

# STORIES FROM THE Y



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A Publication of the Rye YMCA

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Our fall edition is devoted to **RYE Y TRIBE** members and their stories.

## THE RYE Y TRIBE: AN ALL WOMEN'S TRIATHLON TEAM

The Y's female team of coaches are dedicated to educating, inspiring and helping women achieve the goal of completing their first triathlon (or continue training and improving). All TRIBE participants in the 2013 Triathlon in Sandy Hook, NJ (Sept. 8) completed the race! Before training, many of the participants had little or no experience swimming in open water, biking or running. Some TRIBE members first learned how to swim during training.

The TRIBE begins training in March 2014 for the fall 2014 triathlon in Sandy Hook. Join us!

I think one of the best things about becoming parents is that while we are teaching our children "life lessons," we often learn or re-learn them ourselves. I was never athletic when I was younger. But I want that for my children. I want them to enjoy exercise and good foods and healthy living. I want them to push their bodies and minds and see how far they can go. Learning to be an athlete in your 30's after children is much harder than when you are a kid at the playground.

Since my children were born, I have run races and half marathons but never really considered myself an athlete. (I know that's weird.) Crossing that IRON GIRL finish line gave me an opportunity to say that "I am an Athlete." I finally said those words out loud and believed them! I may not be the fastest or the best but I am a finisher. I worked hard on a challenging personal goal that I set for myself and I reached my goal. Those are a ton of life lessons wrapped up in one pink and blue sparkly medal!

I always hope that my children are watching me work hard and that they are learning that they can accomplish anything they set their minds to. When my 6-year old daughter asked me to do an Iron Girl Triathlon with her when she turns 16, I knew she had been watching and learning! Thank you to the coaches. Learning how to swim has been a huge accomplishment for me. I will continue to work on becoming a better swimmer!

Nora Brunnett

## “ELATED BY WHAT WE’VE ACCOMPLISHED”

Since I would like to meet my weight goal of slightly under a BMI of 25, I decided that joining the TRIBE last April would be a good way to up my exercise level. Little did I know how wonderful the experience would be... The cherry on top was being part of our Sept. 8 triathlon, swimming a roiling course, and watching all the Iron Women, whatever their shapes, sizes, and ages, taking good care of themselves by caring for their bodies. I am so proud to be a Tribee, so delighted we all finished, and so grateful to be a woman, in spite of all our challenges in the world today. Thank you all. You are an inspiration.

Mary Ann DeRosa

As 2x cancer survivor, the **LIVESTRONG** program at the Y was my start. Denise was ever supportive and caring. She said I could do it! “Crazy she is,” I said. Well, even through treatment, she was there with mounds of encouragement as were Sally and Laura. I am not a swimmer, but they had me swimming, and with Denise at my side, I made it through! The three ladies are truly a gift from God. And the whole TRIBE could not have shown more support. I am forever changed! Thank you all!

Valerie Romanello



In the old country (England) we would have given each coach - Denise and Laura and Sally (also from the old country), a knighthood for empowering women. As to the Tribees - they would have been awarded with some kind of cross for bravery for facing the gale force sea and crossing it. Thank you all for such a wonderful experience.

Carol Annett

Denise told me I could do it - and thanks to her strength, determination and faith in me, I completed a part of my life I never thought I could achieve.

Kathleen Mandarano



This captures how so many of us all felt yesterday and throughout our training. Motivated by the amazing coaches, inspired by our teammates, and elated by what we've accomplished. Thanks to you all!

Lori LeFevre Wells

Thanks so much for a great experience! I have been a triathlete since September 2011 but have never had the overall experience that I have had with the Rye Y TRIBE. My past experience (both training and racing) was quite lonely, and having to deal with my own negative thoughts while training was, frankly, painful. This experience, with a tribe of women all in it together, was so much richer and gentle (emotionally & mentally, not physically!) at the same time. Brings tears to my eyes thinking about how much different it was. I so appreciate the connections that have been forged.

Suzanne Frank



I have so much pride and sense of accomplishment my heart aches a little. Does that make sense? Maybe no, but this is how I feel. Today I had more bounce on my step. I had this feeling I am part of a bigger circle- this group of amazing women. Women that have accomplished something few have. It's just an amazing feeling. The fact that other tribees were so proud of my accomplishment (in the meantime, they had better timings and have done this twice or more), speaks volumes of the camaraderie and solidarity of you all.

Yvette Vera-Pignato



## THE TRIBE: SWIMMING, RUNNING & BIKING TOGETHER

What an amazing feeling to cross that finish line! The swim experience was truly a challenge, but I was able to tackle it. To my fellow Tribees, you're my inspiration. I joined for 2 reasons, one because it was on my bucket list and second, to set an example for my daughter that women can accomplish anything at any age. Hopefully we will do it together one day soon. Thank you!

Irene Villacis-Braccia



Thank you to Denise for inspiring me to swim, to Sally for inspiring me to bike and to Laura for inspiring me to be brave. I am so proud to be a part of Rye Y Tribe!

Genevieve Boron

Programs like **LIVESTRONG** at the YMCA and The Tribe have allowed me to have faith in my body again. I can now feel strong physically thanks to the encouragement I got from the trainers and my fellow participants. I now want to work on biking hills and learning how to do the freestyle properly. Thank you all so much!

Louise Kulkis

Thanks to all of you!!! I still can't believe that I passed the finish line I'm so happy and grateful to all of you. Now I can say I'M AN IRON GIRL.

Rosana Romano

After the **LIVESTRONG** at the YMCA program, Denise inspired me to be a part of the TRIBE. So, on September 8, 2013, I completed my first triathlon, which I never thought I could do because I finished my treatments seven months before the race and my body was so worn out. It was such an incredible feeling to cross the finish line.

Erin Hedges



Our coaches coach, inspire, transform how people see and think of themselves. All this with humility and humor, and the patience of a 100 mothers... For that, the only other option that comes to mind is Sainthood, but I prefer the here and now for our leaders. There aren't enough words to say Thank You.

Lisa Ricciardi

Just want to say the tears are streaming down my face as I sit in Starbucks and see and feel the love of all my tribe sisters. Laura, you let me in this journey at the last minute when I did not know how to swim or if I could commit so late in the game. Thank you for believing in me and your guidance. Denise and Sally, just knowing you were there with your knowledge and commitment helped me when I was in the water (“keep moving forward”) or fighting the wind on my mountain bike. I was blessed to be around not only for my family and friends but for the new ones who have come into my world.

Susan Janart



I have been hugely impressed with the organization and leadership of the TRIBE from my first meeting to the finish line. If anything, we were over-prepared...There were no surprises and I think I can speak for the TRIBE, that we arrived prepared for the logistics and focused on the finish. I admire the professionalism, patience, kindness and humanity that were the hallmarks of the coaching. Very few of us would have ever thought that we could do a triathlon. That everyone finished that swim is a testament to this program. This was the motivation that I needed to properly care for my knee, back, foot and hamstrings. And it will get me to the gym all winter with that brass ring in sight next summer. Thank you.

Margie French



I don't think any of us realized how that initial commitment would transform us in so many ways. After many months of expert training, coaching and leadership by Laura, Denise, Sally, Maureen and countless others, we were equipped with skills, stamina, confidence, a lot of new gear and a whole new group of friends to share every swim, ride and stride. In addition to thanking our unequalled coaches and teammates I want to thank the Rye Y for supporting our group and putting in place such a talented group of women to lead us across the finish line. It was an honor to wear the Rye Y Tribe shirt yesterday and after a good washing I will proudly wear it while I train for Iron Girl Sandy Hook 2014. Congratulations to us all!

Mary Bouton

The TRIBE was an opportunity to re-start living in a more active way—and to do it in a safe way where I did not feel judged. Because some lovely ladies (Lori, Vickie, and Maureen) encouraged me to join them at 5:30am Mon, Wed, Friday to swim with the Endurance Swim Class, I have been swimming consistently! I have gotten stronger and healthier, I can breath after a swim, and I have dropped 20 of the 50 pounds I gained! I want to thank Laura, all the coaches & volunteers, and all the Rye Tribe women who have encouraged me and each other. You have changed my life and made it amazingly better.

Cathy Raynis Meeker

**Thank you all. It was an awesome day with some awesome people. My life is better because of the Rye Y TRIBE.**

Michaele Rizzuto