

Tri, Tri Again

Inspired by triathletes, an overweight Linda Kline changed her life with the help of triathlons designed especially for women.

By Kevin Fritz

Sometimes it comes down to a choice, a crossroads in life that spins you in a direction you had previously not considered, a place less traveled perhaps because of the effort, but one that ultimately offers a supreme reward.

For **Linda Kline** of **Winter Park**, her moment in time occurred five years ago while watching an Ironman Triathlon on television. She thought it looked like fun; in fact, it looked like something she would like to try. “What I was watching was very inspirational,” she recalls. “There were people you wouldn’t consider doing the triathlon such as the elderly and people in wheelchairs.” One problem stood in her way: Kline weighed more than 400 pounds.

This weight was gradually packed on to her frame from an early age, something she would never get used to and always wanted to reverse. Deciding to train for

Kline had lost 220 pounds and her aforementioned ailments were now under control without medication. Through it all, Kestner became her coach, her friend and eventually the student.

“She had never been in a triathlon,” laughs Kline, “but I got her involved.” And on Mother’s Day 2009, Kline and Kestner competed and finished the Danskin Triathlon, an event designed just for women. As if they needed any more inspiration to complete the event, the two competed in honor of their mothers who had both recently passed away.

“Linda made a lifestyle change, not a quick fix,” notes Kestner. “That is why she is successful.” Today, the 52-year-old Kline belongs to triathlon support groups and is at the gym almost every day. The majority of her diet is now peppered with fruit and vegetables, whole grains, and health shakes.

“It is an absolute thrill for me,” Kline says. To date, Kline has now competed in four races: two Danskin Triathlons, a Moss Park Women’s Festival Triathlon and a TREK Women Triathlon, with her second TREK race scheduled for Labor Day weekend. Her time gets better with each competition, improving by 15 minutes since last year.

The beauty of these particular triathlons, which consist of a half-mile swim, 12.5 mile bicycle ride, and 3.1 mile run/walk, is that they are intended for the everyday woman who wants to keep in shape and take on a challenge. **Kyle Kuhnel** of SK Communication, which represents the TREK Women Triathlon and the Danskin Triathlon for The Xextra Mile, says these races are designed to inspire and empower women like Kline. “It is not for the hard-bodied woman,” he explains. “It’s for moms, grandmothers, housewives and accountants.”

For now, Kline is working hard to lose more weight, knowing that incessant training and eating right are key components to continue her new life as a triathlete, a healthier person, and someone who believes she has been given a second chance.

No longer at a crossroads, Linda Kline has finally found her way. **L**



Karen Kestner (left) helped Linda Kline (right) lose more than 200 pounds before they both participated in their first triathlon.

COURTESY OF LINDA KLINE

a triathlon would be her catalyst to lose the weight, not to mention her doctor’s warning that she was a high risk case for sudden death.

Kline’s first step was the Crosby Wellness Center—Central Florida YMCA where she was assigned a personal trainer, **Karen Kestner**, charged with teaching Kline healthy eating habits and enforcing a strict fitness regimen to transform her into the person she had longed to be.

Kestner says she started Kline in the pool to treat her legs, and then used small increments of weight loss and longer workouts. A year and a half later,