

**SAVVY**

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typically inflated, making it impossible for you to buy the home back. Eventually, the property is forfeited and the new owner sells the home at market value and pockets the equity.

■ **The fake home sale.** In this scheme, a scammer says he will buy your home to get control of the deed or title to the home.

In some cases, homeowners believe their lenders has been paid — but don't get proof before handing over deeds.

But the homeowners are still liable for the mortgage, because you have merely signed over the deed, not sold the home. The scammer rents the home to a tenant with an option to buy — pocketing any downpayment and rent — but never making a mortgage payment. Eventually the lender notifies you that it is foreclosing on the property. The deed holder walks away with no liability.

■ **Bogus help.** This scheme is simple and common. The scammer promises to save your credit or get you low monthly payments. Instead, you pay thousands of dollars in fees, and they do nothing. In the end, you still might be forced into foreclosure or bankruptcy.

**How to avoid a scam**

Most foreclosure scammers identify their victims by watching for property that has been listed for sale in court. They approach the homeowner with offers to help. Other scammers are contacted by potential victims who have seen a flier advertising "foreclosure rescue."

So if you're a homeowner in financial trouble, thoroughly check out any organization before doing business with it. Here are some other tips:

■ **Don't pay upfront fees to "foreclosure rescue" companies** that promise to help you keep your property. In North Carolina, it is illegal to charge fees for foreclosure-assistance services before any help is given.

■ **Don't sign your deed over without consulting a lawyer** you trust. Remember, simply signing your deed over doesn't formally release you from your mortgage liability.

■ **Don't sign any contract to sell your home until you review the document with a lawyer.**

■ **Don't work with anyone who discourages you from contacting your mortgage company, refuses to put promises in writing, pressures you to sign paperwork you haven't had a chance to read thoroughly or fills out paperwork for you.**

■ **Contact your lender at the first sign of financial trouble.** See if the loan can be restructured or refinanced, or work out a repayment plan. Keep in mind that most lenders don't want to foreclose because it costs them money. Also, the longer you wait, the fewer options you have for help. Once a lender begins foreclosure proceedings, the process is swift. Your home could be auctioned in as few as three weeks after your court hearing.

■ **Consider selling your home if you have equity in it.** If all other options fail, you might also consider deeding your property back to your mortgage company, also known as deed-in-lieu of foreclosure. If the lender agrees to this transaction, you can be released from most or all financial obligation and the lender benefits by not having to pay repossession fees and other costs associated with foreclosure.

■ **Contact a reputable non-profit credit and housing counselor** if you are not able to work with your lender. For a list of approved housing counselors in the state, call the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development at (800) 569-4287 or go to [hud.gov](http://hud.gov). Click on the foreclosure link.

■ **Consult with an lawyer if you don't understand the foreclosure process.** To find a licensed lawyer, contact the N.C. Lawyer Referral Service at (800) 662-7660.

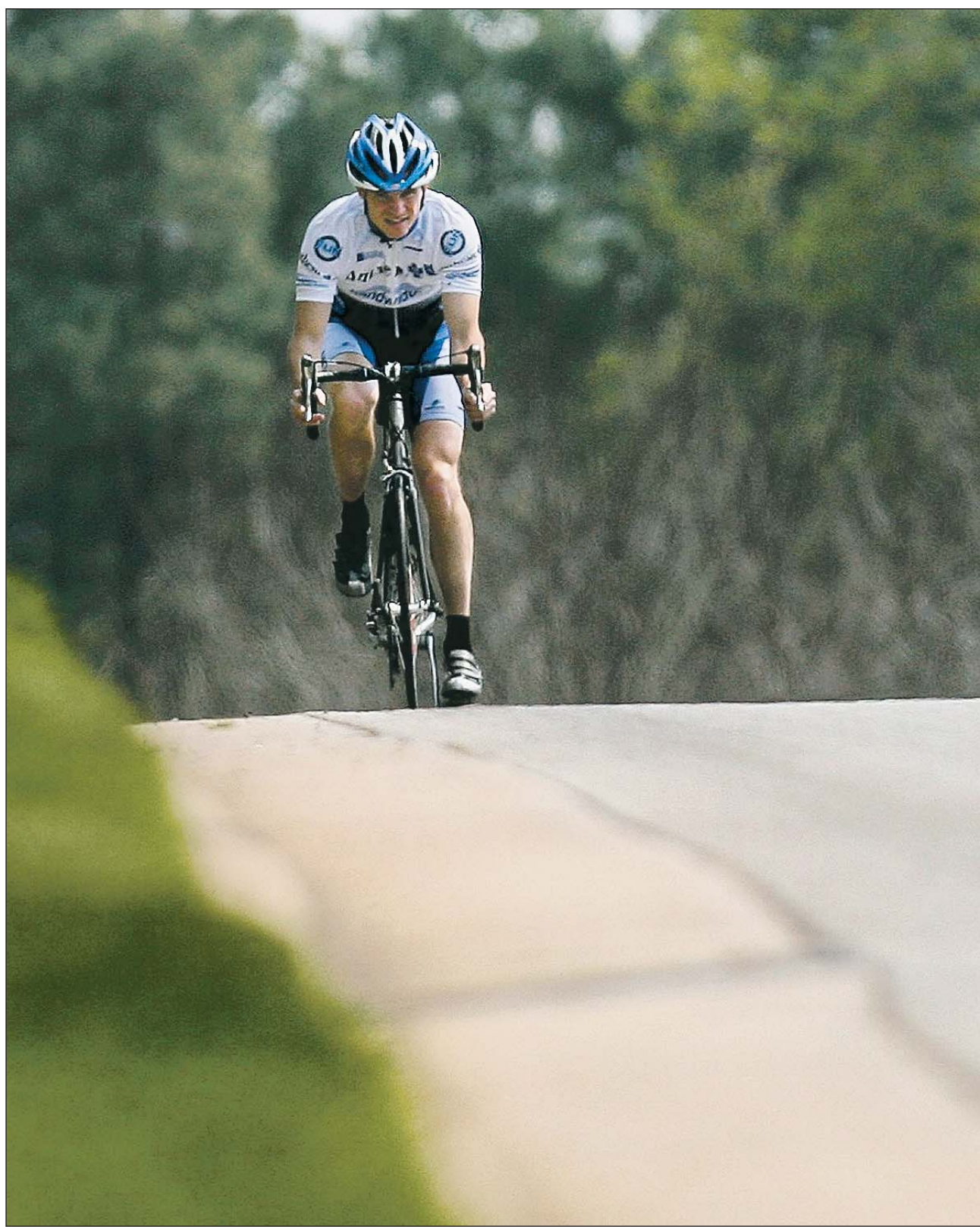
Many people miss out on real help — financial and otherwise — because they are too embarrassed to admit they got roped into an expensive mortgage.

Just remember: There is no shame in needing — or getting — help.

Have a tip or consumer complaint? Vicki Lee Parker can be reached at (919) 829-4898 or [vparker@newsobserver.com](mailto:vparker@newsobserver.com).

'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**

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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**

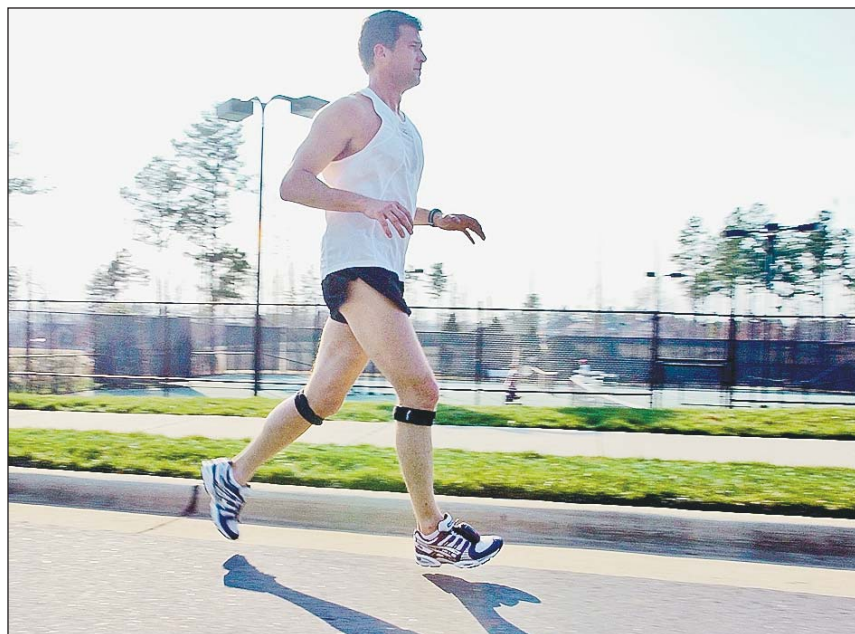
David Morken competed in his first triathlon, the one with the last-place finish, while in the Marine Corps in Hawaii in 1995. Since then, he has had a series of successes as an athlete and corporate leader.

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



Grace W. Ueng, left, is founder and CEO of Savvy Marketing Group ([savvymarketinggroup.com](http://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.

**'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!"

■ **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](http://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.

■ **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](http://TriMyCoach.com), who helps create a plan and offers guidance and accountability.

Grace Ueng



Motsinger



Durand



Wuerch