

To Montauk in Memory

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Beth Puliti

Cindi A. Prentiss says a shin splint injury while running led her to discover athletic training. When she realized that helping people heal is what she loved, but wished to one day own her very own business, she moved in the direction of physical therapy. In 2000, Prentiss, MBA, PT, OCS, Cert. MDT, LMT, by now a physical therapist/massage therapist, opened Physical Therapy & Beyond in Smithtown, NY, which offers orthopedic physical therapy, spine care and women's health. In 2001, she opened a satellite home office in Mount Sinai. By 2006, the home office became so busy, she opened up an expanded location in East Setauket to replace the Mount Sinai location and better serve her patients.

Prentiss also owns Beyond Fitness, a gym located next to Physical Therapy & Beyond in East Setauket. She noted that her reasoning for expanding once again was at the request of her patients who wanted a place to work out after they graduated from physical therapy.

"I opened Beyond Fitness as a cross over after physical therapy. Our clients love it for its unintimidating and inviting atmosphere, where we offer personalized attention and onsite physical therapist support," she said.

Beyond Fitness offers circuit training as well as personal training, and is billed as an affordable, non-competitive, newly renovated place to work out. "I love treating and helping patients feel better. There is no more satisfying feeling," she admitted.

An Unforgettable Mentor

Prentiss credits Jeffrey J. Ellis, MS, PT, MTC, FFCFMT, founder of Integrative Manual Therapy Solutions in Westhampton Beach, NY, for teaching her that physical therapists are an important part of health care and must continue to progress in their field. Ellis served as her physical therapist while Prentiss was pregnant with her now 17-year-old son. She had also taken many spine courses from him, calling Ellis "one of the most knowledgeable physical therapists I have ever known."

"At one of the conferences Jeff was giving, he literally removed me from the class, brought me down the hallway and said, 'You know this spine stuff. We need more PTs to do women's health,' and that was that," she recalled. "I continued my education into woman's health and have a successful practice that includes treatment of pregnancy-related pain, incontinence and pelvic pain."

Prentiss continues to focus on issues that affect women today, and recently teamed up with a licensed acupuncturist who specializes in woman's health--including fertility and pregnancy--and treats patients at both locations. A licensed massage therapist herself, Prentiss also employs other licensed massage therapists at both practices who offer prenatal massages.

"Specializing in woman's health has enabled me to grow my businesses and help women become pain free once again," she said.

Prentiss noted that Ellis acted as her mentor early on, helping to guide her future,



though his own was tragically cut short. Following a three-month struggle with leukemia, Ellis passed away on May 18, 2001. Integrative Manual Therapy Solutions was his most recent venture before passing, and his wife, along with the IMTS staff, continue his legacy today.

"He was one of the greatest physical therapists of all time," Prentiss remembered fondly.

A Century With Significance

As a way of thanking Ellis for helping her to create a successful practice, Prentiss trained with Team in Training-the fundraising sector of the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society-to help her prepare to pedal her bicycle 100 miles in the Ride to Montauk organized bike ride.

Leading up to the century ride, she raised more than \$4,900 for patient services and research for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society.

Prentiss mentioned that as a teen she would ride her bike with American Youth Hostels through Vermont each summer for a week at a time. Her longest ride was from Manhattan to Montreal.

"The last time I actually rode was about 25 years ago in a mini triathlon while in college at Boston University," she admitted.

So, to prepare for the Ride to Montauk, Prentiss trained with Team in Training from the cold winter weekends in March through the sweltering days of summer, until the week before the ride on June 18. During the week, Prentiss and other Team & Training cyclists would pedal shorter rides through the north shore of Long Island. She started out with rides that were 20 to 30 miles, progressing each week until she and her teammates were confident that they could ride 100 miles. Before the Montauk ride, her longest training ride was 72 miles on Long Island.

"Those weekend rides were hilly and grueling," she remembered.

The physical therapist offered training tips and advice to her teammates during weekend rides and via e-mail. She has also lectured the team for the past three years with presentations that include information on injury prevention, stretch and strengthening and tips for safe cycling. If there were icy conditions, the team trained at a spin class during which Prentiss would conduct a stretching/cool down segment at the end of class.

She admits that there were times during training when she felt as if she wouldn't be able to accomplish her goal. What prompted her to keep pedaling? A brand-new bike!

"I started the ride with a bike I bought 25 years ago. I had it refurbished and tried to train with it. But I was constantly getting injured, as it no longer was a good fit for me--knee pain, ankle injuries, wrist overuse," she explained. "I had to cut two rides short, but riding the 10 miles back to my car, with significant pain during each revolution, was what prompted me to finally invest in a new bike. It was the best decision ever!"

Beyond the Finish Line

When she signed up to do the ride, Prentiss knew just one other person-a Physical Therapy & Beyond employee, and avid rider, who registered with her. During the training, however, Prentiss met people who she called "terrific," and who she continues to train with after the ride today.

Her team is currently training for another 100-mile ride on September 10 that leaves from her East Setauket office, called Montauk We Hope. The ride will benefit Hope House Ministries, an organization that provides hope, care and compassion to nearly 2,000 individuals in need each month.

In addition to her plan to ride for Hope House Ministries, Prentiss would like to participate in a charity bike ride one day to raise



money for Kids Have Strokes Too. At 13 years old, her son had a stroke and was paralyzed on his right side due to a left middle cerebral artery clot. No medical condition or reason was found as to why the stroke happened. "It is my mission to help find out why this occurred and I would like to help fund research in the future," Prentiss said. Her son has since fully recuperated and dreams of becoming a physical therapist

Physical Therapy & Beyond has two locations: 196 Belle Mead Road, East Setauket, NY 11733 and 100 Landing Avenue, Smithtown, NY 11787. Visit the website at www.CindiPrentissPT.com for more information.

Beth Puliti is a frequent contributor to ADVANCE.

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