



THE COMMUNITY PAGE

Pick Yourself Up and Keep Going!



Anderson, South Carolina cross-country runner Ben Comen has been called “the slowest cross-country runner in the world” by media outlets like *Runner’s World*, *Sports Illustrated* and *ESPN*. They weren’t joking, and they weren’t being mean. In fact, every story about Ben that appears in the media is tinged with awe and awash in praise. Ben Comen has cerebral palsy, and he simply never quits.

Despite his crippling disease, Ben decided early on that he wanted to run. Perhaps it was the common emotional tie that binds Ben to his non-afflicted identical twin brother, Alex. Alex ran in junior high, and Ben wanted to. But no one would have him. He presented too many challenges. He could sit on the bench or serve as the water boy, but Ben wanted to run!

Finally a kind-hearted and visionary coach allowed him to run, and encouraged his effort. Ben’s limited control of his arms, the braces on his legs and a debilitating stiffness in his entire body pushed him to the limit, and he went beyond. In doing so, his teammates quickly began reaching and exceeding their own previous limits.

Ben has competed as a cross-country runner (3.1 miles) now for five years. Or rather, he has run. He’s never really been in the competition in a single race. In every race he quickly falls behind everyone else. He falls, stumbles, scrapes his shins, bruises and soon bloodies his knees. The rest of the pack quickly leaves him in their dust. But as they finish in half the time it takes him (one sportswriter said “the only thing he beats is the sunset”), many of his teammates run back to find him, to help him up, and to accompany him to the finish line. Many of the opposing team’s runners do the same. People watching the race join in. Grown men stand and cry as he drags himself across the finish line. He has never failed to finish a race.

In picking himself up again and again, in finishing a grueling competition many would say he never should have entered, he picks up everyone else, too, revealing in living color the power of the human will. To those who watch him, he is a champion every time.

In an October 2003 article for *Sports Illustrated*, writer Rick Reilly asked Ben, “Why?”

Responded then-16-year-old Ben, “Because I feel like I’ve been put here to set an example. Anybody can find something they can do, and do it well. I like to show people that you can either stop trying or you can pick yourself up and keep going. It’s just more fun to keep going.”

What is the lesson Ben Comen can teach each of us? How does his

experience relate to ours? Ben says it well enough: every one of us can find something we can do, and learn to do it well. Though competition abounds, though ridicule, failure, false starts and missteps dog our journey, each and every one of us can find our niche, and then find a winning stride. It’ll take hard work, practice and humility. It was an obscure, unappreciated, even scorned Henry David Thoreau who wrote, in his now world-famous book *Walden*: “Humility, like darkness, reveals the heavenly lights.”

Ben Comen has faced incredible odds. Through the course of our lives, each one of us has certainly faced similarly challenging prospects. It has been said that were all of the world’s struggles, trials and challenges thrown into a big pile and then each of us required to pick out three to be our own, most of us would pick the ones we’re already familiar with; the ones we’ve already learned to cope with, face head-on and challenge.

Few of us will ever change the world. But most of us don’t really care to. Most of us just want to succeed in business, or as parents. Some of us most desire to reach a level of proficiency with a given skill, or finish a college degree, or overcome a weakness that has kept us from being the best we can be.

People like Ben Comen take us a long way toward believing that we, perhaps, really can be that good at what we most desire. Ben Comen has never won a race in the traditional sense of the term. But he continues to break his own previous records, race after race, and he finds great joy in that *personal* win.

Ben often refers to the power he has found in the heat of desire, the discipline of practice and the will to keep trying. When asked about the pain, the humiliation, and the thought of quitting, he told an interviewer for *Runner’s World*, “I don’t think there ever was a day I wanted to quit. Several days I hurt a lot, but I knew there was always a chance.”

In a popular movie, the lead character asks the woman of his dreams (who hardly knows he’s alive) what the chances are of her ever falling in love with him. She answers, “One in a million.” Derailed for only a moment, the lead character, a man with perpetual optimism and belief in self, responds, “So, you’re telling me there is a chance!”

Absolutely. For every one of us.

Oh, one final note: South Carolina’s Hanna High is also the alma mater, and now the employer, of one James “Radio” Kennedy. They made a movie about his dream.

The great media scholar Marshall McLuhan often stated that “Education ought to be civil defense against media fallout.” Knowledge is power.

The impact on the mind from messages or images derived from music, magazines, books, television, the Internet, and film can be powerful and long-lasting. Such images can influence attitudes and behavior. Sometimes they can leave scars.

As a service to the community, Melaleuca offers the following “content snapshots” of films currently playing, or soon to be released, in Idaho Falls cinemas. We encourage you to seek more specific information on such web sites as www.screenit.com and www.filmvalues.com. The choices we make daily can impact our entire life. May you choose well, and live well.

Films Now Playing in Idaho Falls

Baptists at Our Barbecue (PG)
S1, P1, V1, A1, T1
Adapted from the best-selling regional novel of the same name, this romantic comedy explores love and lunacy in the backwards little town of “Longwinded,” where Mormons and Baptists struggle for power.

Be Cool (PG-13)
S3, P3, V3, A2, T1
Chili Palmer, the former strong-arm man introduced to audiences in “Get Shorty,” returns as a businessman trying to move from the movie industry to the music industry, dragging a cadre of misfits and miscreants along with him.

Beauty Shop (PG-13)
S2, P3, V1, A2, T1
Comedy: A flamboyant hair stylist is making a name for herself in Atlanta when her employer makes it too tough to continue. She opens a new shop, inheriting a colorful cast of clients and neighbors.

Because of Winn-Dixie (PG)
S1, P2, V1, A1, T2
A 10-year-old girl and her father, an itinerant preacher hoping to settle down, enter a town full of prejudices and hard times. Missing the companionship of a mother and the commitment of her father, she befriends a stray dog... and begins to win over the town.

Boogeyman (PG-13)
S2, P2, V3, A1, T3
Horror: A man returns to his childhood home hoping to face up to childhood fears that yet haunt. But once there, he finds his fears may have been justified after all.

Constantine (R)
S2, P3, V3, A2, T3
Horror: A man eternally cursed for an act earlier in his life tries earning a place in heaven by vanquishing demons, who only he can see.

Guess Who (PG-13)
S2, P2, V1, A2, T2
Comedy: An African American man struggles to accept and understand his daughter’s fiancé, a white man, at the same time he tries to rekindle the fire in his own marriage.

Hitch (PG-13)
S2, P2, V1, A2, T1
A modern Casanova takes it upon himself to train ordinary men in the finer nuances of getting the girl... but then can’t seem to get it right with the girl of his own dreams.

Hostage (R)
S1, P3, V3, A2, T3
When his own wife and daughter are kidnapped, a former police hostage negotiator enters the fray without official sanction. Yet he is severely handicapped by memories of his failure to successfully resolve a similar situation one year before.

House of Flying Daggers (PG-13)
S3, P1, V3, A1, T2
In 9th Century China, two Chinese deputies entice a blind dancer to lead them to the core of a rebel band intent on toppling the Tang Dynasty.

Ice Princess (G)
S1, P1, V1, A1, T2
A Harvard-bound physics whiz finds herself in a dilemma as competitive figure skating begins to compete for her attention and make her wonder about her true potential. A strained mother-daughter relationship raises the thematic score for this film.

Lemony Snicket’s A Series of Unfortunate Events (PG)
S1, P1, V2, A1, T2
Three recently orphaned siblings must deal with the wild maneuverings of a scheming distant cousin out to steal their inheritance. Academy Award for Costume Design.

Million Dollar Baby (PG-13)
S2, P3, V3, A1, T1
An aging, past-his-prime boxing manager takes a chance on a scrappy, yet determined female boxer. Multiple Academy Awards, including Best Director and Best Picture.

Miss Congeniality 2: Armed and Fabulous (PG-13)
S2, P1, V3, A1, T1
Comedy: Having blown her cover as an FBI agent (in the first movie), Gracie Hart begrudgingly accepts a role as FBI spokesperson. But when thugs kidnap two friends, she once again enters the fray... against orders.

National Treasure (PG)
S1, P1, V3, A1, T2
A modern-day treasure hunter and his wealthy financier are convinced that the final clue to the whereabouts of a legendary fortune is somehow encoded on the original Declaration of Independence document. One of them sets out to steal the document, and the other to stop him from doing so.

Pacifier (PG)
S1, P2, V3, A1, T2
In the mode of Kindergarten Cop comes the story of a Navy SEAL assigned to protect (and house sit) the five rowdy children of an assassinated scientist who was involved with high-level secret government work.

Phantom of the Opera (PG-13)
S2, P1, V3, A1, T2
A mysterious theater-dweller in 19th Century Paris endeavors to bolster the career of a beautiful actress with whom he has fallen in love, wreaking havoc when she does not reciprocate. Although this screenplay is co-written by Andrew Lloyd Webber, the film diverges from both his play and the original story.

Racing Stripes (PG)
S1, P1, V1, A1, T2
Comedy: A mismatched mélange of barnyard animals and their human caretakers team up to make Stripes, and abandoned circus donkey, a true contender on the horse racing circuit.

Ring Two (PG-13)
S1, P3, V3, A1, T3
Horror: A reporter races to save her young son from being inhabited by the spirit of a murdered girl.

Robots (PG)
S1, P1, V2, A1, T1
Animated comedy: A young robot leaves the simple life to head for the Big City, hoping to make his mark as an inventor. But when he arrives, things are not as they should be and he sets about to make it right, with help from all sorts of giggling gizmos and gabbing gadgets.

Sin City (R)
S3, P3, V3, A3, T3
Stylized Drama: Three disparate stories drawn from the pages of Frank Miller graphic novels (adult comic books) weave around each other in this exploration of violence, depravity and crime in a city gone deep.

Work and the Glory (PG)
S1, P1, V2, A1, T1
Based on the best-selling regional book series of the same name, members of the fictional Steed family face challenges to faith and family in the era of Joseph Smith and the birth of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Key to Symbols:

These content scores are offered in view of the MPAA rating the film carries. In other words, a film rated PG-13 by the MPAA and receiving a “moderate” score (2) for sex/nudity probably contains sexual material that would earn it an “extreme” score (3) were it a G or PG-rated film.

Degree (as per a film’s MPAA rating)

1 = not present or minimal

2 = moderate

3 = extreme

Element

S = Sex acts, nudity, sexual innuendo

P = Profanity, vulgarity (a single use of the ‘F’ word will earn an ‘extreme’ rating for any film)

V = Violence, weaponry, gore

A = Alcohol, drugs

T = Thematic elements such as child abuse, violent crime, homosexuality, horror, etc.

Thus, a film receiving ratings of S1, V2 and P3 would have little or no overt sexual content, a moderate amount of violence, but a large volume of profanity or use of extreme profanity/vulgarity.