



Recorder/Paul Franz

Luke Toritto of Greenfield begins training daily for the Greenfield Lightlife Triathlon in June. On Sunday, he will compete for the third time in the sprint category.

## 'To finish is to win'

### Hundreds expected at Greenfield's 30th triathlon Sunday

Story by Kathleen McKiernan

**F**rom June until August, Luke Toritto, 18, of Greenfield wheels his bike from his home or laces up his sneakers after work and takes to the pavement.

And during his lunch break, the town lifeguard dips into the Green River to swim laps.

Every day, seven days a week, he competes the equivalent of three-quarters of the Greenfield Lightlife Triathlon, an annual swimming, bicycling and running competition that hits its 30th year when racing begins at 8 a.m. Sunday.

Over the two months, the UMass-Amherst freshman stops living off pizza and snacks and instead eats fruit shakes mixed with peanut butter for breakfast, egg sandwiches with turkey bacon for lunch and chicken for dinner.

And on race day, Toritto will be one of hundreds of athletes rush-

ing into the shallow waters of the Green River, racing bicycles into northern Greenfield, and sprinting back toward Green River Road as he competes in the triathlon for the third time.

On that day, Toritto will strategize, pacing and pushing himself and challenging himself mentally and physically. "I'm nervous before it starts," Toritto said. "It's a lot of staying with yourself and pacing myself. It involves self-motivation and trying to push yourself and feed off others."

The former soccer player at Greenfield High School will compete in the sprint race — swimming, biking and running as an individual competitor. The race also has an international category that is twice the distance. People can compete either as individuals or in teams.

"I grew up watching the triathlon," Toritto said. "It's something I always wanted to do. Two years ago,

The deadline to enter the Greenfield Lightlife Triathlon is today, at 5 p.m. The competition begins at 8 a.m. Sunday, at the Green River Swimming and Recreation Area on Nashs Mill Road, which is the best spot for spectators.



Recorder photo/Trish Grapo

Chris Ethier of Bicycle World, shown here with Amy Browse of Montague during a triathlon training session in June, got the idea to create the race while watching a Hawaiian triathlon with his staff.

I finally got the guts."

Race Director Christy Moore said she expects between 200 and 250 to enter both races this year. Last year, 98 people competed in the international race and 128 people competed in the sprint.

As it has done the past 20 years, Lightlife sponsors the race. This year, Health New England is a new sponsor.

The competition raises thousands of dollars annually for the

in the small bike shop of Bicycle World on Federal Street. At the time, owner Chris Ethier and his staff were huddled around a television watching a Hawaiian triathlon.

"We were sitting around in the shop talking about it," Ethier remembered.

With its meandering roads, picturesque countryside and pool-like swimming hole, Ethier thought Greenfield would be a great place for a triathlon.

So, the following year, in 1984, Ethier scraped together the city's first triathlon with 40 people competing, no small success for a first-time race. He designed two shirts — one for individuals and one for teams. The triathlon continues to use the same race logo today.

That first triathlon in Greenfield was known as The Bicycle World Triathlon.

At the time, the Greenfield race was only one of two in New England. In three years, the number of triathlons in the state jumped to 15. In five years, the race jumped from 40 participants to 150 competitors.

Ethier decided to hand the race off to the town after two years. "When putting on events like that in August, we're really busy already working 60 hours a week at the shop," said Ethier. "It was a good event for the town to put on because

Greenfield Recreation Department. It is limited to 420 participants — 220 for the sprint race and 200 for the international race. As of July 24, 180 people had registered for the race on the website active.com. Registration ends today, at 5 p.m.

The competition's motto is "To finish is to win."

#### History

The Greenfield tradition began



Recorder file photos/Peter MacDonald

These images show the swimming and bicycle portions of the 2008 Greenfield Lightlife Triathlon.

Dan Benson of Greenfield placed first in 2012.