

## Unique wrestler allows 'no excuses'

### Motivational speaker wows Holden employees

By Jean Laquidara Hill TELEGRAM & GAZETTE STAFF

**HOLDEN**— His arms and legs are less than half as long as most men's, but Kyle Maynard is a champion wrestler at the University of Georgia and a popular speaker with the Washington Speakers Bureau of Alexandria, Va.

Mr. Maynard, 19, of Atlanta, said yesterday he wins matches against so-called "able-bodied" wrestlers by believing he can, and by exerting more power than his longer-limbed opponents. Born with four incomplete limbs, Mr. Maynard said he tossed away his prostheses when he was 4 or 5 years old because they got in the way of him leading a normal life.

He said he never gets nervous when he approaches a wrestling match because the anxiety does not help him. He said, however, that he has used the nervousness of other wrestlers to beat them.

He writes by holding a pen between the ends of his two arms, and said he can type 50 words a minute, which came in handy when he was writing his book, "No Excuses," published by Regency Publishers last year.

Yesterday, Mr. Maynard addressed the 140 employees of Woodmeister Corp. in their annual meeting at their Holden site on Industrial Drive, which will become the company headquarters. The company builds high-end houses and furnishings, and provides a maintenance program for the residences.

Woodmeister chief executive officer and founder Theodore B. Goodnow said he selected Mr. Maynard as the motivational speaker for the 25-year-old company's workforce because the company is embarking on a risky journey of moving its three Worcester locations into the new facility in Holden, after disappointing profits last year.

Introducing Mr. Maynard to his employees, Mr. Goodnow said: "This man really has inspired me," adding, "His strength is between his ears."

Mr. Goodnow said before the meeting with employees that he selected Mr. Maynard as the speaker because he has achieved success, in spite of obstacles, because he believes in himself.

Getting out of his wheelchair and onto the stage, and then onto an easy chair, Mr. Maynard gestured frequently as he told the crowd that life is what you make of it.

He said he was raised by no-excuse parents who decided to treat him the same as his siblings. When he decided he wanted to play football and join wrestling teams with so-called able-bodied boys, he said his parents cautioned him, but supported his endeavors.

Other people, he said, told him that his goals were impossible.

"If I'd listened to them, I wouldn't be here today," he said.

Mr. Maynard started training with two-and-a-half pound weights that he said were so light they embarrassed him. But his father helped him build up his strength. He built the muscles he had and did not focus on what he did not have. Now, he said, he can lift 400 pounds.

He is a starter on the University of Georgia wrestling team and wins matches. Winning was not always his style. When he started wrestling at age 12, Mr. Maynard said he lost 35 straight matches before he won. He said his parents suggested he try something else, but he was determined to win. The first win, he said, was over a nervous wrestler. Mr. Maynard said he realized he could beat the boy, and did.

Mr. Maynard said he won 36 varsity wrestling matches during his senior year of high school.

When other wrestlers look for a weakness to attack, he said, they break his nose. The first time that happened, Mr. Maynard told the

audience, he told his mother something was wrong and that he was in pain. "It was a two-day tournament. I had to go back the next day. My mom said: 'Too bad. Take some Advil and go to bed.'"

The next morning, he said, his nose and face were swollen and blood flowed down his throat as he wrestled. "I couldn't breathe. It was hard." But, he said, he continued because he has a "no-quit" mentality.

"Things don't come easy. Life's full of challenges," he told the Woodmeister workers.

While football and wrestling taught him to love competition, Mr. Maynard said there is so much more to life than sports. What is most important to him, he said, is helping people by example and by speaking to them. And, he said, he likes to have fun.

While at the beach with friends one summer, he took tomato puree and put some on one of his arms as he emerged from the water, pretending that he had been attacked by a shark.

Life is not all laughter, though, he told the crowd. He said he had wanted to follow his father's example and join the military, but he cannot. Instead, he finds satisfaction in making himself available to soldiers who return from war with severe injuries.

In one case, he said, two soldiers who had been severely burned in a military accident in Iraq told him they could not get out of bed for a week, until they saw a special about him on HBO. After they saw what he could do, Mr. Maynard said, the wounded soldiers decided to get up and get better.