

In for the Ride



Fittest Execs and Fittest Companies Challenge teaches powerful lessons about the road to good health. Now, it's time to take things to the next level, and you can come along.

Here's to your good health—and the obstacles to it ...

These past few months since October have been fun, and we're proud to report that the first **Fittest Execs and Fittest Companies Challenge** has been well-received, exceeding our expectations and those of our sponsors. Our colleagues at business publications in other parts of the country have administered similar efforts, but without too much boasting, it appears the Kansas City Fittest Execs/Companies Challenge has surpassed the more established programs—this is good news for a city much in need of being more fit.

A few personal observations from my own experience in the competition. As much as I wanted to sandbag on losing weight, and increase my chances of big improvements in the competition, I did start a few weeks early. Lost 9 pounds before the competition testing period began. Then I really got into a workout regimen, and am happy to report that I lost 53 pounds since mid-September.

The bad news? I gained 35 of those back. My weight wasn't yo-yo-ing; it was more like bungee-jumping.

We heard a few groans from competitors about conducting the fitness program that ran over all three year-ending holidays. Maybe we should have listened. This is what the season looked like for me:

First seven weeks: In the gym. Racquetball. Treadmill. Weights. Biking. The step-counter passed 25,000 some days. *Ahh, Success!*

Thanksgiving weekend gain: 7 pounds.

Back to the gym. More treadmill, weights, racquetball, basketball. The step-counter is now broken.

Christmas gain: 7 pounds. *Damn!*

The cycle repeats. I'm burning calories like Washington burns dollars. New Year's weekend gain: 11 pounds—*this one was the killer.*

But a redoubling of efforts brought me back into double-digit pounds lost—11 in the the Fittest Execs and Fittest Companies final assessments and another 9 lbs. during the three weeks preceeding. Final outcome: I lost 20 lbs. in 100 days. And it's only the start of an ongoing campaign to get fit and keep the weight off. Though a noble challenge, conducting the Fittest Execs/Companies competition wrapping around the holidays proved less popular than we ever expected. But it will be back—this Fall with testing complete by mid-December.

And here's why: You don't have to be an Iron Man to start your journey to fitness. Because for me—and for dozens of others in the original field of 130 competitors—something very important happened:

“If you weren't part of the fitness train this time around, I'd strongly encourage you and your colleagues to get on board with the Fittest Execs and Fittest Companies Challenge this Fall.”

I learned how to eat smarter and effectively incorporate exercise into my week and have fun doing it. *I'm trending in the right direction*—that's the most important thing.

Across the board, my health metrics are better. We tested 15 health components, and in virtually every one, I'm a better man today than I was on Oct. 1. My weight is down, I cut my triglyceride levels in half, added muscle, increased aerobic capacity and—point of personal pride—I jacked 10 reps of the entire stack of 500 lbs. on the leg press.

Round II of the Fittest Execs/Companies Challenge will begin testing in August and the competition will run from September through November with final testing by December 20. If you weren't part of the fitness train this time around, I'd strongly encourage you and your colleagues to field your team(s) and get on board this Fall.

By then, I hope to enter the competition in much better shape. I've signed on with the **Cycling for Change** and I plan to ride through parts of Kansas into Kansas City—then on to St. Louis—and no, not on my Harley. You can read more about the cross-country Cycling for Change—the concept of a KC Jesuit priest and long-time

friend, Father Matt Ruhl—on Page 64. I would encourage you to get on board with this cause, as well. If you had the time—and *chutzpah*—you can join a dozen bikers who will ride 5000 miles in 100 days or on various legs of the ride when the Washington-to-Florida caravan passes through our bi-state region. *You can sponsor 'or challenge' me at a "Buck-a-Mile" for my lofty goal of biking 500 miles in nine days.* From Atchison to KC, then to St. Louis, and the final leg from Miami to Key West.

Fittest Execs/Companies Challenge and Cycling for Change are two great ways to maintain and improve your own health and that of your associates. *Get in the Game!* **I**

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