

Brother and sister rally at the YMCA

By **KIM HAYES**
Sentinel reporter

If keeping active really is the secret to a long, happy life, then Sarah and Riley Myers have an abundance of joyful years ahead of them. At just 11 and 8 years of age respectively, the siblings are into anything and everything life — and the Juniata Valley YMCA — can set before them.

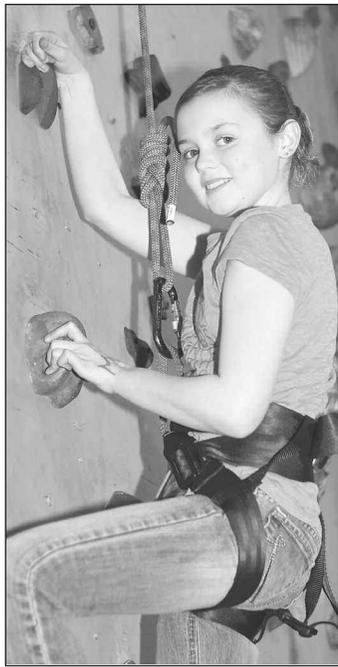
Sarah and Riley both got involved at the Y when they were very young, so young, in fact, that Riley doesn't actually remember starting swimming lessons through the Y's program. Sarah recalls learning to swim in her grandmother's pool.

"I had one of those full piece bathing suits with the floaty packs in it and we'd take one pack out at a time and see if I could swim," she says.

Though the timing was staggered because of their age difference, the pair graduated from swimming lessons to swim team, and started gymnastics as well. After completing the first level of swim team, they faced a choice.

"The time of swim practice overlapped with gymnastics, so I had to choose," Sarah says. She chose swim team over gymnastics because of swimming's potential for scholarships later in her academic career. She's already got one first place team ribbon under her belt for a relay.

When the time came, Riley

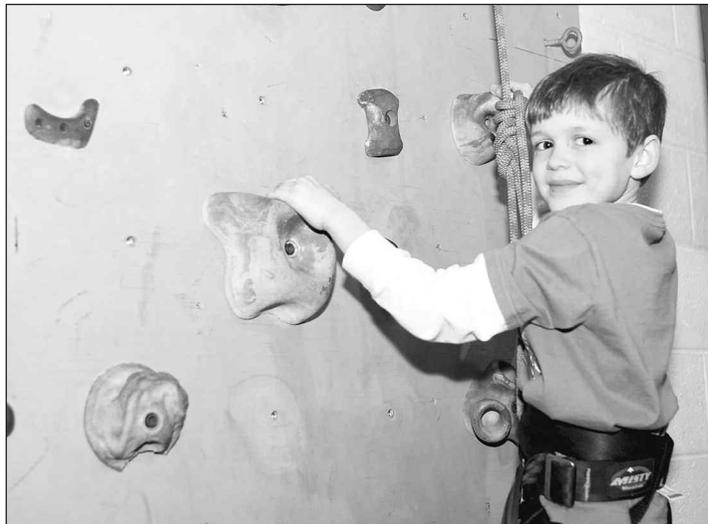


made the same decision, but for different reasons.

"I liked swimming better because we had races," he says.

At age 7, at a meet in Hollidaysburg, Riley learned a good lesson in sportsmanship. "I was sitting, getting ready to race, and these two boys I was racing against were saying 'We're gonna beat you' and 'We're better than you' and stuff like that. I just said, 'We'll see about that.' And then I beat them. It was this close," he says, holding his index finger and thumb about half an inch apart.

At the same time, the sister and brother duo dabbled in



Sentinel photo by **MATT STRICKER**

Sarah and Riley Myers show off their climbing abilities at the Juniata Valley YMCA's rock wall

other sports as well. Sarah actually played soccer before joining the swim team, and both she and Riley participated in basketball programs at some point in their young lives. Sarah attended a basketball camp at the former Lewistown Middle School when she was about 8 years old, and Riley participated in the basketball program at the Y.

Now, during practices at the Y, whoever isn't busy practicing can be found climbing the rock wall or playing ping pong or dodgeball. These are organized activities at the facility that don't necessarily require registration for a program in order to

participate. Riley describes it best when he explains the dodgeball program.

"We had teams," he says, "but we played with whoever was there."

It's not just about sports for the Myers kids, though. Part of what makes their activities enjoyable for them is the chance to spend time with friends.

"You get to spend more time with the people at the Y. At school, you only get to talk to them at lunch," Sarah says. She and her best friend, Hannah, would go to the Y on Thursdays just to hang out and play table tennis.

And that's just inside. The

YMCA offers summer camps for kids as well: Kidz Camp for kids age 5 to 9, Outdoor Adventure Camp for kids age 10 to 14. Both programs give the kids a chance to do things they otherwise might not have the chance to do.

"Every week we have a different subject," Sarah says. "There's canoeing week, rock climbing week, stuff like that."

Rapelling and kayaking were in the mix for Outdoor Adventure Camp as well. Sarah enjoys rapelling now, but notes that the first time she tried, she was so terrified, the instructor told her she could try it some other time. Not one to give up, she did try again, with good results.

"I finally got the hang of it," she says.

The group went kayaking at Greenwood Furnace, and Sarah laughs as she describes her experience with the kayaks.

"For me, it was kind of hard. I tried it with a big boat, but I would go so slow. They gave me a smaller boat this year and I just kept going around in circles," she says.

Maybe manual boating isn't Sarah's strong suit, but that didn't stop her from trying her hand at powersports. At Raystown Lake, she had the chance to go jetskiing, and then she went tubing behind the jetski while someone else drove. As it turns out, those activities are more her speed.

Continued on Page 87

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