

Sharing a recipe for smart eating

by Michael Catarevas
Managing Editor

Zigging and zagging has always come naturally for New Canaan's Dawn Kurth, a long-time ski racer who, at 46, still competes in the master's division. So it wasn't hard for her to go from an MBA'ed career in finance to becoming a certified health coach and nutrition expert.

Kurth started her journey to professional wellness more than 15 years ago, when her first child, Andrew, was diagnosed with several food and environmental allergies.

"I suddenly had to learn about different, healthier foods, recipes and ingredients," she said. "The more I learned, the more aware I became of how important it is to eat properly. It resonated with me, and I wanted to help improve the lives of others."

Kurth has started a new business 'catered' toward adolescent girls and women. What can seem overwhelming and complex, completely overhauling your lifestyle in pursuit of a healthier one, is easier with expert advice. Kurth focuses on building knowledge and tools to eat better and create fast, easy and nutritious meals that taste good and are family friendly.

Kurth launched No Kidding Nutrition in November. She helps busy women and teenage girls upgrade their diets and improve their lives through private and group counseling, innovative workshops and programs for schools. Her unique approach emphasizes that the food you eat is only one part of health and wellness.

The title of her business came about organically.

"The name is my reaction to so much of what I was hearing when trying to find the right foods and medications for Andrew," she said. "I was continually saying, 'You've gotta be kidding me' when I realized how little correct information was out there. There isn't enough being done to educate people about the dangers of the typical standard American diet and lifestyles filled with enormous amounts of stress."

"While education is one part of the solution, helping busy women make healthy eating easier is also essential. Working with teenage girls provides an opportunity for me to impact a generation that is most at risk for developing chronic diseases later in life. This generation has grown up on an unprecedented level of processed foods, and needs the most help."

Kurth grew up in Pound Ridge and has been a New Canaanite for 21 years, living here with husband Richard, son Andrew, 15, and daughter Phoebe, 12. The kids go to St. Luke's. The whole family is into ski rac-



ing, and spends winter weekends training and practicing at Stratton Mountain, Vt. "It's a great way to stay fit and be with the family all the time," she said.

No Kidding Nutrition includes several personal health coaching programs, including one-time sessions as well as 'mini' and full-service health coaching. The benefits of coaching are many, but the main one enables Kurth to personalize plans to fit into any client's unique schedule and preferences.

Classes and workshops are also available. Designed to be engaging and interactive, participants learn practical, common-sense strategies that focus on incorporating real, whole foods, creating a positive mindset and optimizing time.

Each class or workshop will vary slightly in content but all programs have the goal of empowering participants with the knowledge and tools to eat better and create fast, easy and nutritious meals that taste good.

Classes for teen girls include: 'teen tactics for healthy eating,' 'better breakfasts and super snacks,' and 'ho ho healthy holiday treats.'

Classes for women include: 'seduced by sugar,' 'eating for energy,' and 'move over mac and cheese,' to help moms plan for more balanced and healthy family eating.

Kurth is also a public speaker on the topic of health and wellness for any group size or age range. Her interactive presentations have been solicited by schools, scout meetings and camp programs for customized lectures.

Kurth attended NYU's Stern School of Business, gaining an MBA degree, and had a career in finance, working primarily for AIG Financial Products in Westport. She took time off when Andrew was born, staying active professionally with Shakespeare On the Sound for six years.

"Things changed when I had to focus on Andrew's health," she said. "I began learning about the quality of the foods I was purchasing, and the ingredients I was cooking with, and was



Dawn Kurth gave up a career in finance to become a certified health coach and nutrition expert, working mostly with women and teen girls. She emphasizes healthy, whole foods.

frankly unaware of the enormous role that diet played in a person's health. Consequently, I started to make small changes in how our family ate.

"The more I learned, the more shocked I became at the state of the typical American diet. I vowed to try to incorporate more real, whole foods into our meals and share what I knew with my friends and family. Whether it was for strategies to get picky eaters to try new foods, recipes for healthy snacks or meal planning and time-saving ideas, I realized I needed to do this on a bigger scale.

"And did I mention that I love to eat? So, making healthy meals that tasted good was (and is) mandatory in my house. I started taking nutrition courses and formed a library of books and articles related to health and well being. A few years later, I graduated from the Institute of Integrative Nutrition and officially became a certified health coach. With 15 years of real experience helping others improve their diets, I can now offer my services on a much larger scale, and will impact a far greater number of people."

Having a vague-sounding title of certified health coach means often having to explain in depth exactly what she does and who her clients are.

"I help busy people upgrade their diets and improve the 'wow' factor of their lives by giving them the knowledge and the tools to eat better and create fast, easy, nutritious meals that

taste good and don't wind up in the garbage," she said. "I also run workshops specifically for teenage girls. Also, I speak at K-12 schools on a variety of subjects, including obesity and chronic disease, sugar and refined foods, and eating for energy. These talks can be customized for teachers or administrative staff, the particular grade of the students and content upon request."

Kurth explained that her approach differed from a clinical nutritionist, both in theory and practice.

"A clinical nutritionist will focus on the right and wrong foods to eat, specific amounts and portions and give you the 'what' when it comes to a healthy diet," she said.

"My approach gives you the 'what' but also teaches clients to find balance in the other areas of their lives, something that is crucial to living a healthier, happier life. The way I like to explain it is that health itself is not really the goal, but rather a launch pad to living the rest of your life the way you want to."

Differentiating herself from other life coaches is important to Kurth. She's found that living the healthy life she preaches gives her a great degree of believability with clients, in much the same way that a superfit personal trainer inspires his or her clients.

"There are a lot of people offering dietary and healthy living advice, but not all of them 'walk their talk.' Not only do I practice what I preach, but I

know there are no quick fixes, and the same approach does not work for everyone.

"Healthy living is not something you 'do' for a few weeks or months. It is a balanced approach to living, of which only a portion of it is related to food and what you put in your body.

"I found happiness and created the life I dreamed of by not only learning to eat healthy, whole foods, but also incorporating my love for the outdoors into my activities and workouts and structuring my time to prioritize what is most important."

Kurth stresses one thing above all else when working with clients—mindset.

"My unique approach emphasizes the food we eat as only one part of health and wellness, and having the right mindset is probably the single most important thing I can teach my clients," she said.

"On a personal level, I learned how mindset, or our beliefs, can change the results of our efforts and work. Through my extensive research on this subject as it relates to my passion for ski racing, I learned what the mind is capable of and how to 'train' my mind to give me the successful outcome I desired. Realizing that forming new habits and creating positive thoughts are the cornerstones to making dietary and lifestyle changes, I have incorporated these strategies into my health coaching practice."

More info: NoKiddingNutrition.com
dawn@NoKiddingNutrition.com