

WHEELS

FROM PAGE D1

Brandon's mother, Carol Bilderback of Worthington, said the second of her three children learned very young not to let his disability keep him down "I never let him be hand-



JONATHAN QUILTER | DISPATCH

Brandon Thomas doing a "handstand push-up"

She recalled walking outside one day to find a 2-year-old Brandon, who had sneaked out of the house, sitting atop the family van. She realized then that his condition wouldn't be an obstacle. "It's not a disability; it's an ability," she said. "He can do everything except walk."

Mrs. Thomas said she is the one who bought Brandon a skateboard. "It's just the love of his life." So fond of the board has Brandon become, in fact, that he uses it routinely to get around — a notion that can make Mrs. Thomas uneasy. "I'd rather him be in his wheelchair, but he thinks being on a skateboard is faster," she said. "It's when he's on the streets that it makes me nervous."

board while moving. "I consider myself one of the very first handicapped skaters in the United States," he said. "I've been a lot of places — different states — and nobody has ever seen it." At the Extremity Games in July in Michigan — the only U.S. extreme-sports competition for athletes with disabilities — skateboarding drew six competitors, spokeswoman Beth Geno said. "Inspiring — that's the word we keep hearing," Geno said. "It's so inspiring to see someone without the use of their limbs compete." Thomas has found inspiration in Ogi de Souza, a Brazilian skateboarder with no legs whose tricks he often mimics.

About the condition

Arthrogryposis multiplex congenita is present from birth and causes limited mobility in the joints. It usually affects arms and legs but can involve fingers, wrists, ankles and shoulders.

- Symptoms: shortening of joint tendons, overgrowth of joint tissue
Cause: unknown; theories include viral infection and central nervous system failure
Treatments: At a young age, those affected do stretching exercises and use splints on the joints. If movement proves difficult or impossible, surgery might be necessary.
Prevalence: about three cases in 10,000 live births

Sources: National Organization for Rare Disorders, Children's Hospital Boston

Thomas has competed in Columbus against able-bodied skaters but not in a disabled-specific competition such as the Extremity Games. He hopes one day to skate professionally. "My dream is to just really get out there and show the world I'm handicapped and I'm a skateboarder. I'm grinding rails; I'm doing the stuff that I really want to do."

Another dream, he said, is to start a business (before he turns 25) to help disabled people become active. "I wish I could just go around the world and estimate how many people sit in their house and have a disability," he said. "Or, like, even normal people who just sit in their house all day: 'I wanna do this, and I wanna do that.' They're thinking it, but they're not doing it."

Thomas told a story about a mother and her 9-year-old son who approached him at a grocery store in Atlanta to ask for an autograph because they, in watching him ride his skateboard, figured he might one day be famous.

"She started tearing up real bad," he recalled. "Her son, he said, 'Dude, I wanna be just like you!' It just put a big smile on my face."

"When someone comes up to you and says you're an inspiration, it really gets to your heart. You're just like, 'Thank you very much for saying that,' because not too many people come up to you daily and tell you you're an inspiration to them."

Drawing such a conclusion has taken Thomas years of discovery in the wake of many challenges.

Most recently, he dropped out of Thomas Worthington High School and is living in an apartment with his father since his parents separated. In addition, his grandmother battled leukemia.

Still, he keeps moving forward — always with the help of a skateboard.

"In my life, I've had a lot of hard things to deal with," Thomas said. "But I gotta overcome that and not let it bring me down, especially in my skateboarding career."

"That's the biggest thing right now for me."

ALMA AWARDS

Leguizamo, Cruz win honors

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Nothing Like the Holidays had a merry time at the ALMA Awards.

The ensemble family drama — starring John Leguizamo, Debra Messing and Freddy Rodriguez — won three awards at Thursday's ceremony, which recognized achievements by Latino artists in film, television and music during the past year. Leguizamo, screenwriter Rick Najera and director Alfredo De Villa were each honored.

Penelope Cruz won the film-actress award for Vicky Cristina Barcelona. David Archuleta and Pitbull won prizes in the music category during the ceremony at the University of California.

Honorees in the TV category included Benjamin Bratt from A&E's The Cleaner as drama actor, Lauren Velez from Showtime's Dexter as drama actress, Oscar Nunez from NBC's The Office as comedy actor, Selena Gomez from the Disney Channel's Wizards of Waverly Place as comedy actress and Latino Public Broadcasting in the documentary category.

Oscar De La Hoya received the Special Achievement in Sports Television Award while Salma Hayek was given the Anthony Quinn Award for Industry Excellence.

SHOW & TELL

FROM PAGE D1

(Must Love Dogs) as P.J. Franklin, a 20-something sports columnist in Chicago.

Co-stars include Michael Bunin, Kyle Howard, Jamie Kaler, Reid Scott and Kellee Stewart. The nine-episode season is scheduled to begin in 2010.

Puppets picked up by MTV

MTV has ordered a scripted series about an unemployed puppet actor who tries to reclaim fame by appearing on a celebrity reality show, The Hollywood Reporter says.

The show, Warren the Ape, is a spinoff of Greg the Bunny.

Dan Milano will perform as the lead puppet character. MTV has ordered 12 episodes for next year.

— From staff and wire reports

R.S.V.P.

A look at upcoming events on the social calendar in central Ohio:

HEINZERLING GOLF CLASSIC

- Where: Heritage Golf Club, 3525 Heritage Club Dr., Hilliard
Why: Heinzerling Foundation
When: 11 a.m. Monday
Details: chipping clinic with pro, box lunch and hole-in-one contest; awards follow dinner in the Heritage Clubhouse; \$350; 614-272-8888 or www.heinzerling.org

FORE HOPE/GUY DERR MEMORIAL ADAPTIVE TOURNAMENT

- Where: Safari Golf Club, 10245 Riverside Dr., Powell
Why: Fore Hope
When: 8 a.m. Friday

- Details: shotgun start at 9 for eight-hole event; lunch, awards, auction for Ohio State-vs.-Illinois tickets, raffle; \$60, or \$75 for guest players; 614-784-1111 or www.forehope.org

COLUMBUS FOOD & WINE GRAND TASTING

- Where: Franklin Park Conservatory, 1777 E. Broad St.
Why: WBNS-10TV Family Fund, Children's Hunger Alliance, Columbus College of Art & Design, Ian Adams Van Heyde Scholarship Fund and the Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital
When: 6:30 to 10 p.m. Friday
Details: world-class wines and food; \$100; 1-877-274-2672 or www.foodandwineaffair.com

CONDOM COUTURE FASHION SHOW

- Where: Bar of Modern Art, 583 E. Broad St.

- Why: Planned Parenthood of Central Ohio
When: 7 p.m. Oct. 1
Details: fashion show with clothes designed by Columbus College of Art & Design students using Planned Parenthood prophylactics; \$45, \$125, \$350 or \$500; 614-358-8730 or www.plannedparenthoodcentralohio.org

WALK FOR ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

- Where: St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 30 W. Woodruff Ave.
Why: Peer Servants
When: 9 a.m. Oct. 3
Details: 2-mile walk at 10 a.m. to the church, with stroll through the Ohio State Number Garden, Oval, South Oval and Mirror Lake; \$20; www.w4ee.org or walk@peer-servants.org

DAILY SUDOKU | DIFFICULTY: 3 OF 5

9x9 Sudoku grid with some numbers filled in.

How to play: Each row must contain the numbers 1 to 9; each column must contain the numbers 1 to 9; and each set of 3-by-3 boxes must contain the numbers 1 to 9. Today's solution | D2

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Advertisement for 'The Informant!' featuring Matt Damon. Includes quote from Stephen Rebello and showtimes.

Advertisement for 'My One and Only' featuring Renee Zellweger. Includes quote from Roger Ebert and showtimes.

Advertisement for 'I Can Do Bad All by Myself' featuring Tyler Perry. Includes quote 'Hope is closer than you think' and showtimes.

Large advertisement for 'Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs' in 3D. Features characters and promotional text.

Advertisement for 'Love Happens' featuring Aaron Eckhart and Jennifer Aniston. Includes quote 'Sometimes when you least expect it...' and showtimes.

Advertisement for '10 must-see national parks' featuring Ken Burns. Includes quote 'From Yosemite to the Everglades...' and showtimes.