

Madison area

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TSM: Women surviving – and thriving – after cancer

■ By Angela Mihm Nigro
for Neighbors

Is it possible reach beyond surviving cancer to a point of thriving? Through fitness, education, and camaraderie, TeamSurvivor Madison helps women with cancer “achieve the extraordinary” and indeed many of its members, all surviving cancer, are thriving.

Formed in 2003, TeamSurvivor Madison, serves a broad spectrum of women with diverse backgrounds, explains Diane Stojanovich, president and founder of the local organization. The group provides a unique opportunity “to sit side by side and build camaraderie through fitness,” she continues.

Stojanovich knows the benefits of fitness while surviving cancer firsthand. At the age of 35, she was training for her first marathon and was fit, active, and healthy. Her diagnosis of stage four, non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma came as a total shock. “I did not fit any of the definitions of having cancer,” she recalls.

Determined to take care of herself through fitness, Stojanovich learned of the national TeamSurvivor organization and trained for her first triathlon. At the time



Karen Miskimen (second from right) enjoys snowshoeing, one of TSM Inc.’s seasonal activities.

she crossed the finish line, Stojanovich was fit and active even though she was finishing cancer treatment. She remembers thinking, “I have to bring this group to Madison.”

For many members, TeamSurvivor Madison is an opportunity to shift the focus from dealing with cancer to doing something positive. Karen Miskimen, a member since 2005, says TeamSurvivor Madison is invaluable to her because “It’s not just talking, it’s doing. I’m bringing more health to my life and giving myself every chance,” she continues.

Among other events, Miskimen par-

ticipates in a sport called Dragon Boating, something new she’s taken on as a result of TeamSurvivor Madison. In Dragon Boating, 20 women sit in a long canoe, two across, as they combine their power to paddle against other boats. The women gain coaching and practice through their community partner, Rutabaga. Miskimen says it’s incredible to “feel how strong and fast” you get with each and every combined stroke.

Both Stojanovich and Miskimen note the somewhat ironic effect of cancer on life. Many members, themselves included, are



TSM, Inc. members share finish-line joy at the Danskin Women’s Triathlon Series event in Pleasant Prairie last July. (Left to right: Kris Johnson, Susan Lampert Smith, Susan Siman, Sue Haas)
PHOTOS COURTESY OF TEAMSURVIVOR MADISON

The correct date for the second Chocolate Chase is August 30, 2008.

participating in fitness events they never would have considered before their fight with cancer. Now, surviving cancer, these amazing women are driven to celebrate being alive through fitness.

Members of TeamSurvivor Madison live out Stojanovich’s point: “You can not only survive cancer but thrive too.”

The public will have an opportunity to support the local organization at The Chocolate Chase, a bike ride sponsored by TREK Bicycle Madison, to be held August 20. Proceeds will benefit TSM. Membership, event, and class information is available at www.teamsurvivormadison.com. ■