

She fought for fitness – and won

Sarah Hart began swimming competitively at 6. At age 12, Hart was diagnosed with scoliosis (curvature of the spine). Despite various treatments, her spinal curvature continued to increase. It drove Hart to work harder to overcome her challenges, showing amazing determination and courage.

In 1989, as a college freshman at UNC Chapel Hill, Hart became the first female athlete to win six medals at the U.S. Olympic Festival. Despite fracturing her elbow in 1990, Hart showed resilience and drive. By 1991 she



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became a national champion and ranked in the top 16 in the world. She also was an NCAA All-American and U.S. national team member.

While Hart was earning her bachelor's degree in psychology at UNC Chapel Hill, she wrote a thesis on a personal training, lifestyle and sports nutrition coaching company that educates, motivates and empowers individuals and families to live a healthy, active lifestyle. She hoped to make that dream a reality.

It was in 1989 that Hart met another swimmer who would not only be her teammate and training partner, but would also become her best friend. It was a partnership that would blossom over the course of nine years. In 1998, Sarah Perroni and Greg Hart married.

When it was time for the Harts to discuss starting a family, they met with a physician. Many people with the same severity of sco-



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liosis would be using a wheelchair. Sarah's athleticism and strength compensated for her spinal defects.

Sarah had spinal fusion surgery to correct the spinal curvature. She recovered quickly. By May 2001 the Harts welcomed their first child, Marissa. They moved to Huntersville that year, and Morgan was born in November 2002.

Now Hart is the owner and president of Upgrade Lifestyle Inc., working with over 70 clients ages 7 to 67 that want to improve their fitness, health and lifestyle. The company provides customized safe, simple and effective daily regimens, which align with personal and exercise style. In addition to personal training and lifestyle coaching, Hart and her trainers conduct corporate health challenges, youth programs and online coaching.

Kelly Fill joined Upgrade Life-

style as a personal trainer in May. She has won numerous races and is in training for triathlon competition.

Bridget Sprinkle is just one of many clients that are walking billboards that the Upgrade Lifestyle program works. Sprinkle started her program this past June and has lost 12 pounds. "I am running a 10K in November and a half marathon in December," said the 23-year-old college senior.

Corrine Lewis, 38, of Mooresville heard about the program from her best friend. "Sarah's dedication to her clients' success, constantly being encouraged and pushing you to challenge yourself further to reaching your daily goals, is what I like," Lewis said.

Susie Abernathy, 59, from Denver, has been training with Hart and Fill since June and is 17 pounds thinner. "I do all my

Sarah Hart, owner and president of Upgrade Lifestyle, shows her spirit after a recent race at the Huntersville Family Fitness and Aquatics Center, where she trains many of her clients.

Get-Fit Tips

Sarah Hart says the three things you can change to improve your health and fitness are:

1. Get in the right frame of mind and engage in positive thinking at all times.
2. Organize your schedule, priorities and obligations.
3. Fuel your mind and body with the proper nutrients.

For more information about Upgrade Lifestyle, visit www.upgradelifestyleinc.com.

training at home. I am provided with the specifics of all the exercises, nutrition and a calendar of when and what I do on a specific day. What I like most is Sarah's commitment to her clients. She is encouraging and strives to challenge and educate me," Abernathy said.

Jason and Bethany Davis, both 32, of Huntersville began their Upgrade Lifestyle training in January 2007. Now over 50 pounds lighter, Jason has his eyes set on running the Disney World Marathon in January 2009. Bethany, who has lost 15 pounds, plans to run right alongside her husband. "Our life has changed tremendously. We are healthier, have more energy and we are motivated to achieve our goals," Bethany said.

Annette Calud lives in Huntersville. If you have any stories to share, e-mail her at acalud@charlotteobserver.com.