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Work & Money

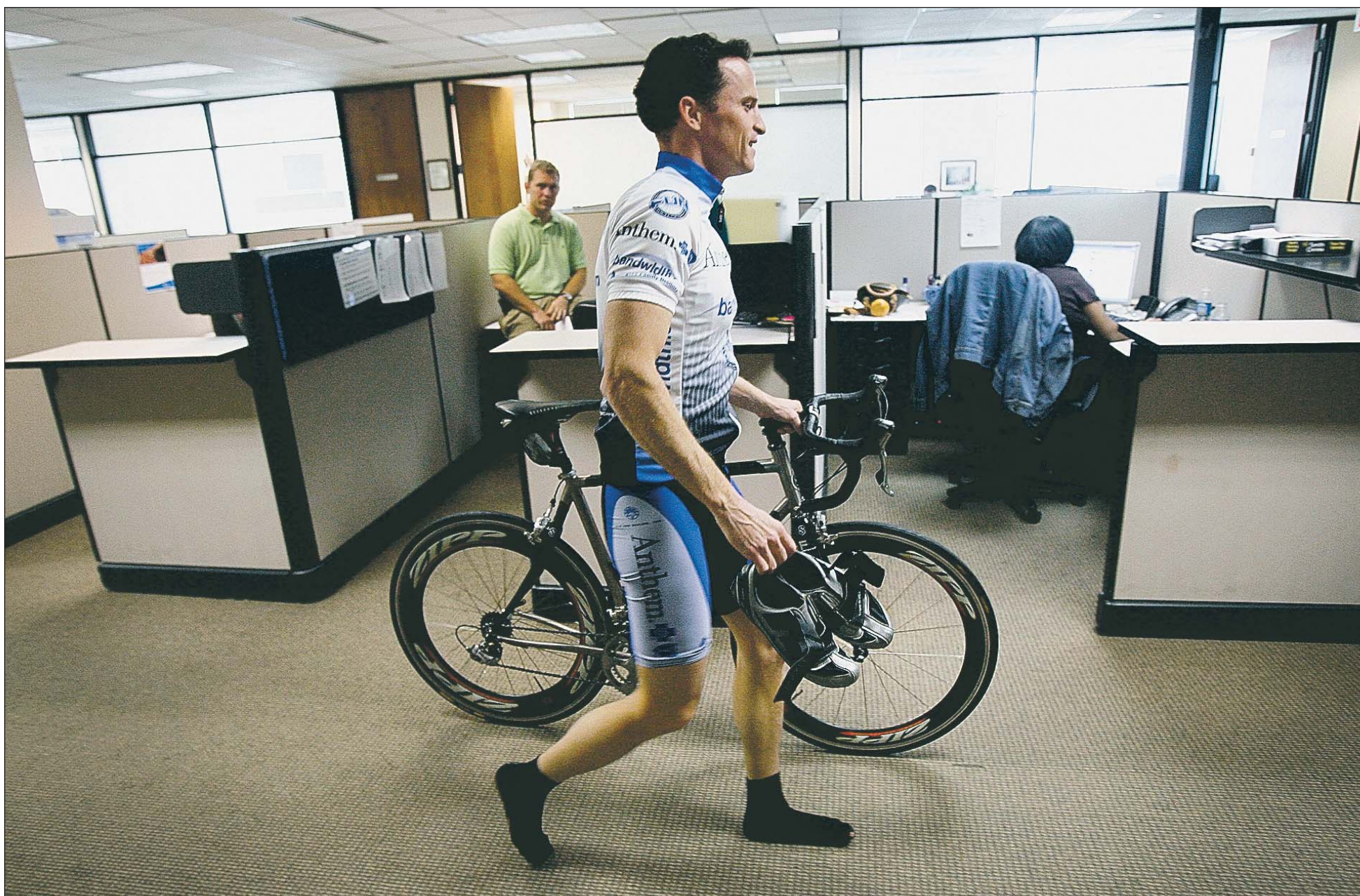
COMING MONDAY

An eyesore on Hillsborough Street in Raleigh could be revamped.

Commercial Real Estate

Racing to the top

Entrepreneurs say endurance sports push them to go the distance



David Morken, president of Bandwidth.com in Cary, heads out of the office for a lunch-break ride. He is training for a 100-mile race. 'I find it very exhilarating,' he said.

STAFF PHOTO BY JASON ARTHURS

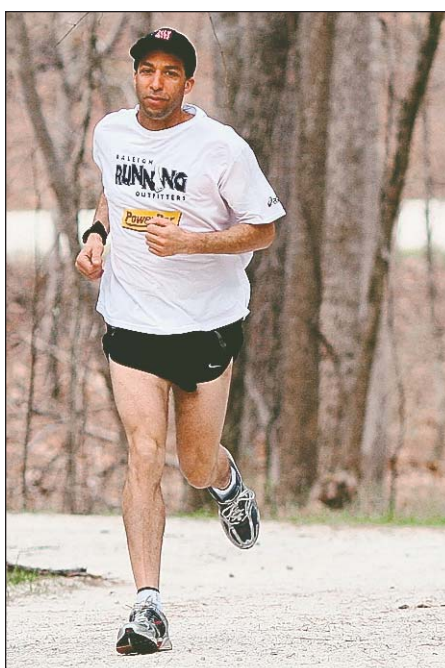
BY GRACE W. UENG
 CORRESPONDENT

David Morken's first triathlon wasn't a triumph. "I finished dead last and darn near drowned," he said. "But I loved it."

Leap ahead 10 years. Morken, president of a fast-growing Cary technology firm, is training for the Wasatch 100 in September. It's a 100-mile ultra-marathon through the Utah mountains. Over about 30 hours, runners climb and descend 26,000 feet in elevation, the equivalent of sprinting up and down Mount Everest.

"If you have to ask why I do it, I won't be able to explain it, but if you do this kind of thing, I don't have to explain it," Morken says, borrowing a line from legendary Notre Dame football coach Lou Holtz. "I find it very exhilarating to push and stay in great physical form."

Business leaders such as Morken are known for their 24/7 work ethic; finding time to sleep — much less train for endurance races — seems at odds with that image. But successful CEOs and corporate managers have much in common with successful athletes: discipline, extreme drive, confidence and vision.



Chef Sarig Agasi of Zely & Ritz in Raleigh runs in Umstead State Park.

STAFF PHOTO BY TAKA AKI IWABU

"As an entrepreneur and an athlete, you face challenges and a level of intensity that sometimes seem too great to overcome, but in both cases, you push through," says Ryan Wuerch, CEO of Motricity, a Durham technology company.

Having completed the New York City and Virginia Beach marathons, Wuerch expects to complete six triathlons this summer, including the New York City Triathlon and the Escape from Alcatraz Triathlon in San Francisco. Then he'll be back to train for the Chicago Marathon in October. All that while running Motricity, which develops technology for ring tones and other cell-phone content. The company has expanded rapidly to 350 employees in Durham, attracted high-profile partners such as MTV and raised \$216 million in private funding — a record in the Triangle.

Certainly, there are capable leaders who are sedentary or overweight. But it's no secret that many successful people enjoy exercise,

ENJOY THE ENDORPHINS

Get tips on going from weekend warrior to endurance athlete. ► 4E

and often, intense workouts.

There is a class of entrepreneur and endurance athlete that elevates the connection to another level. As with other regions of the country that are hotbeds for entrepreneurial companies, the Triangle is home to a large share of that type of achiever.

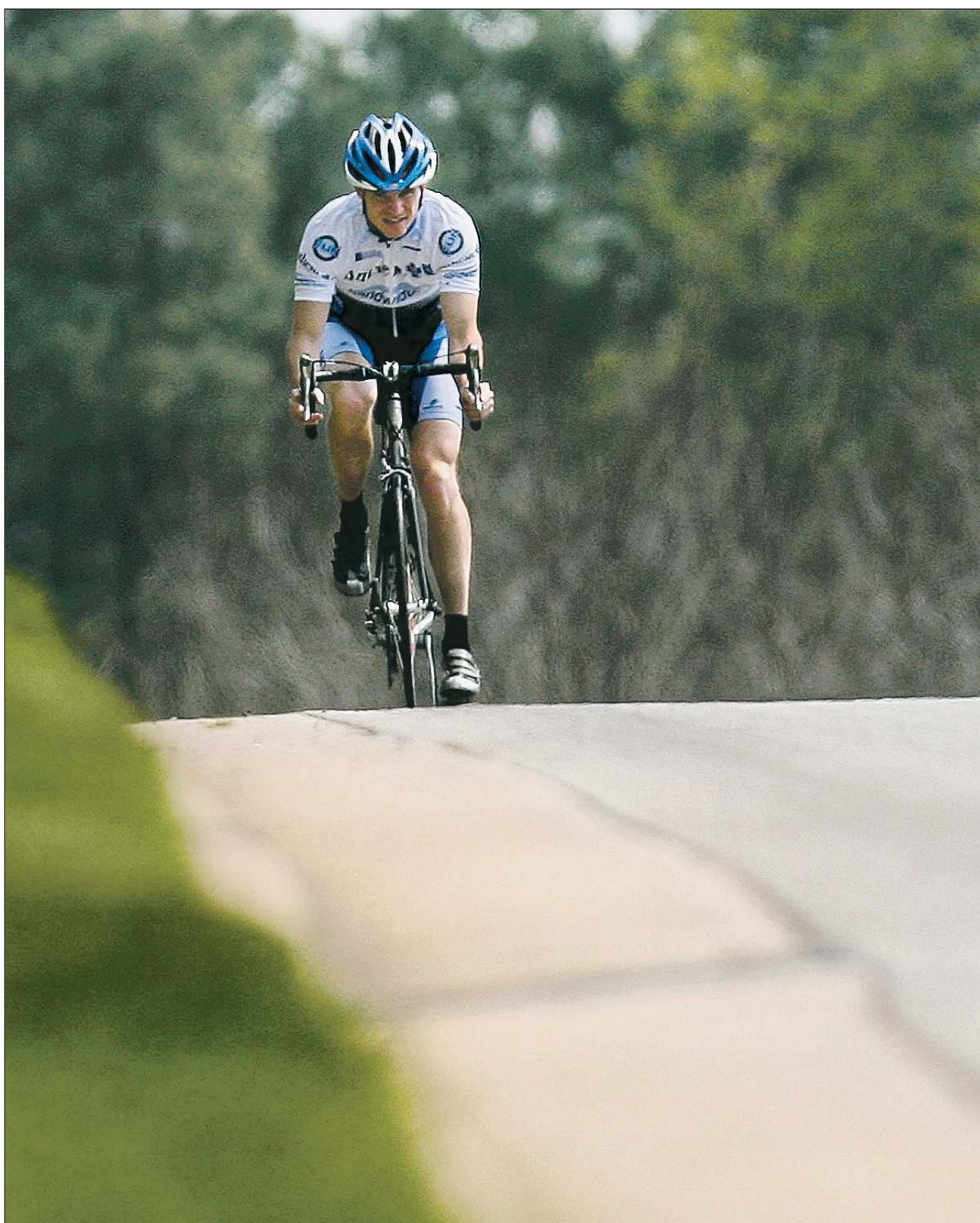
Donna Jensen-Madier, an adjunct professor at UNC's Kenan-Flagler Business School, thinks that the correlation between entrepreneurship and endurance sports is "a good, healthy supply of endorphins. ... The most successful entrepreneurs have high energy levels and tremendous stamina, probably due to the powerful effect of endorphins."

Jensen-Madier, who is the former CEO of Startups.com, always loved to

SEE ENDURANCE, PAGE 4E

‘Many people on my staff exercise, and we often talk about what we did. I think the adrenaline is contagious, and it certainly makes for a healthier staff.’

SARIG AGASI, CHEF AT ZELY & RITZ IN GLENWOOD SOUTH



David Morken, president of Bandwidth.com, bikes during his lunch break. He said that there are connections between his drive as an entrepreneur and his motivation as an endurance athlete.

STAFF PHOTO BY JASON ARTHURS

ENDURANCE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1E

run. When she shut her company in 2002, she signed up for her first marathon and “discovered that euphoric feeling again at about mile 10 and was hooked.”



Jensen-Madier got a ‘euphoric feeling’ competing in her first marathon.

She discovered that she was not alone. “While training, I came across numerous other dot-com CEO casualties who were also training for a marathon or triathlon,” she said. “We laughed it off, saying it was better than hitting the booze, but I think we all knew that we missed the energy and excitement of it all.”

Running on adrenaline

Chef Sarig Agasi takes his time in the kitchen at Zely & Ritz, the organic-food restaurant in Raleigh’s Glenwood South district. But when he puts on

his sneakers, he’s all about speed.

Agasi says his best creations, including special menus for athletes, come to mind while he’s training to break three hours in the Boston Marathon. He recently placed sixth in the Umstead Trail marathon.

“Many people on my staff exercise, and we often talk about what we did,” Agasi says. “I think the adrenaline is contagious, and it certainly makes for a healthier staff.”

Indeed, other endurance executives say their training and all-around drive help set an example for other employees.

Pete Durand is CEO of Integrian, a Morrisville company selling digital video technology that helps mass-transit systems with security. He points to evidence that intense exercise improves health, reducing the risk of disease, boosts mental capacity and more.

“I can concentrate longer and miss less work due to illness,” he says.

Durand’s competition of choice is 125-mile bike races. He says the time he spends running, biking and lifting weights is one of the few chances he has to clear his head and decompress from the challenges of work.

Leading a company and endurance sports each require a large investment of



Chef Sarig Agasi of Zely & Ritz said great ideas, such as menus for athletes, come to him as he trains.

STAFF FILE PHOTO BY PAILIN WEDEL

time. Together, does one hurt the other?

“My physical training has positively influenced my entrepreneurial endeavors by creating in me a confidence, energy and discipline far stronger than what they were before I began training,” Motricity’s Wuerch says.

Ties between the two

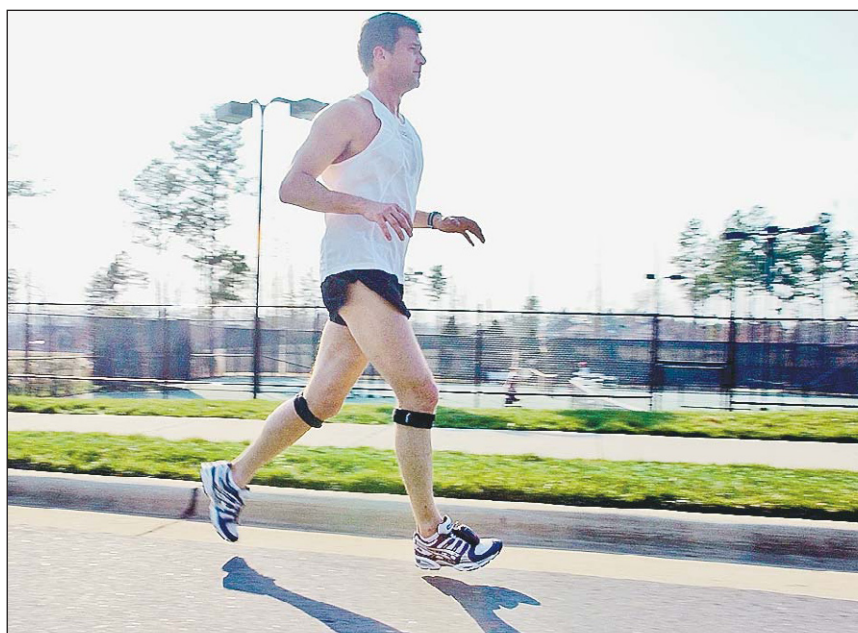
David Morken competed in his first triathlon, the one with the last-place finish, while in the Marine Corps in Hawaii in 1995. Since then, he has had a series of successes as an athlete and corporate leader.

He is president of Bandwidth.com, a Cary provider of Internet services to businesses. The company he helped found in 1999 now has slightly more than 100 employees. In 2005, he was the top finisher from North Carolina in the Ironman triathlon in Kona, Hawaii.

Morken says that there are connections between his drive as an entrepreneur and executive and his motivation as an endurance athlete. And if he stumbles in either effort, it can affect the other side of his life.

“There’s no question: If the business isn’t hitting its objectives, I can be subject to a suboptimal frame of mind,” he says. “When trauma keeps me from my training calendar, it can also make me short-tempered.

“If business is hitting its objectives and I’m able to train injury-free, life is good.”



Motricity CEO Ryan Wuerch runs near his home. He plans to complete six triathlons this summer and train for the Chicago Marathon.

STAFF PHOTO BY HARRY LYNCH

‘Run whenever you can’

Going from weekend warrior to endurance athlete isn’t easy for anyone.

World-ranked Ironman athlete Dave Morken, co-founder and president of Bandwidth.com, offers this advice: “There is a saying in the infantry — don’t run when you can walk, don’t walk when you can stand, don’t stand when you can sit, don’t sit when you can lie down, and sleep whenever possible.

“Balancing endurance sports with family and work requires you to do the opposite — run whenever you can, walk instead of stand, stand instead of sit, and never sleep,” he adds. “But in all candor, just getting started and overcoming the inertia is the most important thing.”

Here are some tips for someone who’s interested in training for a marathon or other race:

■ Sign up for a race that interests you and set a goal. Depending on where you are starting and your time limitations, the goal can be simply to finish uninjured or to improve your previous time, finish in the top 25 percent or win the event. Committing to a goal will ensure that you do it.

■ Team up with friends for long distances. Friends “provided the necessary hands-on advice on training, equipment and events,” says David Motsinger, chief technology officer of StrikeIron, a Durham company that provides Web services for other corporations. “And they didn’t make fun of me when I first tried on that spandex!”



Motsinger

■ Schedule workouts just as you would any business meeting — respect the time you set aside and don’t cancel the appointment with yourself. “Think of getting the training/exercise as being as basic in your life as brushing your teeth in the morning — then you will always find time to do it,” says Bud Whitmeyer, general partner of Research Triangle Ventures, a venture capital fund in Raleigh.

■ Find the time in the day that works best for you. Many athletes schedule workouts first thing in the morning to ensure that it gets done and to enjoy the boost in endorphins and metabolism all day.

■ Make it convenient and enjoy time to think. Find routes near your home or office. “Running, biking, and weights are my only chance at personal time each day — I relish the chance to clear my head,” says Pete Durand, CEO of Integrian, a Morrisville video technology company.

■ Involve the whole family so you can have time together while improving your family’s health. “Kids in Training” (kidsintraining.com) is a great way to involve your children in running, or even triathlons. Ryan Wuerch, chairman and CEO of Motricity, ran the Myrtle Beach Half Marathon with his 14-year-old son. “There was nothing like running with my son across the finish line with my arm around him,” he says.



Wuerch

■ Avoid injury by easing into your program and not making any huge leaps in distance or time, even if the workout seems easy that day. Doing too much too quickly is a great way to get sidelined with an injury. Consider a chiropractor or massage therapist to keep yourself aligned and to relieve sore muscles after long runs.

■ Have fun. Entrepreneurs tend to be competitive. In the business world, you win or lose (close up shop), so a competitive posture is necessary. With endurance sports, you don’t necessarily have to win — that doesn’t have to be your goal.

■ Seek balance. Participating in an endurance activity is a great way to balance working hard with playing hard. But make sure you make time for family, friends and all the other great things in life.

■ Consider a professional coach to advise you in maximizing your training in the time you have leading up to the race. Motricity’s Wuerch speaks highly of Randy Bernard at TriMyCoach.com, who helps create a plan and offers guidance and accountability.

Grace Ueng



Grace W. Ueng, left, is founder and CEO of Savvy Marketing Group (savvymarketinggroup.com), a strategic consulting firm in RTP. Ueng received an undergraduate degree from MIT and an MBA from Harvard Business School. She is an adjunct professor at UNC’s Kenan-Flagler Business School. She also is a motivational speaker, director of The Harvard Club of Research Triangle, a trustee for The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society and chairwoman of the board of advisers for the N.C. Chinese Business Association.

Ueng began her endurance sports career through Team in Training, running her first marathon in honor of a friend diagnosed with a rare form of lymphoma. She is planning to compete in the Great Wall Marathon, coinciding with the Beijing Olympics in 2008.

An earlier version of this story appeared in Endurance magazine in October.