

# Twelve-Week Triathletes

## First-timers prepare for the Gold

BY ALICE LONGWORTH

CHRISTINE VERNA DESCRIBES HERSELF as a middle-aged housewife. “I’ve jogged the same three miles for over thirty years and never pushed myself.” Michael Steinman, on the other hand, is a veteran of the New York Marathon. Ned Bakelman would like to be “as graceful in the



PHOTO © ALICE LONGWORTH

**Christine Verna practices her kicks in the JCC of Mid-Westchester’s pool in preparation for the Long Island Gold Coast Triathlon.**

water as a dancer on the stage,” and Helene Walisever has set a fortieth birthday challenge for herself.

What brings these four Scarsdale residents together poolside with several other participants on a Tuesday evening? It’s a 12-week, pilot program for first-time triathletes—a partnership between Jewish Community Center of Mid-Westchester in Scarsdale NY and Race with Purpose, a national organization providing opportunities to combine community service with athletic performance.

Tonight Triathlon Club members have an hour to practice their kicks, strokes and breathing in a supportive atmosphere at

the JCC pool. Other sessions are devoted to bicycling and running. “The coaching has been amazing, so professional with lots of personal attention,” says Walisever.

“They are taking us seriously,” adds Verna, who especially wants to improve her 3.2 mile/40-minute jogs, “so now I really have to do this.”

Adam Krajchir of Race with Purpose is head coach for the triathlon training. He aims to help adults break past their personal boundaries “one workout at a time.” A successful athletic experience, he believes, can lead to achievement in additional, seemingly unrelated, endeavors.

The other coaches are Roger Kahn and John O’Brien, JCC Sports and Fitness Director. Roger, a nationally ranked swimmer who has competed for 40 years, is a member of JCC. He volunteers his time as a coach to help group members develop technique and increase strength and endurance.

“Swimming is in my blood,” he says.

The program, which began in March, culminates in a half-mile swim, a 12-mile bike, and 3.1 mile run on Sunday, June 15, 2008 (Father’s Day) at the Long Island Gold Coast Triathlon. Contact John O’Brien at 914.472.3300, x329 or obrienj@jcca.org for more information. ■

*Written for JCC of Mid-Westchester.  
Published in The Scarsdale Inquirer  
and in JCC Circle magazine.*