

I am a 52-year-old female with no history of heart disease! I survived a heart attack and had 6 stents placed in my heart June 22, 2009. People would say, myself included, that this can not be true. I have lived my life being active and fit. I had been living a healthful and happy life trying to set a good example for those around me. No one had a clue this could happen to me!

I am a swim instructor at Michael Phelps Swim School and masters swim coach at Meadowbrook. I am a former triathlete, competitive swimmer, lacrosse and field hockey player. I used to coach sports and teach in Physical education here and in Alaska. I am an inductee of The Roanoke College and Roland Park Country School Athletic Halls of Fame. My family spends our summers hiking and kayaking in Alaska's wilderness. I swim regularly and train year round for the "health of it" and to ride in 65 and 100 miler day bike tours.

My heart attack has changed my life completely. It is the scariest thing I have experienced. I was lucky. I was at the right place at the right time. After riding Baltimore's 65 mile Tour 'Dem Parks ride 2 week prior and a 37 mile solo ride in Carroll County I was wading in a pool when I felt a severe burning in my chest as if I had inhaled toxic fumes! Looking around at the other people in the pool I knew I was alone. The moment became surreal. I looked at the lifeguard on the stand and told her I didn't feel right.

A sip of water did not rid me of this sensation and the pressure beneath my sternum began gradually. The assistant lifeguard was sent to check on me. I told her "I'll be okay, Let me call my ERN sister in Virginia Beach." At this point the insightful, well-trained guard had already called 911. My sister also advised I go to the hospital. The pressure was growing. I was having a heart attack.

With the help of the EMTS, hospital staff, doctors, family, work, fitness buddies, book club, neighbors, and friends and LifeBridge Cardiac Rehab I continue to get healthier each day.

Having a heart attack was like a death to me. I lost who I was. I was in a sort of mourning for months after. I was very scared. I did not want to leave my daughter! It took a physical and emotional toll on me that a change in lifestyle has helped me overcome.

Out of survival I take all medical and health advice to heart! Following strictly my doctor Stacy Fisher's, orders I take my medicine religiously. I monitor my heart rate and keep a check on my blood sugar level. I began swimming and biking within 2 and 3 weeks after surgery. I train under the target heart rate guidelines Dr. Fisher has set for

me. Over the course of the last 7 months my target heart rate been raised and my workout intensity levels increased. Exercise helps my heart and helps my stress levels. My diet restrictions were red meat and fried foods but I have chosen to eliminate refined foods and eat as much fiber in the way of grains, legumes, fruits and vegetables I can. My mom would be proud of this! I have traded sugary snacks for protein that will keep my blood sugars in check. I eat several small meals throughout my day to fill me and keep my energy levels up. I avoid high fat, high cholesterol foods. I feel great! I have lost 15 + pounds.

In July I was hiking gradual mountain trails in Alaska. In October I rode in my 4th annual Sea Gull Century completing 79.6 miles of the 100. Next year I will do 100 again!

I am stronger, healthier and more confident than ever!

Telling my story is very important to me. I want you to know that you should never second-guess how you are feeling. When in doubt...Check it out! I have returned to the ER 2 times since my event because I just didn't feel right and was not sure. I was fine but everyone was glad I came in. I hope my story can help save a life or help any one make a small change or upgrade in their lifestyle. You are in charge. Take care of yourself so you can continue to take care of the ones you love!

*Miss Annie*