



# Angus Stakes

► by *Shauna Rose Hermel*, editor

## What is the Olympic spirit?

*Did you catch the Olympic spirit in February? Whether they win or lose, those athletes who can give it their all — leaving nothing in reserve — to compete to their very best abilities are nothing short of heroes in my book. Whether they medal or come in dead last, they've made the most of their God-given talents, and that deserves respect. But when they can take it further, when they can use their spotlight to benefit others, they deserve more than our respect. They deserve our assistance.*

### Being the best

I think most people today would agree that the Olympic spirit is about dedication to being the best you can be and celebrating those marks of achievement. We can cheer our beef-industry spokesperson Sasha Cohen for getting a silver medal even after she faltered twice in her long program, not because she medaled, but because she got up after falling and put her signature stamp on the entire figure-skating competition.

One of the most “Olympic” comments I heard was from one of the United States’ young women competing in the half-pipe competition. With snowboarding generally an individual sport, she commented on how great an experience she was having competing as a team and how honored she was to be allowed to represent the United States on that team. I don’t recall her name. I don’t understand her sport. But, I cheer her spirit.

On the other hand, I didn’t feel a bit sorry for the snowboarder who missed a gold because she tried to show off. I can’t really be

happy for the speed skater who got his personal gold at the expense of a team placing. And, the banter between two teammates in the men’s speed-skating competition made me glad to see the magic refrigerator commercial.

### New heights

And then there’s speed skater Joey Cheek, who redefines the term “Olympic” — setting the bar just a little higher. After winning the 500-meter sprint, Cheek announced that he would donate the \$25,000 bonus he would receive from the U.S. Olympic Committee for winning gold to the charity Right to Play, and he challenged Olympic sponsors to match his donation. Founded 12 years earlier by Johann Olav Koss, who won three golds at the Olympics in Lillehammer, Norway, Right to Play is an international humanitarian organization that uses sport and play as a tool for child and youth development in the most disadvantaged areas of the world. Cheek said he wants to help children in the Darfur region of Sudan.

I can’t help but think those great intentions can propel individuals to greater accomplishments than they themselves are really capable of.

After winning silver in the 1,000-meter race, Cheek again donated his bonus — this time \$15,000 — to Right to Play. In mid-February, the organization reported Cheek’s assistance had resulted in nearly \$300,000 in donations, including gifts from The Gap, Nike, Jet Set, Lenovo and individuals.

### Closer to home

Such acts are not unique to the sports world. The gift by Blanford and Joan Pierce of Woodlawn Farms to begin an educational endowment (see page 88) through the Angus Foundation is no less heroic. That endowment will benefit youth for years to come.

But, remember, it’s not necessarily the size of the gift that’s important, it’s finding a way to use what you have to benefit others. It could mean volunteering your time, sharing your experience, giving the neighbor kid a ride to the county fair, donating your skills or just showing moral support for someone in need.

May we ever hold these acts of excellence as our standard, rather than allowing selfishness, vanity and pride to become acceptable.

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