

Triathlon not the hardest test for this team

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Annette Lisa and Trinity Trione will swim a half mile, bike 12 miles, and run 3.1 miles on Sept. 11 as part of the Danskin® Triathlon Series in Sandy Hook. As physically challenging as this day will be, it is nothing compared to the challenges both women have already faced.

Lisa and Trione are cancer survivors. Lisa, a resident of Montville Township, was diagnosed with breast cancer nearly two years ago. Trione battled cervical cancer six years ago. They are part of Team Survivor and are bringing to their training the same optimistic attitude that helped them get through their illnesses.

The women met at Model A Fitness in Boonton. Trione is an instructor and Lisa was in her Pilates class.

Membership in the gym was Lisa's gift to herself after completing treatment in February. She considers herself a cancer warrior and wanted to work towards getting into shape.

She now feels fit and looks forward to the triathlon.

Lisa said, "If anyone told me almost two years ago when I was diagnosed that I would feel this strong today, I wouldn't have believed it."

With the triathlon, Lisa is not looking to break any records. Her goal is simply to finish the event.

It is likewise with Trione. A belly dancer who teaches and performs, Trione said before every one of her New York shows, she asks herself why she is doing this to herself.

"When I'm done, I know exactly why," said Trione. "It is such a sense of accomplishment, even if it was not exactly as choreographed, I did it. I think this will be the same."

Neither Lisa nor Trione have ever competed in a triathlon. As part of her training, Lisa runs almost every day and was in a 5K race years ago. She bikes and has done a 10-mile ride with the Hunger Cycle Tour, which raises money for New Jersey food banks.

"The biking is something I knew I could do. I feel confident I can complete it," said Lisa.

Trione has been running since she was in high school and has been in half marathons. As for the biking, she said it "excites me."

It is the swimming portion that has both women worried. Lisa has been swimming this summer, locally at Lake Valhalla, and while on vacation at Lake Placid. Trione has been increasing her swimming time, trying to determine what a half mile in the water is.

As would be expected, both women are taking their training seriously. Besides working on the activities connected with the sprint triathlon, Lisa also takes fitness classes. Trione, meanwhile is working to increase her time for each discipline, going so far as to put lights on her bicycle so she can ride at night.

Physical training is just one portion of the preparation. Lisa and Trione are facing the triathlon with positive mental attitudes.

Lisa said, "I am usually optimistic. It is what got me through the tough times and scary challenges. I just have to keep up that mindset."

Trione's concentration is something she learned from belly dancing, which she took up 10 years ago during a family crisis when she needed to "busy my mind, not just my body."

Belly dancing is about isolation and requires coordination. It kept Trione so busy thinking about her movements and breathing that she did not think about her problems.

Trione said, "Without the ability to meditate and focus on what is good, what's the point?"

It was this focus that also helped her when she was sick and going through surgeries. During this time, even though the usually active Trione could not get off the couch, she never thought cancer would beat her or that she would not see her daughter graduate. Her thoughts instead were about getting active again and past being ill.

Lisa, Trione and the other members of Team Survivor may have a physically demanding day ahead, but they are already winners.