

Publication: Virginian Pilot; Date: Aug 27, 2012; Section: The Daily Break; Page: E1



# 350 - 140 =

## A MUCH THINNER, HAPPIER SALLY ADAMS



After getting the chance to change her life in a most public way on ABC's 'Extreme Makeover: Weight Loss Edition,' this former Hampton Roads resident wants to be an inspiration to others.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF SALLY ADAMS

By Denise Watson Batts  
The Virginian-Pilot

Sally Adams' first stop on a recent visit home to Norfolk was the Onelife Fitness gym on Monticello Avenue.

Adams, who recently was featured on "Extreme Makeover: Weight Loss Edition," picked a stretching spot near a window. A few blocks away was Maury High School, her alma mater, and Doumar's, where she spent many afternoons.

Back then, she could eat ice cream, slurp soda, do what she wanted and kill excess calories during her sprints on the school's field hockey or swim teams.

But all that changed as Adams aged. After several injuries and childbirth, her weight shot up to about 350 pounds, and about two years ago, she appealed to the popular ABC program for help. They answered, and Adams, 46, said it changed her life.

"When you get an opportunity this serious handed to you, and you're saving your life, you do it."

As Adams moved from limbering up by the window to a bank of bikes at Onelife, she explained that being featured on a national TV program was almost as difficult as trying to lose the weight on her own.

She was exposed physically and emotionally, confronting her fears of pushing her damaged knee during exercise routines. Through these sessions, viewers saw many of the demons she'd fought and kept hidden for years.

Adams grew up in Virginia Beach and Norfolk, attending the Virginia Beach Friends School, then Blair Junior and Maury after a family move.

She had always been athletic, spending countless days swimming at the North End of the Oceanfront.

But when Adams was studying abroad during college, she got into

an accident while riding her bike and tore her anterior cruciate ligament. It did not heal properly and Adams fell into a pattern of injuring her legs. When she was 32, she fell down some stairs and ended up in a wheelchair for a year. The recovery process included years of corrective surgeries. She had to relearn how to walk and became afraid she'd hurt herself again if she tried too much.

During that process, Adams put on weight and was not able to get it off.

In her late 30s, she and her husband decided to start having children, but Adams had two miscarriages and was devastated. Adams also had several close relatives die from illness. She would learn during the show that she often ate to mask her grief.

"I suddenly looked up one day and I was 355 pounds."

Adams eventually was able to carry to term and had a little boy to chase around, but she found it difficult to

**TOP** Sally Adams with surf pro Laird Hamilton, who gave her lessons on the show.

**ABOVE** A 23-year-old Adams gets some sun at Virginia Beach.

### online

Follow Sally Adams on her new website: [www.gogosallygo.com](http://www.gogosallygo.com)

manage her family, her career and cooking healthy meals for herself.

Her turning point came while she and her husband were watching a football game.

"I realized that I outweighed all of the men on the defensive line," Adams said, "And I saw them as walking slabs of beef. And I said, 'I can't do that. I'm going to die.'"

See ADAMS, BACK PAGE

## ADAMS | *A radical yearlong journey*

*Continued from Page 1*

So Adams wrote a letter to ABC for help. In September 2010, she was conducting a bus tour as a guide in Washington, D.C., where she lives, and was shocked when “Extreme Makeover” host Chris Powell called her name while he stood in front of the Lincoln Memorial.

It began a radical yearlong blend of exercise, therapy and discovering new ways to eat. Adams realized she was consuming way too many sodas, the equivalent of a 5-pound bag of sugar each week.

“When I sat down with a nutritionist, I learned that 125 of my pounds were related to the sugary drinks,” Adams said. Her portion sizes were also too big, and consisted of too much restaurant food, which was soaked in butter and salt.

The first three months of

being on the show were intense, with Powell spending days with Adams to teach her cardio-boosting exercises and helping her get over her fear of placing weight on her knees.

Adams missed her quarterly weight goals, but she was gaining muscle. She said she biked as many miles as crossing the country three times, and she rowed and swam the equivalent of traveling the eastern seaboard.

Adams dropped close to 140 pounds by September 2011. The show rewarded her with skin removal and breast reduction surgery to smooth out her look.

Adams continues to exercise at least two hours five or six days a week, even when she’s visiting family in Norfolk. At Onelife she climbed the steps using only one foot

per stair, something she could not do before the show.

A tall glass of water is a friend now. She no longer fears a bathing suit. Instead of hiding, Adams wants to be an inspiration. One of the best moments during the program was having a dream fulfilled – being able to learn to surf. She was taught by none other than pro Laird Hamilton.

“Doing the show had its good and bad sides,” Adams said, after completing a round of cardio by slamming thick ropes against the gym floor.

“Doing it publicly makes you do it. But we all got depicted in certain ways for the show. But I’ve gotten so many texts, letters, posts since it aired. That’s when I said it was all worth it.”

**Denise Watson Batts,**  
757-446-2504,  
denise.batts@pilotonline.com