

Gregory woman, 72, proves health is timeless

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Personal trainer and health coach Kelly Fletcher works with 72-year-old Brenda Badish in a workout at the Hamburg Fitness Center while filmmaker Keith Famie shoots footage for a documentary project. Photo by GILLIS BENEDICT/DAILY PRESS & ARGUS

Brenda Badish found herself in a desperate situation at a tough age.

At age 68, Badish had gained about 100 pounds since her husband's 1997 death and could no longer function physically on her own.

"I couldn't do anything. I was at a point where I couldn't even dress myself," recalled Badish, who lives in Gregory in southwestern Livingston County.

"It was either enjoy the daisies or push them," she added.

Badish had two things on her side — family and determination.

Over a 26-month period, Badish lost 145 pounds after pairing with a trainer at the Hamburg Fitness Center and adopting a diet that was heavy on fresh food and light on fat and sugar.

She started the process at 272 pounds.

Badish's daughter helped mobilize her return to the Hamburg gym, where Badish had been a member since 1999 but hadn't been since about 2002.

Badish competed in a triathlon at age 71, and she continues to compete in triathlons and marathons.

Her story will be featured in "The Embrace of Aging: The Female Perspective of Growing Old," a 13-part documentary series in development by Keith Famie, formerly a renowned chef in metro Detroit and contestant on CBS' "Survivor."



Brenda Badish works with personal trainer and health coach Kelly Fletcher at the Hamburg Fitness Center. GILLIS BENEDICT/DAILY PRESS & ARGUS

Famie this month filmed Badish, now 72, working out at the Hamburg Township gym, where she most enjoys a spin class led by her personal trainer, Kelly Fletcher.

Badish also enjoys a kickboxing class, but she doesn't approach the sport from a pugilistic standpoint: She participates in the class, as well as private kickboxing training, for the aerobic benefits.

Part of her inspiration for working out daily is the opportunity to spend time with friends she's made at the gym, including Fletcher.

Famie said he chose Badish for his film because she exemplifies that it's never too late to lose weight and develop a healthy lifestyle.

"When you're in your late 60s and you're going to lose 145 pounds, you're talking about some serious dedication," he said.

He called obesity "an American issue" at all ages.

Badish said it's much harder to lose weight later in life, but her work with Fletcher soon paid dividends.

"The more I did it, the better things got," including dramatic weight loss, she recalled.

"Money is one thing, but time is a big thing. If you spend enough time, you can get over some of these things, and you can have a much better life. You can be very healthy," Badish said.

“You don’t have to be 40, 50 years old to do it,” she added.

Famie is filming for the project across the country and plans to shoot in other countries, including in Japan. He anticipates a 2014 release on Detroit Public Television.

The series will focus on several areas of concern for aging women, including menopause and cancer and heart disease in older age. It also will cover sexuality and spirituality in older women.

The series on aging women follows Famie’s “The Embrace of Aging: The Male Perspective of Growing Old.”

Famie also filmed in the county in 2011 for series on aging men. For the men’s series, he also filmed at the Hamburg Fitness Center, highlighting recognized triathlete and local fitness trainer Ryan Rau training then-48-year-old Chris Banfield, who had reached 280 pounds.

Fletcher shared Badish’s story while Famie was working on the men’s series.

Information in the women’s series will benefit men as much as women, Famie said.

“I think men are going to gain from it in a big way,” Famie said. “Guys are going to have a chance to really see and understand maybe the women in their lives a little bit better.”

Famie is also working on a series dedicated to the dying process.

He said the county has been a natural setting for his documentaries.

In addition to the “Embrace of Aging” series, Famie also included a ceremony in Hamburg Township honoring Vietnam War veterans in his film “Our Vietnam Generation.”

The film includes an interview with Livingston County Sheriff Bob Bezotte, who is a Vietnam War veteran.

Famie’s film “Ice Warriors” included then-Brighton Township resident and former Detroit Red Wing Dennis Hextall.

“It’s a really strong homestead community that just happens to have very vibrant, engaging people in it,” Famie said.

<http://www.livingstondaily.com/article/20130513/NEWS01/305130002/Gregory-woman-72-proves-health-timeless-video->