisconsin Lutheran excels in the biology lab and on the gridiron



*TJ Bodnar from Racine, a senior at Wisconsin Lutheran College*

When TJ Bodnar set out to find a college, he didn't want to be just another number on campus. He didn't want to

get lost in the crowd, which can happen at bigger schools. TJ visited other colleges, but when he first stepped onto the campus at Wisconsin Lutheran College, the surroundings were inviting, and he knew he had found the perfect fit.

What made it the right fit? It was the small, friendly campus, the ability to get involved, the proximity to home, and the faculty and staff that put him at ease. He also appreciated the challenging classes offered in his chosen field of biology and the fact that he might be able to play on the Wisconsin Lutheran football team.

Sports played an important role for TJ, a four-sport athlete at Racine Park High School, and he hoped his sports activities would continue at college. Now a senior, TJ is the starting quarterback for the Wisconsin Lutheran football team and a member of the baseball team.

Sports can be a great teacher. It is through sports that TJ has learned valuable life lessons – lessons that will serve him well in the future. He knows that hard work applies in all situations. It is through the extra effort and work that a reward is finally earned

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**BEN SALENTINE** CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Kewaunee with braces and canes.”

Salentine can move his legs somewhat, but they do not support his body weight without the braces and crutches. “This bike provides electrical stimulus to strengthen the muscles and wake them up,” said George Orr, who helps Salentine with pool exercises.

Salentine has overcome daunting challenges since the fateful accident that left him in the hospital for two months. “The first two weeks he was in critical care and we didn’t know if he would make it or not,” said his dad, Frank Salentine, the Kewaunee police chief. Besides damaged frontal lobes, Ben also suffered cracked ribs and crushed T12 vertebrae in his back. He has made great strides since doctors told him to get used to his wheelchair because he had only a 1% chance of ever walking. He went home heavily medicated.

Dr. Marc Steele, a Kewaunee chiropractor, discovered that one of two rods in his back had unhooked, causing excruciating pain. Later both rods were removed. At that same time, Steele opened All Aboard Fitness, a health club just north of Kewaunee on Highway 42.

“It’s almost destiny,” said Salentine, who has spent up to four hours a day in therapy. “First the fitness center opened when I really needed it. I worked with Julie (Anderson) until she left; now, George and Don are there.”

Salentine is also on the Green Bay Horizon wheelchair basketball team that the Silver Lake College community enjoys supporting. Last year the team finished with a 20-1 winning record and placed third in the national tournament in Peoria, Illinois. In addition, Salentine volunteers to work with youngsters in after-school programs as often as he is able.

**FACT OF THE MONTH**

From 2004 to 2014, job openings in the U.S. are projected to grow 13 percent, which comes out to 18.9 million more jobs over ten years. Those jobs that require a degree are expected to increase faster than those that don’t.

*U.S. Labor Department*

**TJ BODNAR** CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

– whether it is a good grade in a class or a “W” in the box score.

TJ also knows that things aren’t always going to be easy. He says, “When times get tough, you can’t give up. That’s when you need to dig deep, pick yourself up, and face challenges head on.”

Since TJ is one of five college-age boys in his family, he knows that affording college can be a financial struggle. Thanks to the Wisconsin Tuition Grant, TJ overcame this financial challenge. “I’m very grateful for the WTG,” says TJ.

“The fact that this grant is there for four years takes away the burden of worrying how I’m going to pay for college. Instead, I can focus on college life rather than on how to pay for it.”

Right now TJ’s focus is on graduating with a biology degree. During his freshman year of college he took a few education courses, which allowed him to get clinical teaching experience in the classroom – an experience he loved. TJ hopes to get certified to teach biology at the high school level and, of course, to coach.

His interest in biology stems from a high school AP biology class. He found it to be the most challenging and fascinating academic field, especially since the math and chemistry courses don’t come easy for him. But TJ is not one to back away from a challenge. “I’m working hard and working through it,” says TJ. “I definitely plan on doing whatever it takes to reach my goals.”

With the help of the Wisconsin Tuition Grant and the work ethic TJ possesses, there is no question that his goals are well within reach.

**Wisconsin’s Private Colleges and Universities**

Alverno College *Milwaukee*  
 Beloit College *Beloit*  
 Cardinal Stritch University *Milwaukee*  
 Carroll College *Waukesha*  
 Carthage College *Kenosha*  
 Concordia University *Mequon*  
 Edgewood College *Madison*

Lakeland College *Sheboygan*  
 Lawrence University *Appleton*  
 Marian College *Fond du Lac*  
 Marquette University *Milwaukee*  
 Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design *Milwaukee*  
 Milwaukee School of Engineering *Milwaukee*

Mount Mary College *Milwaukee*  
 Northland College *Ashland*  
 Ripon College *Ripon*  
 St. Norbert College *De Pere*  
 Silver Lake College *Manitowoc*  
 Viterbo University *La Crosse*  
 Wisconsin Lutheran College *Milwaukee*

