

REAL LIFE

FLYING HIGH

By: LaRue Novick



How Michele Jamison escaped her chrysalis and spread her wings.

Michele Jamison was sick and tired of being sick and tired. As a defeated woman who'd experienced physical, mental and verbal abuse for many years by a former spouse, she was an angry, bitter, sad, depressed and overall unhappy woman, she said. Her self-esteem and self-confidence had tanked below zero.

As a young woman, Michele was involved in softball, dance, tumbling, beauty pageants and modeling. But the years and the misery and the extra weight from two pregnancies packed on the pounds. She was able to lose 60 pounds on her own, but in a very unhealthy way, she said. Still, tenacious pockets of fat clung to her body.

It wasn't until the Moline, Illinois resident picked up an issue of Max Sports & Fitness at her local gym and read about Max Muscle's former MaxFormation Life Challenge winner, Dawn Thomas, that something just clicked inside her as instant as a light switch. "I decided that if Dawn Thomas could do this at 47, I could do it at 43," she said during an interview at Crystal Cove Beach in California, a warm smile lighting up her face.

And, so began Michele's journey to become the next MaxFormation winner. On January 1, she walked into Max Muscle Bettendorf, Iowa and told the owner, Scott Herkes, "I will win this challenge."

"Attitude is everything," says the proud Max Muscle franchisee. "Michele did what most people have a tough time doing: She locked the goal into her mind and didn't waiver. She remained very focused throughout the contest."

It was that intense focus that carried Michele all the way to first runner up in the MaxFormation Life Challenge, which ran from January to June. "I never thought about quitting. I never cheated on my diet. I never had a splurge day," said Michele, who carried a photo of Dawn Thomas in her datebook everywhere she went. "I think the reason for that is I knew there was no room for error and I got in it to win it."

During the contest, Michele put notes up all around her house to keep her focused on her goals. After just one week of doing the MaxFormation program, her hair stylist, Sunday Saunders, said Michele's skin was glowing. By the next week, "Michele had more energy and was starting to tone up. People were always stopping her to ask what was different about her," said Sunday.

In addition to starting on a supplement regimen and diet program through Scott at Max Muscle, Michele began training with a 59-year-old former bodybuilder at her gym named Rocky LeMarr. "He took me under his wing and taught me about 'old school' bodybuilding," Michele said. "He was always there to train me, day and/or night. I was always grateful for his unwavering dedication to my goal."

For three months Michele worked furiously hard in the gym, usually twice a day, and rarely took a break, even if she was too sore or sick. Then entered a man who would change her life forever: Mike Kratzberg, 43, of East Moline, Illinois.

Mike worked out at the same gym as Michele and he knew who she was since they graduated together some 25 years ago. "But she had no idea who I was," Mike said. "I said 'Hello,' and basically, it was

love at first sight!”

Mike began watching Michele work out, admiring her intensity and dedication. As a personal trainer, he wanted to help her with her workouts because he knew some innovative training techniques. He began taking photos of her and documenting her progress and he helped her with her cardio training and core work. “Not only did he guide my cardio and core, but he captured my head and my heart,” admits Michele. “He opened up a part of the MaxFormation that I would imagine no other contestant experienced: to be instrumental in helping me let go of anger, bitterness, sadness and depression; to trust, to love. There are no words great enough to express my feelings. Kratz knows.”

By May, Michele had leaned down tremendously and her sleek muscles were really starting to show. Her motto had become, “Sweat, burn, crave more!” And, on her MaxFormation blog, she wrote, “I have a serious addiction now to fitness ... and I LOVE it!”

Michele’s addiction has become so great that she now tries to instill it in others as a personal trainer. She teaches them that it’s not all about the number on the scale and that there are four areas for victory in any weight loss journey: measurements, weight on the scale, body fat percentage and muscle gain. But, she wouldn’t have known that before joining the MaxFormation Life Challenge. Before, it had always been about the number on the scale.

In addition to motivating her new clients, Michele has inspired a number of those around her because of her hard work and determination. Brenda DeVore, 43, a close friend of 15 years, said she watched Michele from the beginning to the end of her MaxFormation journey. “I know that Michele’s self-esteem has been hit hard through relationships and devastating circumstances,” she said. “It makes me smile to see her journey taking her to this new place where she – her goddess self, the true essence of Michele – is being revealed in such a beautiful and fulfilling way!” Brenda said she thanks Michele for motivating her to step up and achieve her own goals and now the pair have become running buddies.

Michele’s two daughters are incredibly proud of their mom for taking

her life back and blossoming into a self-confident, self-assured energetic woman who is living what she's always taught them. "She has always told my sister and I that we could do anything we wanted to, we could be anything we wanted to be, and we should always follow our hearts and our dreams," said 21-year-old Ashley Jamison-Love, Michele's oldest. "In this competition, she exemplified this."

Michele is a firm believer in the law of attraction (detailed in the book, "The Secret," by Rhonda Byrne). And during the competition, she stayed focused and positive. She wouldn't let would-be saboteurs get to her. And, she often wrote on her MaxFormation blog that "you bring about what you think about." A good example for Michele is she knew she wanted to take her final photos in front of Jeep (her favorite car). She didn't own a Jeep, but, guess who did? Her new found love, Mike, who came into her life three months after she started her MaxFormation journey. She got to take that picture. "And that's the law of attraction!" said the beaming blonde. "I believe that what you put out there, what you expect, you will get."

For more than 20 years, Michele had suffered and felt miserable, longing to get fit, but never having the will power to do it. Today, she is a healthy, happy, fit and energetic woman ... nothing remains of her former self. Her transformation changed her from the inside out and now her goal is to help others achieve similar results. "My ultimate goal," she said, "is to train the next MaxFormation Grand Champion for 2010!" **MS&F**