

Manitowoc woman starring in national television commercial

It wasn't long ago that Patti Geigel avoided having her picture taken. Now, the hairdresser and mother of two from Manitowoc is the star of a television commercial that's been seen by hundreds of thousands – if not millions – of viewers nationwide.

“Patti is one of the sweetest, most genuine people I've ever met,” says Mark Daly, the National Media Director of Anytime Fitness. “The first time I met her I said to myself, ‘I hope she'll be in one of our commercials someday.’”

Geigel's sudden rise to stardom did not have a happy start. About a year ago, while she was at an amusement park with her family, Patti tried, but was unable, to fit into a ride with her daughter. She knew right then and there that something had to change.

About that same time, a new Anytime Fitness club opened in Manitowoc. Patti had never belonged to a fitness club before and, at 300 pounds, she was embarrassed about the way she looked.

“The toughest part,” Patti recalls, “was getting up the courage to walk through those doors that first time.”

Fortunately, when Patti finally did walk through those doors, she met compassionate staff members who wanted to help her -- not judge her. They devised a fitness plan for Patti that included achievable goals and large doses of emotional support.

“In the beginning,” Patti says, “I chose to work out late at night, so that fewer people would see me. That first night I lasted only about 5 minutes on the treadmill. Then I went home and said to myself, ‘We'll try it again tomorrow night.’”

Eventually, things got easier for Patti. She built up her stamina on the treadmill and added other exercises to her workout routine. She started losing weight, changed her eating habits and, most importantly, began working out during daylight hours. In less than six months Patti lost 90 pounds.

“Patti is amazing,” says personal trainer Drew Kassner. “She has a great attitude. She always has a smile on her face and she's truly an inspiration to our other members at the club.”

Last spring, Daly and a photographer came to Manitowoc to shoot a video for Anytime Fitness about corporate partnerships and employee wellness programs. The owner of the Manitowoc club, Mike Langley, introduced Daly to Patti that weekend.

“I just thought Patti was someone who typifies how you can change your life with the proper support and encouragement,” Langley said. “I can't say enough about how proud we are of her. She is a very determined woman.”

The corporate video, which included a lengthy scene featuring Patti, was shown for the first time at Anytime Fitness' annual conference in Utah last August. Several conference attendees told Daly after

the viewing that they were very impressed with Patti. A few weeks later, Daly asked Patti to appear in the fitness company's next series of commercials.

The filming took place under glaring lights in a warehouse-sized studio near Minneapolis. In the finished commercial, which is now airing in Minnesota, Florida, Nebraska and California, Patti refers to a "before picture" by saying, "I did not want to be that person anymore." The next scene features a dramatically slimmed-down Patti smiling, laughing and dancing.

"We've just begun making the commercials available to all of our 500 different club owners," says Daly. "It won't be long before it's being shown all over the country."

Langley, who recently opened a new another Anytime Fitness club in Two Rivers, says that Patti recently agreed to lead a support group of women seeking to lose weight just like she did.

"She came to our club looking for a little help," Langley says. "Now she's leading by example, helping others."

Not just face-to-face in Manitowoc, but also via television in hundreds of thousands of living rooms across the country.

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