

Los Angeles Business Journal

HOME FINANCE HEALTHCARE MANUFACTURING REAL ESTATE SERVICES TECHNOLOGY GO
TRAVEL/LEISURE

[Sign in](#)

Your accounting firm has its priorities.

Sweat Garage Inspired by Illness

PAGE 3

By [Charles Crumpley](#), [Howard Fine](#), [David Haldane](#), [Joel Russell](#)

Monday, February 21, 2011

Why did Christopher Slevin join the Guillain-Barré Syndrome CIDP International Foundation last month? Because he created his business, the Sweat Garage gym in the Fairfax District, while recovering from the nerve disease.

Two years ago, Slevin, 38, was a private trainer at an L.A. gym. One day he felt a tingling sensation in his foot. Within three weeks, he couldn't walk, feed himself or blink his eyes.

His body's immune system was attacking the lining of his nerves, and he was diagnosed with Guillain-Barré. After 10 weeks at Cedars-Sinai, he left in a wheelchair. Medication stopped the autoimmune attacks, but it took more than a year for the nerve sheaths to regenerate. Slevin joined the foundation to help people through the first difficult months with the disease. The condition is so rare that he never met anyone else suffering from it during his ordeal.

During recovery, he decided to start a gym to emphasize emotional well-being in addition to physical health. He

LOS ANGELES BUSINESS JOURNAL



Subscribe today and save \$56 off the cover price

[click here](#)

opened Sweat Garage last summer.

“I started Sweat Garage because I want to help people with their struggle,” he said.

Expanding Fan Base

Emmylou Harris has a new fan. He is Roman Alemania, owner of Merge Right, a direct marketing company in Manhattan Beach.

Alemania, 45, had heard of the singer-songwriter popular since the 1970s, but never paid much attention to her music until she signed his guitar. The occasion was an October fundraiser for a Tijuana children’s clinic at the La Jolla estate of Joan Waitt, former wife of Gateway Inc. founder Ted Waitt.

Alemania is a board member of the Foundation of the Children of the Californias, which raises millions for Hospital Infantil de las Californias.

Also present was Calexico recording artist Gordy de Necochea.

For the Manhattan Beach businessman, however, the evening’s high point was meeting Harris, who performed at the event.

“She was very down-to-earth,” recalls Alemania, an amateur musician. And since she supported the children’s clinic, he supported her. Since the fundraiser, he’s bought two of her CDs.

Profane Priest

Developer Wayne Ratkovich was looking for the best way to attract commercial and retail brokers to showcase his company’s new mixed-use project in Alhambra. He found one by arranging a speaking appearance by gang intervention activist Father Gregory Boyle, founder of Homeboy Industries.

The Ratkovich Co. founder said the ploy worked. Of the 70 brokers invited, 42 showed up at the Jan. 27 event, a higher-than-expected attendance. What’s more, just about every broker agreed to donate the \$50 they received in enticements from the development firm to Boyle, whose Homeboy Industries flirted with bankruptcy last year. With matches from Ratkovich’s company, the event raised \$4,000.

But nothing prepared Ratkovich or the brokers for some salty language from Boyle. The priest recalled how one former gangbanger sought his help in finding a job. Boyle told him he wasn't going to find a job with the f-word tattooed on his forehead, and he agreed to let Homeboy remove it. That's how the tattoo removal program got started.

"In telling the story, Father Boyle actually used the f-word several times," Ratkovich said. "That was quite a shocking moment since it was the first time that I had ever heard a Catholic priest use that word in public."

Staff reporters Joel Russell, David Haldane and Howard Fine contributed to this column. Page 3 is compiled by Editor Charles Crumpley. He can be reached at crumpley@labusinessjournal.com.

- [Share This Story](#)

- Share this item

[Send this to a friend](#)

- Grab the link

Copy and paste the link:

- [Close](#)

- [Print View](#)



Subscribe
today for
only \$1.96
per week!



© 2011 Los Angeles Business Journal | (323) 549-5225 | [Privacy Policy](#)