

9-14-12 Dashing Divas and Divine Inspiration

I wasn't expecting to be inspired by an eighty year old woman when I attended last Saturday's Diva Dash in Marshfield to support my three daughters as they ran, sloshed and climbed during the 5 k "Women's-Only Obstacle Adventure Run", sponsored by *Shape* magazine, *Luna* bars, *asics* footwear and others . Why did my mind not include me as a possible participant? I did not even for a moment consider myself to be in good enough shape to join; I just wanted to watch. Even watching was a blast and inspirational. I left with more than I had hoped for, though.

At the beginning, I was in a bit of a daze, astounded by the thousands of people there, as my youngest went to show her identification and pick up her participant number and timing device to lace into her sneaker. Out of the crowd I recognized someone I knew who confessed to somehow having been coerced into this thing. But she was there for fun and so weren't many others! Most women were in groups and dressed as a group to both identify them from a distance and to add to the pride and fun of the experience. There were lots of tiaras and tutus and colorful socks.

Just reading the tee shirts made for an entertaining way to pass the time on the sidelines. Here are some noteworthy sayings and group titles: Strong Is the New Skinny, Sassy Striders, Mama Drama, Bridal Brigade, Triple B, Ninja Warriors, I can and I will. Watch me, Holy Scissors, We Row like Girls-We Train like Girls-Try to Keep Up, WTF (This translated on the other side of the tee shirt as, "Witness the Fitness".) My daughters' group was Just a Bunch of Clowns. Whatever attitude or identity brought them in, a few things were clear: they were doing a good thing for themselves and each other; would have fun and they were going to finish!

The groups had starting times, organized into groups of about fifty. As the first group returned I overheard one say, "That was fun, climbing that rope thing!" I headed over to the "rope thing", as most of the course was out of our view and I discovered a really good waiting area close to the rope climbing hurdle and realized it was just before the finish line. When those women made it over that, they knew they could finish!

The rope climbing obstacle proved to be challenging for many, however, independent of their physical shape or age. Some seemed to be experiencing a fear of heights as they approached the top, hesitated and then froze. One woman put her forehead on the top beam and could be heard saying, "I can't do it." Every time this happened, another woman would leave aside any concern of finish time or team identity and maneuver herself over and into position for reaching out her hand with encouraging words. Every woman who was afraid at the top, made it over, on her own, or with the helping hand of another.

It was gratifying to witness the cooperation, where we might usually see only competition. My contemplations were interrupted by the sounds of people chanting, "Grandma! Grandma!" There she was: all eighty years of her climbing up one side, taking her time and one

step at a time, reaching the top. She steadied herself without hesitation and carefully placed her leg over the top. Once she had her footing, she began the descent. A little bit later, after I saw my daughters finish, I had to find Grandma and thank her for inspiring me. As I gave her a hug, she treated me like a kid and said, "Why I have children older than you!"

I left with the many images of inspiration and thoughts of gratitude. It was great to see so many Dads on Duty. Some were clearly more experienced than others at being totally responsible for watching their own children; I kept my eyes on all the children, just in case. Children entertained themselves with sticks and dirt. It is always gratifying to me to see that young minds and hands don't require money and gadgets to learn and grow. One boy started twirling a stick and another noticed that he was unintentionally drilling a hole. The looker on was delighted to see the stick abandoned and called to his friends, "C'mon, let's work on this hole!" As he stuffed it with grass, a girl suggested, "How 'bout if we bury it all, pretend we're pirates and dig it up!" "Yeah!" they all agreed.

Thank you, my daughters, for clowning around and getting me there in the first place. Thank you, children, for giving me hope. And thank you, Grandma for some grand inspiration!

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