

## **Girl Guides to tackle triathlon**

Wednesday, January 26th, 2005

Twenty-seven-year-old Jennifer Pinarski says after she finished her first triathlon she felt she could conquer anything.

"I felt really strong, really healthy, really good about myself," she recalls. "That's what we want to share with the girls."

Pinarski is a Girl Guides group leader who initiated a new program, Girl Guides of Steel, designed to help girls get active. Starting in March, a group of 10 girls age 11 to 14 will begin swimming, running and biking for 12 weeks to train for the St. Malo Kids of Steel Race on June 25. Girls will complete a 100-to-300-metre swim, five-to-10-kilometre bike ride and one-to-two-kilometre run on race day.

Pinarski says this is the first time Girl Guides has partnered with Triathlon Canada's Kids of Steel Program, and says the girls will participate in weekly running and biking sessions and bi-weekly swimming sessions. The girls will also learn about proper nutrition, sportsmanship and the history of triathlon. Pinarski says the program is open to all female youth, whether they are part of the Girl Guides program or not.

"The main goal is to make sure girls are getting outside, having fun and learning," Pinarski says. "It's a fun way to get active."

Michelle Barclay, Girl Guide provincial commissioner, says the new program will provide young girls with positive role models and mentors, and an opportunity to try a new sport. Barclay says she doesn't know of any other province where Girl Guides are doing a triathlon, and says the triathlon will teach girls valuable lifelong skills.

"They'll learn teamwork, co-operation, how to set a goal and how to achieve a goal," she says. "We're looking for girls to strive to do their best and teach them how to get there."

Jaclyn Vallis, executive director of Triathlon Manitoba, says youth participation in triathlons is on the rise, and last year 800 Manitoba youths were a part of the Kids of Steel program. According to Vallis, there is an equal number of males and females completing triathlons, and more people are realizing that triathlons aren't just for "ironmen."

"People are realizing it's a very achievable sport," she says. "It's not just for the iron man you see on TV."

To register for Girl Guides of Steel, contact Jennifer at 253-3937 or [pinarski@mts.net](mailto:pinarski@mts.net). The fee is \$50 for current Girl Guide members and \$80 for non-members. Visit [www.girlguides.ca](http://www.girlguides.ca) for more information.