

Competitor taught herself to swim for triathlon



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The first Galloway Captiva Triathlon takes place this weekend and one participant is especially thrilled to stand at the starting line.

A year ago, Regina Redmond, 47, was more than 70 pounds overweight and had blood pressure that was "through the roof."

After a year of exercise, she will join hundreds of athletes Sunday morning in a fitter body.

She's lost 60 pounds and expects to hit her ideal weight by Christmas.

Beginning last October, the Fort Myers home care provider started walking half a mile a day. The walking turned into running. Then she added bicycling to her workouts.

Redmond met another challenge. She taught herself to swim by watching videos. Now she wakes at 3:30 a.m. each morning to run, bike and swim before she goes to work at Comforcare Senior Services, a non-medical home care business in Fort Myers.

It doesn't end there. Her six day a week workout routine includes running or biking after work.

Besides increasing her exercise, she uses portion control and cut out dairy and bread from her diet.

She got the idea to enter a triathlon from her boss. Ann Montgomery, owner of Comforcare Senior Services, told Redmond that she should try a triathlon.

At that point, Redmond didn't know how to swim.

"I laughed it off," Redmond said. But she couldn't shake the idea. She learned about the Galloway Captiva Triathlon but didn't register right away.

"I had to overcome my fear of swimming in open water," she said.

By the time she got her nerve up to register for the triathlon, the race was full.

She added her name to the waiting list and then found out about the Zehr Center for Orthopaedics' online contest for a free ticket to the triathlon. Redmond wrote a 100-word essay about her desire to compete in the triathlon, picked up thousands of online votes and won the contest.

"Regina's story is truly inspiring," said Dr. Robert Zehr, founder of the Zehr Center for Orthopaedics. "In my educational seminar on arthritis I emphasize that obesity is one of the main risk factors for developing arthritis and that exercise is the key to losing weight and making a difference in your joint health."

Redmond feels very lucky these days. "I am so excited," she said about this weekend's triathlon. "Oh my gosh, it's like Christmas. I don't need to be best in show. I just want to finish."

