Giving back is all that matters By Luisa Bonilla

How do you run a business, raise three athletic kids, volunteer for several organizations, raise a close knit family, maintain strong spiritual values and still find time to enjoy life?

This is a story about a man who is doing all these things. He has been blessed in many ways but he has also made sacrifices.

Rush Soccer Board Member John Zakhem is a native Coloradan. Born to a Lebanese immigrant who later became an American citizen to the United States.

Ambassador in Bahrain, he attended high school in this small island kingdom near the western shores of the Persian Gulf, off the coast of Saudi Arabia. When I asked John about his experience in Bahrain he said “It was fun. I had friends from all over the world. It was very multicultural. It opened my eyes to the rest of the world. I got to travel all over and learned that the world is much bigger than Colorado.”

John graduated from Georgetown University, School of Foreign Service in Washington, D.C. with a Bachelor of Science in International Affairs. After college, he coached football and basketball at Mullen High School in Denver, Colorado. Later, he attended the University of Denver, College of Law. His curriculum vitae is beyond impressive: Deans List, Honor Society, Member of countless organizations. However, in my opinion, it’s not John’s academic and professional accomplishments that make him exceptional, but rather his drive to give back to the community and his humility and desire to help those in need.

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John with his mother and wife watching daughter Amira play soccer.

John met his wife Katrina in Denver. Mrs. Zakhem, also an athlete, works part-time as a State Farm Insurance Representative, and says John is “a real trooper.” They spend a lot of time with their three active kids attending all their many sports events. He also finds time to enjoy sharing his hobbies with the family like fly fishing, snowboarding, skiing, golfing, and playing sketball.

John is also a Christian who believes that his faith has played a major role in his successes. He also does pro bono work for his church, Bear Valley Church in Lakewood, Colorado. The world isn’t the only thing bigger than Colorado – so is John’s heart. John followed his work dreams in order to give back to the community for all the blessings he has received. His passion for kids, and love for helping others in need, led him to open up a small for profit litigation firm that allows him the freedom to perform pro-bono. When John’s oldest son, Maximus, started playing soccer for Rush Soccer, the club sent an email to parents asking for legal referral and John volunteered. The Rush had a vision to expand the program both domestically and internationally. That was five years ago. Today, John does everything from corporate and tax counsel to setting up the international arm for Rush, all on a pro-bono basis.

John spends about 250 hours volunteering during the summer. When I asked him why he does it he said in his serious and peaceful demeanor, “Because giving back to the community is my

obligation as an attorney and making sure that everyone in that community receives some benefit from what I can provide."

"Working with charities that are helping kids is the best, because kids hold the future in their hands." John Zakhem

Although John is not a soccer player he believes that, "Soccer is a great sport… that requires skills and discipline to be great at it. It translates well to any sport you are going to play. Soccer demands coordination, working with your feet, team work and quick thinking."

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