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## InspirationallyFIT

### A Tribute to the ?Adult On-Set Athlete?

**By: David M. Kaffey, DDS**

There are not many out there like Roz Carson. She is a shining star, a hero and an example to us all. Roz is an ?adult-onset? athlete.

After her marriage of thirty-two years ended, Roz found herself in her fifties, with three teenage boys quickly approaching college. Roz, a South Philly elementary science teacher, decided to take the advice she always gave to her students, ?Face the challenges that come your way and turn them into opportunities.? Roz learned from her dentist about an exercise program called Platoon Fitness. Not far from her home, she arose at the crack of dawn to attend the six a.m. class. The first time she went, she was intimidated. Mike Smaltz, Director of Operations and Training at Platoon Fitness, always motivated her. ?Run the corners of the track and walk the straight part.? Roz said, ?Mike never made me feel like I was the slowest or the weakest.? Determined, she kept coming back even though it was hard.

?When I first met Roz Carson, her first statement to me was that she couldn't run. That was then; this is now. Her power to motivate others is understated, but powerful all the same. I don't know anyone more committed to her own training as well as the training habits of others. Keep running Roz,? applauds Mike.

Platoon Fitness is an outdoor workout and was a calling card for Roz. ?Seeing the moon, the daybreak-that's what drew me in.? Despite the weather, she always showed up. ?Before Platoon, I wouldn't even drive in the snow. Now I work out in it!? She also works out in the mud, fog, heat and pouring rain. She figured that if she could conquer working out in the elements, she could face anything in life.

Roz's sister, Anita Krulick said, ?When we were growing up, we weren't encouraged to be athletic. We took swimming lessons but that was about it.? As a young adult Roz did do some running, but between work, school, and then children - it fell to the side. Just as her marriage started to disintegrate, instead of giving up under all the pressures and demands and burdens, Roz fought back by taking on one of the most challenging fitness programs around - Platoon. Instead of breaking down, she began building up, becoming stronger and stronger. At a time when many people would become bitter and blame others for their situation, Roz became better! She is older than most of the others in her Platoon classes but no one is more committed or harder working. In a sense she was "running for her life" and she's certainly won the race! ?I've loved my sister from the moment I was born and have always tried to follow her example. As a matter of fact, she's set an example everyone should follow. I couldn't be more proud of what she does and more importantly who she is,? remarked Anita.

We fast-forward seven years, and Roz has run several half-marathons, plus dozens of charity races. She had never won a medal for an athletic activity in her life. Now, her shelf is flanked with them. All the bling doesn't much matter to Roz. In fact, there were many races that she didn't even know that she had placed in her age group and left before the awards ceremony. She enjoys the races for charity and continues to support good causes while testing her limits.

Through this journey, Roz has made friends that have become like a second family to her. She has a great support network, helping her through her divorce, empty nest, and recently, through the death of both of her parents, only months apart. ?She made a choice to embrace life as opposed to letting circumstances beat you down,? comments friend, Cynthia Mack.

?Roz is my guardian angel, personal trainer and dear friend. Not only did she encourage me to run 5k races and to eventually complete a marathon, but she has inspired many others to embrace running and group fitness as a way of life. We owe our good health to Roz's weekly e-mails, support, coffees, and friendship. Roz is our fearless leader and we all adore her,? says friend, Sue Rapp.

Since Roz is the ultimate cheerleader and motivator, she often finds races for the Platoon group, even people who have never attempted a 5k. Roz somehow finds a way to get them there. ?You don't have to run, you can walk. Just get out there and do it,? says Roz.

If someone hasn't shown up to Platoon class in a while, Roz genuinely misses them and personally calls them to ask them to come back and join her. In this exclusionary life, Roz goes out of her way to include and invite others no matter the race, socio-economic background, age or stage in their life. ?When I first met Roz, I immediately connected. I went to outdoor Platoon and there was a participant older than me. It made me feel safe. Roz totally inspired me to keep coming back day after day. She is one we look to for organizational communication from the main office. She is, in my opinion, the Mayor of Platoon,? comments fellow Platoon classmate, Shelly Sullivan

Roz Carson is a great role model for all people. She started exercising at an older age on an athlete's level. Despite tremendous personal strife and stress, Roz made a whole new group of friends whom she supports and who in turn support her. No matter how young or old, fit or not so fit, we all want to belong, to be accepted. Roz has a unique way of including everyone, and that is truly a gift to all who know her.

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