Triathlon returns for 25th year

Sept. 13 Sprint Triathlon includes 0.74 miles of swimming, 18 miles of biking and five miles of running

BY CASSANDRA MCCARTY
Features Editor

It’s a race that brings together Kirksville residents, Truman students and people from across the country to compete in a challenge that combines the sports of swimming, biking and running.

Thousand Hills State Park will host the 25th Annual NEMO Triathlon Sunday, Sept. 13. The triathlon is marked by its unique ability to provide inspiration for Kirksville.

Janet Gooch, communication disorders department chair, has been participating in the triathlon since 2002 and said she has a soft spot for the competition because it brings the whole town together.

“It’s a hometown event, it’s close and we know the people that put it on, and we have a certain allegiance because it’s right here in Kirksville,” Gooch said. “It’s the first triathlon that I ever did.”

The race is divided into three sections: swimming a distance of .74 miles, biking for 18 miles and running five miles.

Gooch said that swimming is her least favorite part because she panics with the many people kicking and thrashing in the water around her. Despite setbacks that can occur while in the water, Gooch said the turnout for the triathlon is great. Each year brings a familiar face, including an older woman who swims, rides and runs in the race.

“She is an old lady who swims, bikes and runs and she is always at the front, she is always at the front,” Gooch said of the elderly woman who competed last year.

Gooch said competitors don’t need a fancy bike or sports equipment to compete in the triathlon. She thinks it’s a great opportunity for beginners and people who would like to complete a life goal.

Dan Martin, director of the NEMO triathlon, was the original mastermind behind the event and has encouraged the Kirksville community to compete in the race for 25 years. Martin said that in the early 1980s, he decided to develop an athletic event in town and bring a marathon to Kirksville.

Eventually Martin discarded the marathon notices for a race that introduced the concept of cross training.

Martin said that he wanted to do something different in Kirksville and there was a suggestion to have a marathon. Martin said that he wanted an event that included swimming, biking and running.

“I lived here, and what we were trying to do was promote an active healthy lifestyle, whether it was with the Heart Association or any other race for charities, 5K, 5 miles and 7 miles running events,” Martin said. “In the middle ‘80s there was just kind of beginning of cross training and multi-sports.”

Since then, more than 200 volunteers turn up to the event on race day, and many times, the volunteers eventually become participants in the triathlon.

“The people who come around and help us, they end up being in it,” Martin said. “Usually next year they think about participating, or it’s kind of a family thing that I think everybody sees themselves, I can run a little, and I can decent on the bike, and I thought about running a little. It becomes one of those lifelong challenges, you want to challenge that type of thing.”

Martin said that he wants the triathlon to grow and he hopes it will continue to attract new participants.

Exercise Science professor Jana Arabas is also a returning competitor in the triathlon. Arabas said she enjoys competing in the race every year because of the familiarity.

“So many times we do triathlons where you don’t know anybody,” Arabas said. “We [Gooch and Arabas] usually travel, the two of us, and then you don’t know anybody else doing it, but in Kirksville you know a lot of people doing it.”

Read the Index the easy way

www.trumanindex.com

- Breaking News
- Web Polls
- Additional stories
- E-mail stories
- Access archive
- Post Comments

... all accessible from the comfort of your room