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Men's Health

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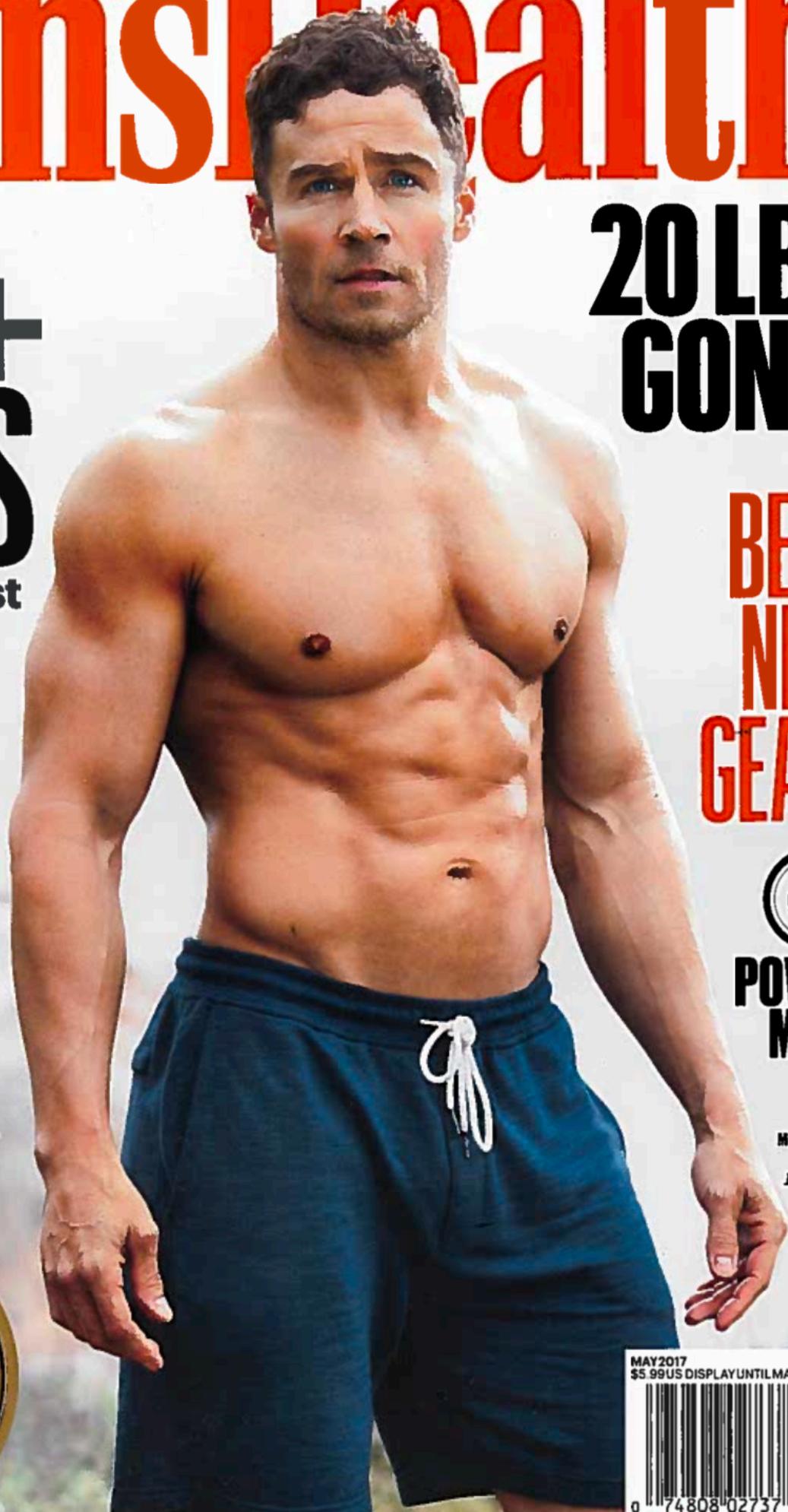
20 LBS GONE!

BEST NEW GEAR!

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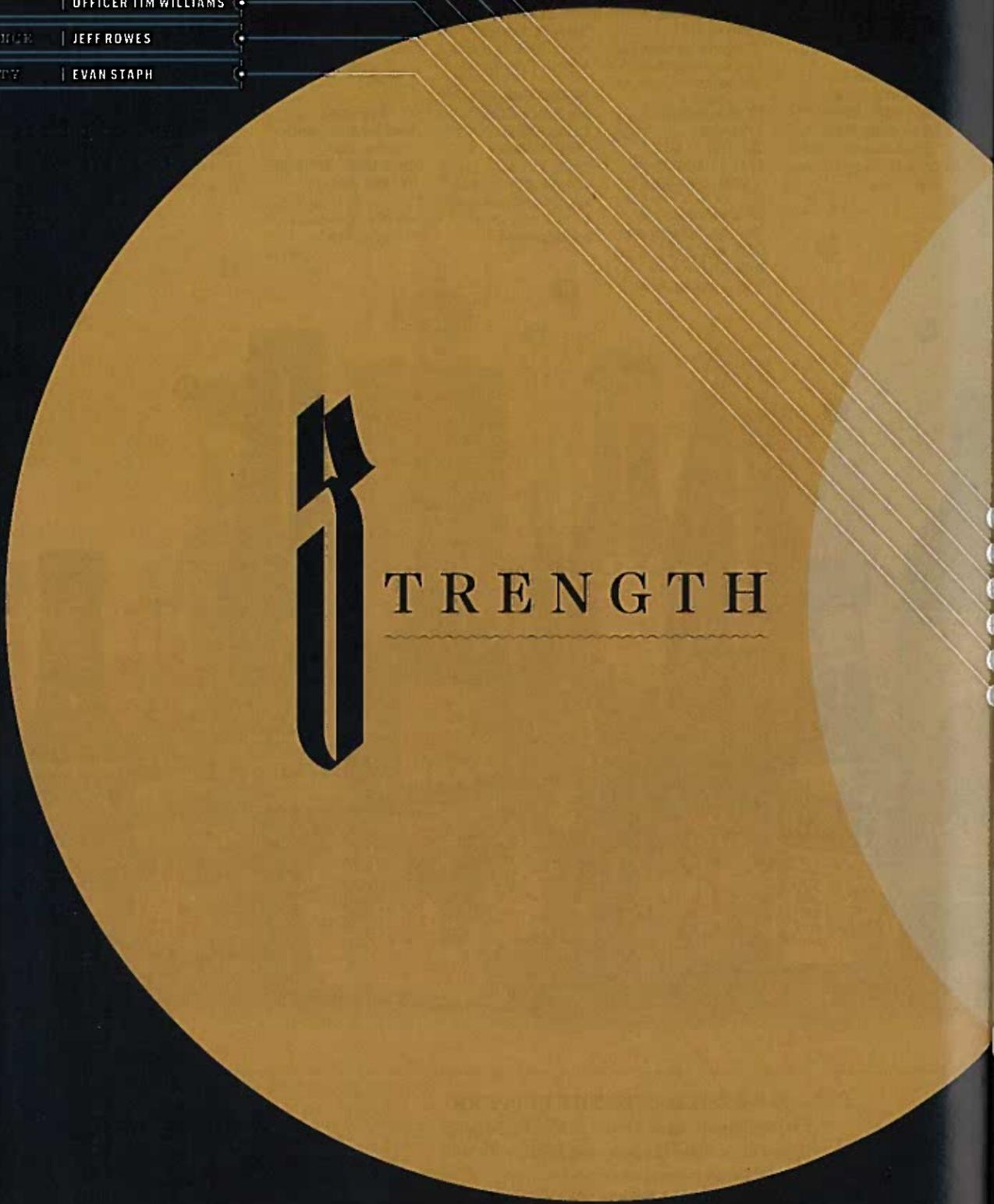


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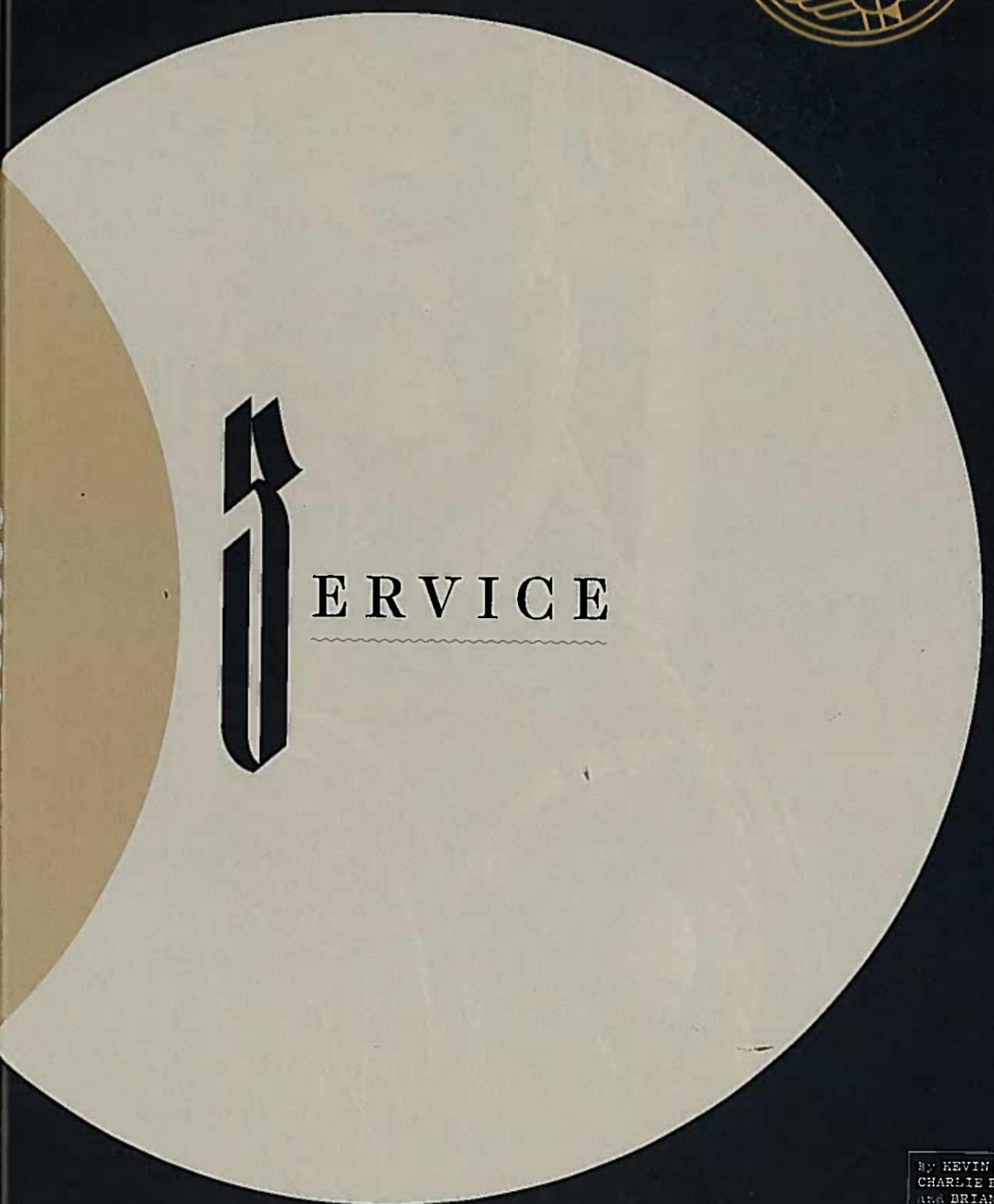




PERSISTENCE	WESLEY HAMILTON
TEMACITY	KENT BRANTLY, M.D.
DEVOTION	REV. GREG ORAHAM
BEAUV	OFFICER TIM WILLIAMS
ENDURANCE	JEFF ROWES
HUMILITY	EVAN STAPH



STRENGTH



SERVICE

A man's strengths can be revealed in many ways. Some

aren't visible, and some don't appear until needed—as in the stories of these six men.

BY KEVIN PANG,
CHARLIE BUTLER,
AND BRIAN FISKE
P. 117



DANIEL WARREN JOHNSON (portrait illustrations); location: CrossFit Lee's Summit

PERSISTENCE

DRAWING STRENGTH FROM OTHERS

THE WHEELCHAIR DAD

Wesley Hamilton

29 | Kansas City, MO

01

For six weeks in the winter of 2015, Wesley Hamilton lay on a hospital bed thinking about what he might do. It tormented him. Three years earlier, when he was 24, he'd been shot twice by a stranger. He was paralyzed from the waist down, facing a life he never imagined—as an unemployed, disabled single dad. He resigned himself to life in a wheelchair, wearing “Walmart sweatpants and Velcro shoes.” In the hospital, recovering from his fifth surgery, “You have all type of thoughts. You know, suicide and all,” Hamilton says. “It’s not a pretty thing.”

But he had a source of strength to fight off the negativity: his 5-year-old daughter, Nevaeh (“heaven” backward). Every time he had dark thoughts, “I automatically just thought about her,” Hamilton says. “And it gave me that extra push I needed to keep going.”

Back with Nevaeh in their two-bedroom ranch house, Hamilton stayed motivated. He wanted to stay emotionally strong for her. But he also needed physical strength.

Hamilton, then 5'4" and 260 pounds, says he'd never thought about fitness a day of his life. But with diet changes he lost 100 pounds in eight months. Then he searched #wheelchair on Instagram and was inspired to see other paraplegics working out. “I started going to the gym to see what I could and couldn't do,” he says. “After a while, my confidence built more and more.”

Hamilton now benches 250 and snatches 35-pound kettlebells above his head. He competes in CrossFit and bodybuilding contests and is working toward CrossFit certification. On his website, Disabled But Not Really, he shares what he's learned. “If people with disabilities see someone open up about it, maybe they can start to open up and release their mind. Sometimes the things we go through, we don't tell anybody, and it traps us.”

Above Hamilton's computer hangs a quote from Bob Marley: “You never know how strong you are until being strong is your only choice.” Today, he helps his daughter start her day by fixing her breakfast and teaming up on a workout. “My only dream,” Hamilton says, “is to allow her to keep dreaming, to let her know that whatever she wants to do, she can do.”

PHOTOGRAPH BY PAUL NORDMANN

TENACITY

RISING FROM A DEATHBED

THE EBOLA DOC

Kent Brantly, M.D.

36

Physician

Fort Worth, TX

02



When Kent Brantly, M.D. was told he had Ebola, he says, “I had a profound sense of peace in that moment.” Peace? When a killer lurked inside the 33-year-old father of two? Dr. Brantly, living in Liberia as a medical missionary, knew Ebola was 50 to 70 percent fatal. “I thought, ‘Okay, I may die here, but I’m going to die doing the right thing.’” His mental strength, he says, came from years of “not being a slave to comfort.”

“Weightlifters don’t do their max bench press every time they work out,” he says. “It’s the practice of little things over and over that prepares us for the bigger things.”

Dr. Brantly survived. He was severely weakened but is now his old self. He recently had to tell a mother she had breast cancer. “I cried with her, and there’s nothing weak about that,” he says. “To choose to have compassion for the person in front of you or for people on the other side of the world, instead of reacting out of fear, takes a deep sense of strength.” He pauses. “It’s not the kind of strength that lifts a car, but in a very real sense, it’s strength.”

DEVOTION

FINDING A PURPOSE

THE PASTOR TRAINER

Rev. Greg Oraham

55

Founder,
PastorFit.com

Seneca, SC

03



Greg Oraham was a trim, fit 50-year-old when he underwent emergency surgery for five blocked arteries. His anger, confusion, and fear felt familiar. Years earlier, his oldest son had suffered a brain injury in a horrific car accident. Oraham, the pastor of Foothills Community Church in Seneca, South Carolina, felt helpless. So he made a pact with God: “Whether my son lives or dies, I’m with you.” A feeling of serenity passed over him. Against all odds, his son recovered fully.

After heart surgery, Oraham again drew strength from dark days. He devoted himself to training, and other pastors (not usually the healthiest bunch, he says) took note. He drew up meal plans and workouts. Now a certified trainer, he runs the motivational Pastor Fit website, charging nothing.

Oraham gets the “suck it up” mentality. “But I also believe there’s another component necessary,” he says. “I tell the congregation: Storms will come into your life that you’ll brace for and withstand. When it happens, it requires more than all your inner strength.”

BRAND

RELYING ON MUSCLE

THE HERO COP

Officer Tim Williams

51
Skowhegan, ME

04



"There's somebody trapped inside!" Tim Williams arrived at the burning mobile home before the fire department did. Instincts sharpened during his 13 years as an Army medic kicked in. He ran into the raging flames, belly-crawled through darkness, and pulled two motionless people—a mother and son—to safety. He performed CPR until medics arrived. They lived.

Years earlier, when he weighed 264 pounds, such a feat would have been unthinkable. But Williams met a woman who changed his life: a bodybuilder named Kate who put him through fitness hell. Before long he was 80 pounds lighter, down to 11 percent body fat, and rippling with muscle. He entered bodybuilding contests, and he fell in love with Kate.

After the rescue, the praise, and an award, Williams thought back to his days of huffing up stairs. He reflected on how he's in better shape now at 51 than he was at 25.

The key, Williams says, was setting goals. That, and "everybody who helps you out and pushes you." Meaning Kate—and now their 2-year-old daughter, Alayna.

WITNESS

PRESSING FOR JUSTICE

THE DEFENDER

Jeff Rowes

45

Attorney,
Institute for Justice
Austin, TX

05



Jeff Rowes remembers taking a deposition from a witness a decade ago, and getting nowhere. Rowes has game: He's a Harvard grad who has won big cases. He's also a bike-riding, rock-climbing, hiking fiend who's completed several Ironmans. "If he thinks I can't sit here for two or three hours while I get every single thing I need out of him," Rowes recalls thinking, "then he is badly mistaken." The witness caved.

Rowes works for the Institute for Justice, which helps people fight government restrictions on property rights, free speech, and other libertarian issues. He makes workouts his second priority, after his clients. He commutes by running or cycling and leads associates in lunchtime runs and body-weight exercises in a park. "The discipline required to become physically strong is the same discipline needed to stand in court and project confidence."

Some of his Harvard classmates have gone on to prominent careers. But Rowes is happy being home by 5 p.m., doing pullups on tree branches with his sons.

HUMILITY

DIVING INTO THE DEEP

THE RESCUE SWIMMER

Evan Staph

30 U.S. Coast Guard Falmouth, MA

06



Evan Staph surfed before he walked. The Southern Californian joined the Coast Guard after high school, hoping to become a rescue swimmer—the guy who's lowered by a helicopter into choppy seas to save people in peril.

It is not for the soft. Swimmers spend four days a week in the gym: Olympic lifts, CrossFit-style circuit training, short-burst cardio, and core strengthening. They spend two days in the pool, swimming in full gear.

This prepares them for days like the one Staph had in February 2015. A father and son had lost electrical power on their boat 150 miles off Nantucket in 60-knot winds, 30-foot waves, and horizontal snow. When Staph was dropped into the water, he didn't feel the cold. He wasn't thinking about his bride of three months. What he was

thinking about—what was automatic from muscle memory—was what he learned in training: Follow protocol. If any step fails, regroup, and try again.

He swam all-out for five minutes in the roaring storm, weaving through debris. When he loaded the first boater into the rescue basket, a mammoth wave struck and forced Staph beneath the water. Setbacks mounted: The weather worsened, the helicopter hoist failed, and a static electricity shock knocked him unconscious. In the time he was lucid, Staph's brain defaulted to autopilot: Process, regroup, try again.

By the time both men were safe in the chopper, Staph had spent 40 minutes in the sea. It took him a long time to tell his wife how close he came to death.

Heroics come not from bravery, but humility and training. "Strength and humility are things I hold close," he says. "Take yourself seriously, but be humble and know there's someone you can learn from. If you're not humble, someone or something will humble you. It doesn't matter what you tell people you can do, or even think you can do. It just matters what you can do. And that takes humility."