

Ridgewood Tri Athlete: Accomplishing Dreams and Winning Races

Elizabeth Wittmaack creates Ridgewood Tri Athlete to train runners, cyclists and swimmers to accomplish dreams.

By [James Kleimann](#) | [Email the author](#) | September 27, 2010



"I was never an athlete growing up," said Elizabeth Wittmaack, clad in gym gear and holding bottle of water at the Ridgewood Coffee Company.

Now Wittmaack, a 1999 graduate of Ridgewood High School, is an athlete in three sports and has competed in the Ironman World Championship in Hawaii and in other Ironman races around the globe.

It's quite a departure for someone who just five years ago had been wearing purple scrubs in Hoboken, where she worked in medical device sales.

"I was wearing my tri-shorts underneath my scrubs and leaving the operating room to take out my bike," she laughed, saying she spent every available moment she had to run, bike and swim.

"So I sold everything," keeping only clothes and her bicycle, leaving behind a car, condo and more.

Now, after a stint working as a professional triathlon coach and also as an executive working on back-end business needs in New York, Wittmaack is back in the village, where she joins her brother Terry as the second Wittmaack with a business in town. (Terry is the owner of Man Around the House, a contracting firm their father started years ago.)

Said Wittmaack, "I asked myself, 'If I don't do it, what *am* I going to do? Am I going to wait around forever while my life ticks by?'"

"It was kind of a no-brainer to come back to Ridgewood."

Wittmaack has started Ridgewood Tri Athlete, a one-woman business to help fill what she calls a "huge" niche for tri athletes—those who run, swim and bike around [Graydon](#), [Wild Duck Pond](#), and other spots throughout the village and surrounding towns.

Though the numbers of athletes are growing in great numbers, she says coaching resources are sparse for athletes.

"There are only a few coaches in the area," she says, but said that most are part-time and have other jobs.

While clubs and gyms like the Glen Rock Tri Club (which has hundreds of members) promote the three-headed sport, they provide no professional coaching.

Finally, said Wittmaack, 'cookie cutter' online plans have limited flexibility and personal investment in their clients. There are gaps, she says, and said that what she can provide is a tailored plan based on the client's personal goals. Others can't or haven't lined their services or dedication with those of prospective clients.

"The goals of people are all different," Wittmaack said.

Wittmaack personally trains clients to race everything from 5k runs to Ironman Triathlons.

"Anything that involves swim, bike or run or the combination of all three is what I would handle. I'd sign you up for that race and I would prepare you for it."

Wittmaack, who has five clients right now (3 are triathletes, two are runners), will even personally run, bike or swim the event with the client, part of what she calls 'the sherpa service.'

One of her first clients was able to beat their goal in the Long Branch Half Marathon by a half hour, even passing friends he never thought he'd even see the back of, let alone speed past.

Wittmaack was right there along side, helping push the client while providing practical advice of when to eat, drink, slow down and really make the last push to accomplish his dream.

Plans depend on how often clients want to see her, but she goes beyond just signing up and training clients for races.

"Everything is fully customizable. You can go online and get a cookie-cutter plan but the disadvantage is there's no interaction. You read it but what happens if you don't feel good after that workout? There's nothing tweaked, nothing changed."

"The reality is we're all different."

Ultimately, she said she's in the business to help people accomplish their dreams.

"My goal is to inspire," she said. "I believe people can reach their goals and accomplish their dreams and I will do everything I possibly can to help them do that."

"There's no better feeling in the world," she said.

If you'd like to get in touch with Elizabeth at Ridgewood Tri Athlete, check out her website, [Ridgewood Triathlete](#) or email her at elizabeth@ridgewoodtriathlete.com,