



# JOINING A MOTIVATING COMMUNITY

## Kathryn's Member Success Story EAU CLAIRE YMCA

On February 1<sup>st</sup>, the Chippewa Valley YMCA began the Chippewa River Challenge. This is an 11-month challenge during which participants are tasked with swimming the length of the Chippewa River which stretches a total of 183 miles. Kathryn was one of these participants. Going into the challenge having never lap swam before, she wasn't sure that she'd be able to finish saying, "Well, at least it'll motivate me to come to the pool more regularly!"

Kathryn joined the Y less than a year ago at the end of the STRONG Challenge. When she joined, the main draw for Kathryn was the pool. She is sometimes bothered by an old neck injury, so low impact workouts in the pool seemed welcoming to her.

Kathryn enjoyed the way that she was embraced as a member of the community here at the Y. She thrived on the motivation from those around her and welcomed the helpful tips and encouragement from lifeguards and longtime swimmers. With the rallying motivation of the friends she had made at the Y and the stimulating goal of finishing the 183 miles, Kathryn was rarely tempted to take a day off and quickly became an avid swimmer.

Kathryn recalls swimming her first length of the pool and having to stop to catch her breath. Slowly, she worked her way up to swimming for up to an hour and a half three or four times a week. She now says that she finds herself in what might be described as a meditative state while she swims saying, "I focus on my breath, watch the line at the bottom of the pool, and feel the water around me. I try not to think about anything else and that is what makes it really relaxing and enjoyable." Having worked hard to increase her endurance, she was able to finish the 183 miles with 4 whole months to spare.

Having completed the challenge, Kathryn hopes to continue to nurture her newfound love of swimming. Her advice to people trying to get active was, "Find something that you enjoy and stick with it even if you think others are better than you. Try to focus on your own happiness and don't compare yourself to others. It also helps when you have such an encouraging community of people around you." She says that she will continue to swim as often as she is able and hopes that other people can find what she has found here at the YMCA.



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