



PROJECT KILIMANJARO: THE CLIMBERS

Sheri Dawson, Flight Attendant, Southwest Airlines

Sheri is 45 and a flight attendant for Southwest Airlines. She has been with Southwest for more than 21 years and says events in her early childhood must have sowed the seeds for her career—she learned to walk, according to her mother, carrying a doll's suitcase in each hand for balance; AND she had a dog named Peanuts. Ergo, becoming a flight attendant on the “peanuts airline” was destiny!

Sheri reports a happy childhood growing up in Houston and a “regular” life. As a young adult, she felt she missed out on some opportunities and she realizes now that her life experiences weren't measuring up to her life expectations. She found herself being treated poorly in relationships and began to doubt herself. Things she wanted to accomplish, goals she had set, began to drop from her realm of possibilities. She began to believe, “Well, maybe I can't do that after all.”

Slowly and steadily, Sheri says that she reached the point where she was living a life filled with regret. She became bitter, cynical, judgmental and filled with fear that this was all there was to life. She also neglected her health, and her fitness levels plummeted as her weight ballooned.

Then, as she turned 43, knowing she wanted to live a fuller life, she decided to start by getting into shape, but not sure how to begin. At Shana Ross Fitness, she learned about nutrition—for the first time, she reports—and learned how to exercise her body in the right way. She lost 45 pounds in less than a year, dropped her body fat percentage from 40% to 20%, and has kept it off.

At age 45, having met her initial fitness goals, Sheri was ready to challenge herself on a whole new level. The challenge she chose was the Austin Marathon, which she completed at the beginning of 2011. “One marathon down, many more to go – after Kilimanjaro!” she says.

Sheri accepted the invitation to climb Kilimanjaro with a resounding yes. “The more you say ‘yes,’ your life is on an up-curve,” Sheri says with that gorgeous smile. “And I choose to say yes.”

