

Nordic Warrior Goddess winning Okanagan hearts

By JAMES MILLER

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When Mari-Ann Drevvatne arrived in Osoyoos with the moniker Nordic Warrior Goddess, it drew instant attention. That was 18 months ago and within days, everyone had heard of her.

"I had the name Nordic Warrior Goddess handed to me," said the fitness and nutrition consultant. "I was operating a boot camp for years in Vancouver, and we'd be out there in snow, sleet, rain, whatever, with all ages and having all kinds of aches and pains. From my own experiences of overcoming adversity, I was given the name."

When the group of former clients presented her with the nickname, it stuck and she eventually embraced it, using it as the name of her business.

Her card lists her as "a body transformation, body performance and personal empowerment coach." Nordic Warrior Goddess

(with decals and photos on a vehicle seen all over town) is easier to remember than Mari-Ann Drevvatne.

"It was very sweet people saw me that way. We're all gods and goddesses. We're all part of the divine. It's a great spiritual name. I've been through some hardship in my life and I had to have a warrior spirit to overcome hardships. With me being Scandinavian, I'm a real wilderness woman at heart who would run with the wolves."

Born near Oslo, she left Norway in 1989 to serve as a recreational director with Norwegian Cruise Lines where she travelled everywhere from Chile to Indonesia and rubbed shoulders with the likes of Nelson Mandela and Diana Ross.

She settled in Canada in 1994, first in Maple Ridge then in Vancouver, where she worked in fitness. Life changed in an instant after being involved in a car accident.

Continued on page A4



Photo submitted

Mari-Ann Drevvatne, a lifestyles coach and former bodybuilder, created instant attention in Osoyoos when she arrived there 18 months ago with the moniker Nordic Warrior Goddess.

Goddess

Continued from page A1

She was the passenger and a driver hit her side after failing to stop at a light.

The accident was so severe that at one point she was incapable of putting her socks on.

"I was told I'd never return to being a trainer after the accident," she recalled. "I went to every therapist and specialist you could imagine. I was in chronic pain for four years with a herniated disc in my back. I could hardly walk."

She spent her recovery years studying everything imaginable.

"I think the big thing was mental. Everyone in my life basically gave up on me. I was borderline depressed but I never gave up. I'm from the school of hard knocks. I had to overcome adversity in my marriage, adversity from my childhood."

Even though life has dealt her some bad cards, she's extremely upbeat and optimistic believing everyone should live each day to its fullest.

Drevvatne's personal comeback came in 2007 when she was able to work herself back into top physical shape, placing in the top three at the Canadian natural bodybuilding championships followed by a fourth-place performance in the world, competing for that title in Greece.

Active throughout her life, athletic involvement included skiing, equestrian, running, soccer and archery, twice competing in the Norwegian national championships in the latter. A loner in school, she always preferred individual ahead of team sports. Her list of activities now includes yoga, inline skating, shooting, skydiving and hunting and she'd like to compete again in bodybuilding in the near future.

When she celebrated her 40th birthday a few years back, she posed for a series of provocative photos to help break the stereotype of women over 40. One of the photos, involving an ancient-style weapon, paid tribute to her heritage.

"There's more to the body than working out. It's the emotional, spiritual and mental baggage. How you do anything is how you do every-

thing in life. You can't heal your body just through training and ignoring other aspects."

An advocate opposed to genetically modified foods, she stresses the importance of not only reading a label but knowing how to read the label.

"Stop confusing people," she said. "Most people don't know how to read a label and what it is that they're eating. I believe in full foods, getting back to the basics and eating the way our DNAs are set for — certified organic, free-range chickens, and dark green, leafy vegetables."

She believes things happen for a reason and she was naturally drawn to Osoyoos, describing it as "a healing place" where she plans on staying for years to come.

Her mission is to help make Osoyoos a "health and wellness mecca of Canada," noting the large number of personal trainers and active citizens in the region. It's a natural fit with the climate and landscape, she declared, adding a good time to offer seminars and conventions is during traditional down times in tourism, mainly the winter months.