

Former Aurora resident, set to fulfill 22-year dream

Vicky McGrath began running in the mid 90s.

She began a personal journey of her own, with a goal of managing her weight. She joined the Markham Centaurs Running and Walking Club and eventually began running marathons.

"I had actually just done my first marathon in 1998, and then I quickly realized that marathons were probably not what I wanted to do," McGrath laughed, in an interview with The Auroran.

"So, I started to look at other things that included running, but weren't limited to running. So, I started to do research into triathlon, and that's how my interest in triathlon actually came about."

She came across the Ironman World Championships in her research and learned more about the "holy grail" of the competition that takes place in Kona, Hawaii.

When McGrath and her husband planned their wedding in 1999, they decided to make it a destination wedding right in Kona; and not just for the beautiful beaches, the thrill of the volcanoes or the weather. It was about the Ironman World Championships.

"It was a wedding coordinated around watching the Ironman, as opposed to going there to get married," McGrath chuckled.

"We watched the Ironman Championships, then we got married afterwards."

Gazing upon the will of the athletes and the energy of the crowds, McGrath began envisioning what she wanted in her future. From that point onward, she had set out one goal. That was to compete in this Ironman World Championships in Hawaii one day.

She started off small, easing her way into the swing of things. Then in 2002, she competed in her first Ironman in Wisconsin and then again in Florida in 2003.

Following the birth of her daughter, she took some time off to ramp up her training again and in 2006, she signed up for the competition right here in Canada.

But an incident during training forced McGrath and her family to take one step back.

"I crashed my bike, sustained a concussion, punctured my lung, broke some ribs and was unable to complete my Ironman in 2006. Despite my pleading, the doctor wouldn't let me go. I had to defer the race to 2007."

Of course, with her family concerned about her health, McGrath involved herself in smaller triathlon events. The goal had remained the same, but she refrained from fully giving it her all to protect herself from any further incidents.

Even then, that small impediment never fully stopped her from ever saying that she would never compete in an Ironman one day. That remained in sight.

As part of entering the Ironman competition in Kona, McGrath got involved in a charity that would help her get in. It's called Women For Tri, which supports equal opportunity for women and girls in sport.

But with COVID-19, there was no chance McGrath could travel to the USA. So, her entry was deferred until this year. She received the official invitation to the Ironman World Championships. She was ecstatic that her 22-year dream will become a reality.

Now, McGrath would like to share her story to businesses, teams and clubs,

?You know, it's been 14, 15 years since the last Ironman in 2007. Nonetheless, every year, I've taken action. I've done a contest. I've entered a triathlon; a smaller one. I kept the vision, I've had vision boards. I visualized in my mind of myself doing the race and completing the race and crossing the finish line,? McGrath said.

?It's not like I made the decision and did nothing about it. It's all about staying committed and persisting in developing a success mindset, however long it takes to achieve your goal. It's fantastic. It's really an amazing journey and process, that I would now love to share with other people to help them live and achieve their own goals and have that success mindset.?

As part of ?Women For Tri,? McGrath would love to connect with local sports entities to come out and speak about her life's journey.

Having recently moved to Georgina, McGrath will do so as she gears up for the Ironman World Championships in Kona, Hawaii on October 6, 2022.

To contact McGrath for any information about her charity work, you may contact her at her business email vicky@heretohelphomecare.ca.

By Robert Belardi