



See women  
**swim,**  
**bike,**  
**run.**  
For hours—  
with diabetes.

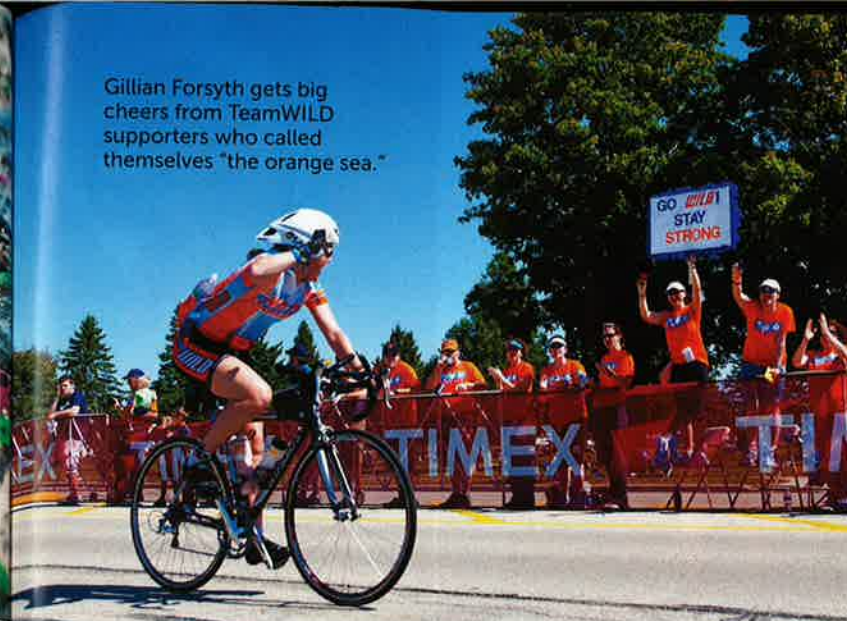
Competing in an athletic endurance event for 17 straight hours would be daunting for anyone. But throw in glucose sensors, insulin pumps, carb-loading, and blood sugar checks, and you may start thinking even the label Ironman is too wimpy for this team of women.

By Michael W. Hoskins | PHOTOS BY Kathryn Gamble & Meghann Bestell-Eide





Karen Lipinsky runs to find her bike.



Gillian Forsyth gets big cheers from TeamWILD supporters who called themselves "the orange sea."

bike



Racers mounted containers on bike bars to keep healthful snacks within reach.



Jennifer Ahn stashes a power bar for the long swim ahead.

# swim



At Ironman Wisconsin 2011 in Madison, a team of 11 women from four states and New Zealand came together to individually swim 2.4 miles, bike 112 miles, and then run 26.2 miles. All but one live with type 1 diabetes, chalking up more than 178 years of experience living with diabetes.

The women competed as TeamWILD (We Inspire Life with Diabetes), a four-year-old program aimed at empowering people with diabetes to focus on the exercise physiology aspect of their athletic training and diabetes management. As a result of this training and support, diabetes hardly interfered with the race.

Sure, competing with diabetes required extra preparation and planning—and team support. Karen Lipinsky from Boulder, Colorado, PWD type 1 for 18 years, realized during the 112-mile biking leg of the event that her lancing device had fallen out of her supply pack. She needed to borrow one; fortunately, a teammate had a lancing device handy.

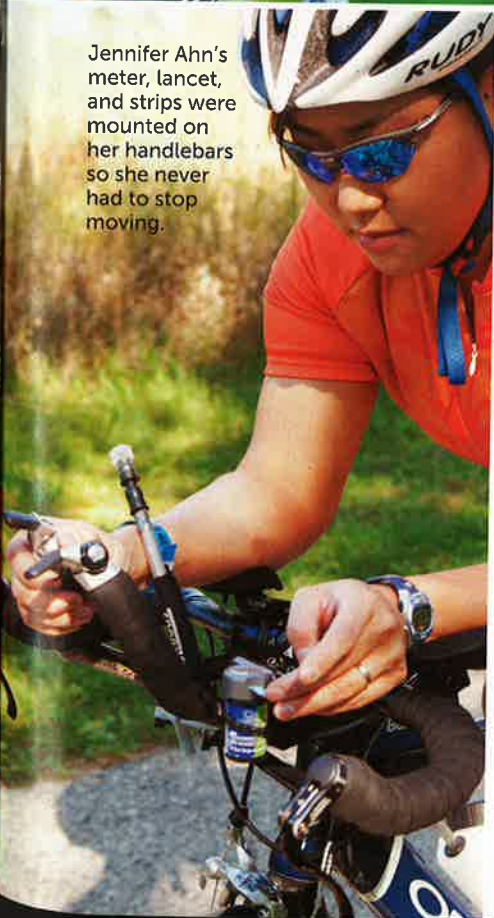
Kathy Ziegert from Madison, Wisconsin, PWD type 1 for 19 years, echoed some of those thoughts about how little diabetes really interfered and noted how she never



One team member filled bags with supplies before the race.



Jennifer Ahn's meter, lancet, and strips were mounted on her handlebars so she never had to stop moving.



thought she'd be able to do this kind of Ironman event. Not until she joined TeamWILD.

"I had an awe of Ironman athletes but never thought I would have what it takes to finish one . . . diabetes management being a big part of that doubt," the 32-year-old insulin pumper says. "But I believe people with diabetes are capable of more than we might think. Athletic achievement is limitless when you think of yourself as an athlete with diabetes, versus a person with diabetes who exercises."

That "you can do this" mantra is exactly what TeamWILD founder and leader Mari Ruddy, PWD type 1, from Denver had in mind when she formed the group in 2008. Diagnosed at age 16, Mari is also a two-time breast cancer survivor. After creating the American Diabetes Association's Red Rider Recognition Program in 2007, she founded TeamWILD when she couldn't find programs for PWDs who wanted to exercise safely and with expert guidance. It first focused exclusively on women. Now TeamWILD has a mission to empower men and women with any form of diabetes who want to get physically fit.

Continued on page 30 ➔



TeamWILD's Mari Ruddy offers support.



Every woman had a different strategy on how to race with diabetes. Kathleen Fraser ate CLIF SHOT BLOKS to keep her energy up.



Karen Lipinsky, Kathleen Fraser, and Jennifer Ahn bond before the big race.

# run



Kathy Ziegert races with her CGM taped to her arm (shown above).

About 100 women have been part of TeamWILD since its inception, Mari says.

"This empowerment is amazing to watch," she says. "You learn about your health through the lens of being athletic, not as something you have to learn because you have diabetes. It's more fun that way."

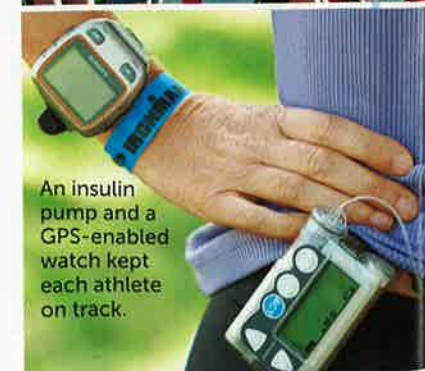
Marcey Robinson, a certified diabetes educator who's been a part of TeamWILD since the beginning, says the medical community doesn't have the experience to offer more than basic guidelines on exercise, rather than the personalized, in-depth information TeamWILD members get on sports nutrition and exercise relating to diabetes care.

The focus is not on what one's blood sugar is doing but what one's insulin (the body's own or used as medication) is doing and how the body is responding to the exercise, Mari says.

Of the 11 TeamWILD members who started the race, seven finished. Bike problems, a bike crash, severe leg cramps, and a gastrointestinal tract illness stopped four from crossing the finish line. "None of the four women who did not finish had diabetes-related issues," Mari says.



Each team member carried glucose in the form that worked best for her, including tablets.




An insulin pump and a GPS-enabled watch kept each athlete on track.

## find your inner athlete

**OK!** You probably aren't ready to start training for an Ironman, but you can start to move more.

It's never too late to get fit—no matter how old you are or even if you have never exercised. Regular physical activity clears glucose from your blood, and it can lower cholesterol and improve mild to moderate high blood pressure. As you get more fit, your body's sensitivity to insulin also improves.

To encourage people over age 50 to exercise, the National Institute on Aging has launched a campaign called Go4Life ([go4life.niapublications.org](http://go4life.niapublications.org)). The message: You can't stop exercising as you age, and if you have never exercised a day in your life, it's time to start. The website offers inspiring stories of first-time exercisers and people with chronic health issues who exercise regularly.

Be sure to check with your health care provider before starting any exercise program. 



### Set a Goal, Inspire, and Change!

TeamWILD is an online and in-person training program for people with all types of diabetes who want to train for runs (from 10Ks to marathons), cycling events, or triathlons. It also offers a 12-week starter program called WILDfit! to get people moving in the direction of endurance athletics.

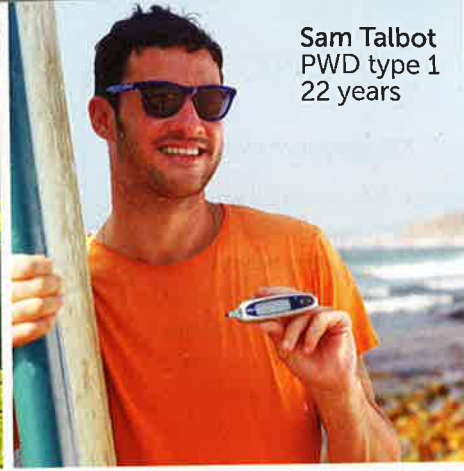
To participate, you can already be an athlete—or just be able to get up off the couch, walk a mile without pain, and have the desire to become an athlete. Weekly training plans and video and audio coaching sessions help PWDs focus on athletic, diabetes management, and nutrition goals.

Visit [teamwild.org](http://teamwild.org) to learn more.

Find fun, easy ways to start exercising.  
[DiabeticLivingOnline.com/move](http://DiabeticLivingOnline.com/move)



Juanita Nelson  
PWD type 2  
3 years



Sam Talbot  
PWD type 1  
22 years



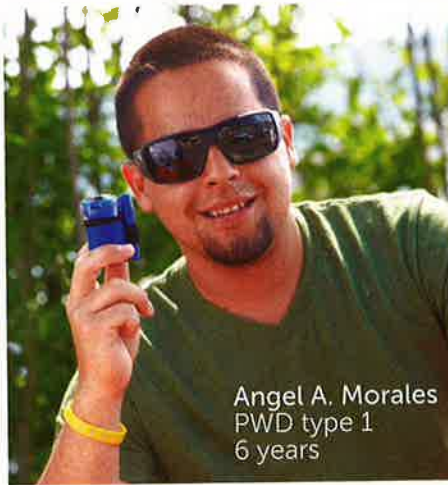
Karen Lipinsky  
PWD type 1  
18 years

# we're **LIVING** it!

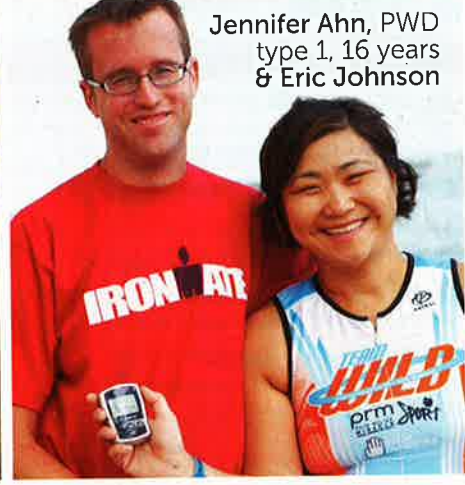
Diabetes does not stop us! Say hello to some new friends who demonstrate what it means to live well with diabetes.



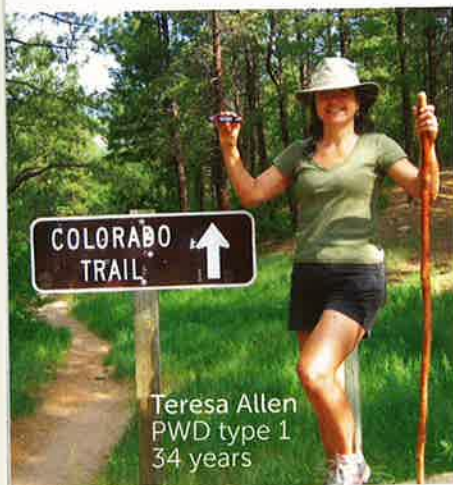
McKayla Schmits  
PWD type 1  
1 year



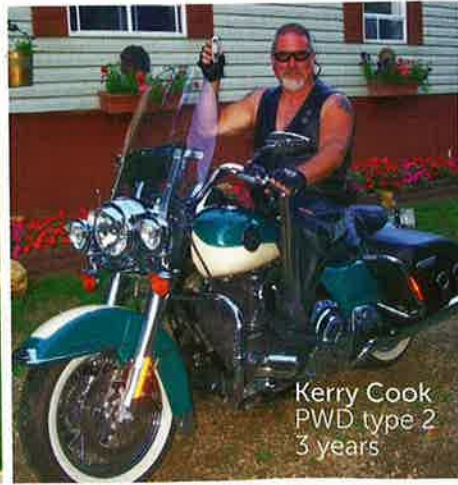
Angel A. Morales  
PWD type 1  
6 years



Jennifer Ahn, PWD type 1, 16 years & Eric Johnson




Teresa Allen  
PWD type 1  
34 years



Kerry Cook  
PWD type 2  
3 years

See yourself here.  
(Raise awareness!)

 To submit your photo: Visit [facebook.com/DiabeticLiving](http://facebook.com/DiabeticLiving), e-mail [DiabeticLiving@meredith.com](mailto:DiabeticLiving@meredith.com), or mail *Diabetic Living*, 1716 Locust St., Des Moines, IA 50309. You may be featured in our next issue!

Diabetic Living® (ISSN 1552-8065), Spring 2012 issue. *Diabetic Living* is published quarterly in February, May, July, and November by Meredith Corp., 1716 Locust Street, Des Moines, IA 50309-3023. SUBSCRIPTION PRICES: U.S. and its possessions, 1 yr. \$19.97; Canada and other countries, 1 yr. \$23.97. Periodicals postage paid at Des Moines, IA, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Diabetic Living*, P.O. Box 37508, Boone, IA 50037-0508. Canada Post Publications Mail Sales Product Agreement No. 40069223. Canadian BN 12348 2887 RT. Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: *Diabetic Living*, 2835 Kew Drive, Windsor, ON N8T 5B7. BETTER HOMES AND GARDENS is a registered trademark in the United States, Canada, and Australia. BETTER HOMES AND GARDENS marca registrada en México. © Meredith Corp. 2012. All rights reserved. Printed in the U.S.A.