

Calendar promotes Pittsburgh's inspirational 60-somethings

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Sam Gaetano hadn't really thought of himself as pinup material. But there he is, Mr. February, in a new "60 Strong" calendar released this week by Preferred Primary Care Physicians, the largest independent network of primary care doctors in Western Pennsylvania.

All proceeds of the sale of the calendar will go to the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, in honor of Preferred Primary Care Physicians staff member Patty Lukach, who died last year of acute myeloid leukemia.

The idea behind the calendar was to promote people in their 60s and above who have excelled in fitness, overcome obstacles or helped people in need.

"We're trying to show that there are people in their 60s living vibrant lives," said Gregory Erhard, CEO of Preferred Primary Care Physicians, "but at the same time, as a service to our patients, we want to help them navigate the difficult decisions that are part and parcel to that age group."

Mr. Gaetano, 61, was nominated as a "60 Strong ambassador" for the calendar by his doctor, who admired the path that he has chosen in life, as well as his dedication in battling several health challenges. Once addicted to alcohol and opioids, Mr. Gaetano got sober in the 1990s and began ministering and volunteering to help others find their way out of addiction. On a recent Monday, he had just fin-



Leslie Bonci, left, Sam Gaetano and Liz Sullivan are "pinups" in a calendar that celebrates people in their 60s who have excelled in fitness, overcome obstacles or helped people in need. They gathered last summer at Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens in Schenley Park.

ished leading an outpatient therapy group at Gateway Rehab, before going in for a day of work at the dental lab that he has owned for 30 years.

"I'm grateful to be alive and give some hope to people who are caught up in addiction," he said. "I guess the message would be never give up, persevere. I should be dead so many times."

Mr. Gaetano, who has survived a serious motorcycle accident, a life threatening bout with

Diverticulitis and stage 4 cirrhosis, also preaches the gospel of good medical care. "I always tell them faith and good medicine will create the miraculous," he said. "You got to go for follow-

ups, you got to go for blood work, you got to stay on it. You got to be an advocate for your own health. No one else is going to do it for you."

The calendar also includes former Steelers nutritionist Leslie Bonci, heart transplant recipient and football coach Ron Gooden, fitness teacher and volunteer Christine Hogan and marathon runner and mountain climber Jack Tomayko.

Candidates for the calendar were chosen by a panel of local celebrity judges, including Dan Gilman, chief of staff for Mayor Bill Peduto; KDKA morning traffic anchor Celina Pompeani; and Post-Gazette food writer Gretchen McKay.



Thomas Pandolfo, who owns his own accounting firm and injured his spinal cord when he slipped on the ice while coaching youth hockey, is one of the Pittsburgh 60 Strong "pinups" in a 2020 calendar.

"We had a number of really inspiring applications," said Mr. Erhard. "There's a lot of very inspirational people in their 60s in the market doing some extraordinary things."

Richard Butler, HR manager for talent and wellness development with the city of Pittsburgh, was originally contacted to participate as a celebrity judge. That changed when he was nominated as a 60 Strong ambassador. Mr. Butler, 61, has worked in the fitness industry as a trainer for more than 35 years. He also completed an ultramarathon in his 50s and competed on a national level in martial arts in his 40s, winning a national championship.



Richard Butler, who coaches rowing, boxing and cycling and lives a life of service, is one of the 12 "pinups" who appears in the 2020 60 Strong calendar.

He became involved in fitness when he was getting bullied for being skinny. As he started to lift weights and get in shape, the bullies asked him to train them, too, he said. And thus started his career as a personal trainer.

"I'm usually getting people in shape to be on calendars and

model," he said. "It's nice to be on the other side of that."

Preferred Primary Care Physicians came up with the idea for a calendar also as a way to promote a new enhanced care program that they will be providing for Medicare-eligible patients, called preferred senior care advantage. And they wanted a way to recognize the contributions of Ms. Lukach.

"It's not hyperbole to say that the programs she built enhanced the quality of care for tens of thousands of patients," said Mr. Erhard. "We thought this was a good way to honor her."

The calendar can be purchased online at pittsburgh60strong.com for \$15.