

Lighten up!

Life coach focuses on the positive, how to handle 'bumps in the road'

By MICHELLE CENTAMORE

There are two questions motivational speaker and life coach Jim Ryan asks himself when he wakes up each morning: "What good is going to come my way today?" and "Whose life could I make a little bit better?"

It's all in a day's work of personal development and the desire to help others. Mr. Ryan is the founder and president of Jim Ryan Talks, an organization dedicated to the cultivation and development of an individual's potential for living a life full of joy, fulfillment and success. He has written *Simple Happiness: 52 Easy Ways to Lighten Up*, and is also the creator of inspirational messages, "Aha Moments."

While he's always maintained a positive perspective on life, Mr. Ryan's career as a motivational speaker happened somewhat by chance, and he is forever grateful for the opportunity he's had to impact the lives of others so that they too can create change for the better in their own lives.

Mr. Ryan grew up in Schenectady, New York and attended Iona College in New Rochelle. He majored in French and won an award for "Outstanding French Student." In 1970, he started teaching French and Italian at Bethpage Junior High School. He married his sweetheart, Diane, in 1973. The couple raised three children in Northport and they currently reside in Northport Village.

Mr. Ryan was urged by his principal at Bethpage Junior High to pursue a higher certification and attended Queens College, earning his degree in guidance and counseling. He continued on at Bethpage Junior High School, working as a guidance counselor until 1984. During the summers he managed the East Hampton Tennis Club. During that time, he stayed in Sag Harbor. "It was a different life, like living at a resort, I got to see the lifestyle of millionaires through the tennis club," he recalled.

Through the connections he made at the club, Mr. Ryan undertook a new career in the financial services industry as an advisor for Shearson Lehman Brothers. "I worked with them through the investment crash of 1987. That experience made me reevaluate my career," he said. He then found himself at Guardian Life Insurance, where he stayed for 11 years.

"I realized the two are really wedded and I blended my career to do both, as many financial advisors do," he said. Mr. Ryan moved from Guardian Life to LPL Financial and became an independent agent. "With an eye on retiring, I moved from LPL

to American Portfolios." 18 months ago Mr. Ryan sold his practice.

In between the career changes, however, Mr. Ryan had embraced his true passion, personal development. "All my life I've been reading books by Wayne Dyer, a personal development guru," Mr. Ryan recalled, noting hours and hours spent reading books, listening to tapes and attending seminars.

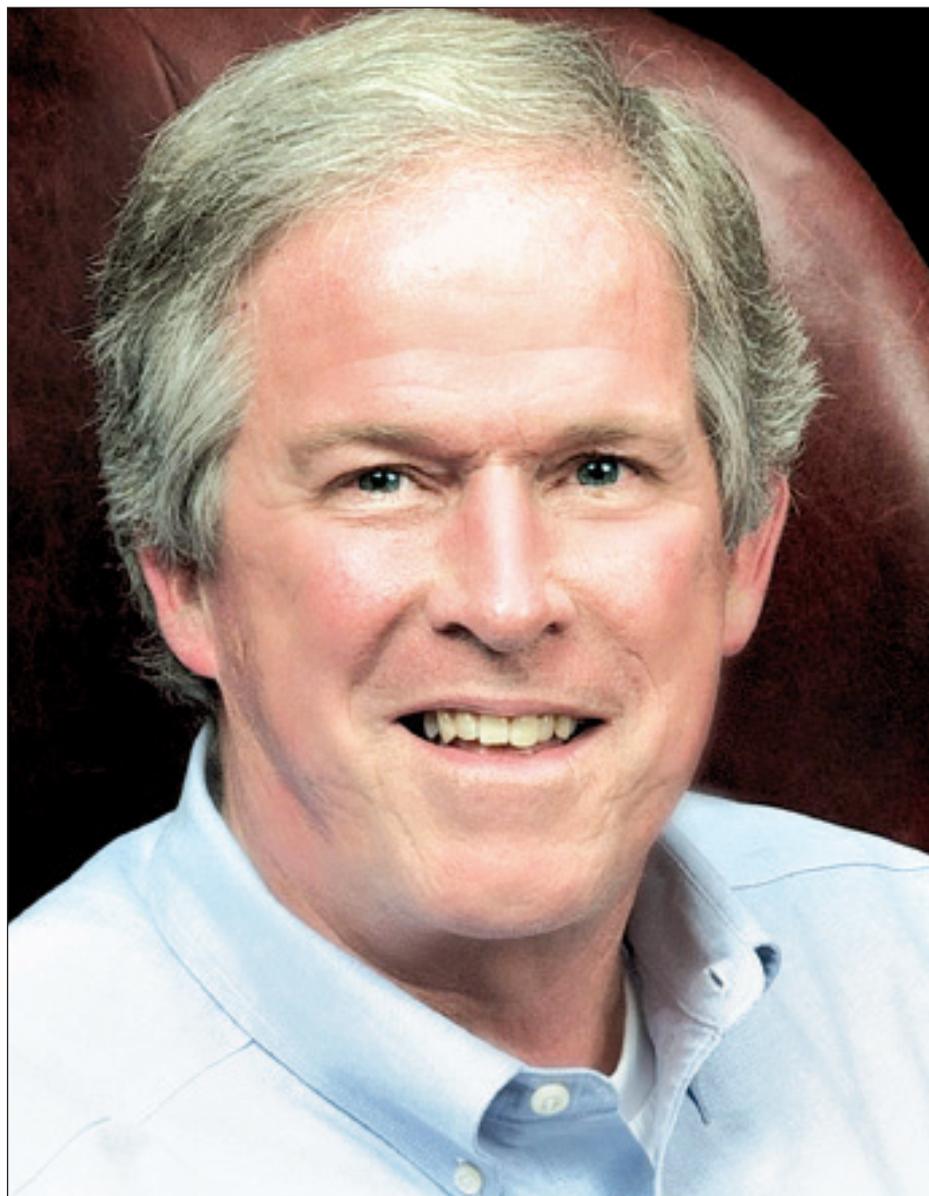
"Back in the year 2000 I realized I had all of this stuff in my head," Mr. Ryan said, and he was convinced he was meant to "share" his insight. A friend of his, Dan Murphy, was teaching a bible class at the time to prisoners at the jail in Yaphank.

"I started teaching a class in personal development to men who were locked up for multiple DWI convictions," he said, adding that it was a volunteer position. "It was one of the best things I've ever done in my life," he said.

Teaching the men at the jail awakened Mr. Ryan to his ability to effectively communicate to others, even those facing extreme obstacles both physical and emotional, that by altering their perspective on life, they could be happy and create positive changes in their lives overall. "It was a real enlightening experience," he said, recalling that although at first most of the inmates were not thrilled to see him, by the end "they shook my hand and said, 'thank you.'" Mr. Ryan still continues his Monday classes at the jail and also teaches women who have been convicted of crimes. "It's very gratifying to have a positive effect on people who are suffering, to give them hope and doable strategies to make a better life."

Three years into doing volunteer work at the jail, Mr. Ryan considered how the general public would appreciate his lectures. He approached local libraries and soon began giving similar presentations to Long Island communities. In a casual conversation with a friend, a name for his presentations was born: "Jim Ryan Talks."

"Jim Ryan Talks" became quite successful, said Mr. Ryan. In addition to giving local presentations, he began to travel throughout the country, giving his talks to all different kinds of audiences. He



Motivational speaker and life coach Jim Ryan, of Northport.

offered them practical strategies on how to be the best you can be every single day. He continues to give these talks, often opening up with a song while he plays his guitar. He's given keynote addresses at various school districts' Superintendent Days, including Northport's, as well

been the most exciting time in my life, talking about how to be happy—it's something we all crave."

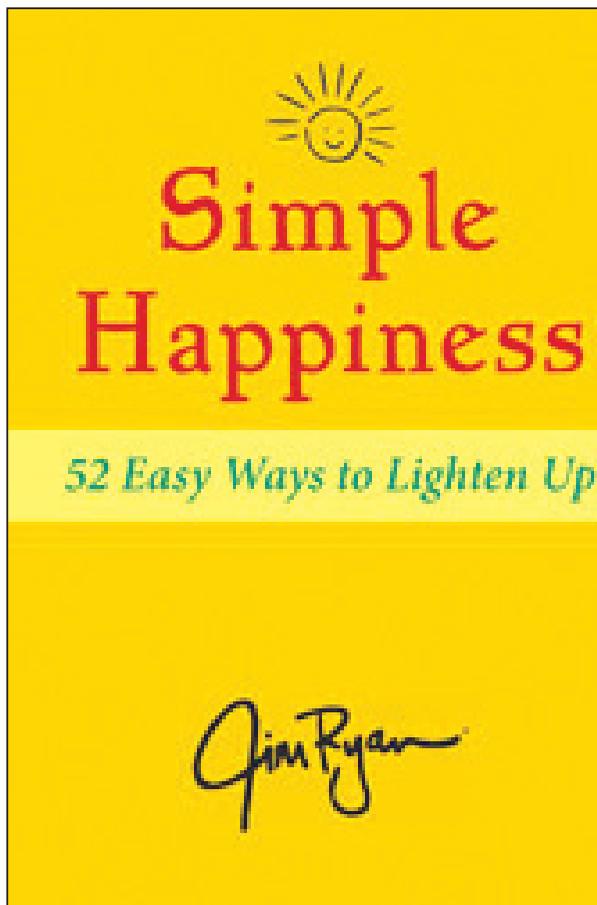
In 2006, Mr. Ryan wrote a book called *Simple Happiness: 52 Easy Ways to Lighten Up*. His book inspires others to live a life full of joy and fulfillment. "The book has been such a blessing. It gives hope and perspective and it helps people pull themselves out of depression or a bad situation because it's hopeful, easy to read and it makes sense," he explained.

Mr. Ryan also created inspirational messages, "Aha Moments," which are uplifting thoughts that are emailed to subscribers every Wednesday. Aha Moments aim to assist them in getting through their week with a positive outlook on life.

"The first place to begin the road to a happier self is with gratitude," said Mr. Ryan. "When we are grateful, we are thinking about the good things that we have versus the lack. If you are focusing on your abundance, your blessings, you are not paying attention to the the things that are not so great; you are giving your attention instead to your blessings. The bad stuff is still there but it is not that important because you are paying attention to good things."

You can't expect to be happy all of the time, notes Mr. Ryan, but by focusing on the good, the positive... recognizing your strengths, "you'll be more resilient" should you hit a bump in that road to happiness. "Happy is a process," said Mr. Ryan. "We are never perfectly happy, but we are always on a journey towards our best life," Mr. Ryan said.

To contact Mr. Ryan, call 1-866-Jim-Ryan or email him at info@jimryantalks.com.



as at company staff appreciation days, and health and wellness conferences. Mr. Ryan was also the guest speaker at a recent Rotary Club of Smithtown meeting. "It's