

Swimmers vie for space in the Green River during the first leg of Sunday's Greenfield Lightlife Triathlon held at the Greenfield Swimming and Recreation Area. More than 200 athletes competed in this year's event.



Recorder/Trish Crapo

## Greenfield Triathlon draws old pros and newcomers

By CHRIS CURTIS  
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GREENFIELD — The finish area of the Greenfield Lightlife Triathlon fills rapidly with spectators as finishers begin to trickle in, to be immediately surrounded by family and friends with water and congratulations. Chris Ethier of Shelburne gets more than the usual backslaps.

Met by his daughter, granddaughter and wife, Ethier is recognized and greeted by many of the finishers as they cross the line. "I like to see them come in, the smile is worth it," Ethier said as another member of his weekend training session crossed the

line. Ethier, 64, is well known in the area cycling community as the owner of Bicycle World on Federal Street in Greenfield, and among many first-time triathletes as a leader of a pre-race training program offered by the Greenfield Recreation Department. Ethier is also the race founder, launching

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Recorder Chris Curtis

Montague neighbors Amy Bowse and Amy Johnson smile after completing what was for both their first sprint triathlon Sunday.

### Triathlon

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it 30 years ago with about 40 competitors and handing off organization of the event when it became too big a production for his spare time. Now run by the Recreation Department, the triathlon this year drew more than 200 participants.

Now, he and Rick Roy of Greenfield volunteer as instructors to coach those who

need it in swimming and bicycling, Ethier's field, Sunday mornings at the Greenfield swimming area. The running portion generally comes naturally, according to Ethier.

Running is the final event in the three-part race and Ethier watched as fellow finishers legged it across the line in various states of exhaustion.

Among these were the Amys.

Friends and neighbors Amy Bowse and Amy Johnson, both 43 and from Montague,

finished their first triathlon Sunday.

"It was on my bucket list," Bowse said. "Getting older, you like to do something for yourself."

"And she called me and said 'Hey, so um, I'm thinking of doing a triathlon, want to do it with me?'" Johnson said. "This was last fall."

The "why not" became a little clearer once spring rolled around and training became a reality, but both finished the sprint race uninjured.

The sprint version of the

race combines a 0.31-mile swim, 14.87-mile bike race and a 3.07-mile run, just shy of road race staple five kilometers.

Johnson runs, usually using the Franklin County Sheriff's Office annual Jail Break 5K as a goal.

"That's pretty much all I do, I'm not a swimmer," she said.

"And I never did anything," Bowse said. Bowse said she swam her first lap in January. The two kept each other motivated, then enrolled in the

eight-week group training session once it began in June.

Both agree it was worth it, although nothing prepared them for the swimming portion of the race.

"The open water swim for the first time is something I don't think you can learn," Bowse said. "You have to experience it. It's like being thrown in a washing machine; the water, the elbows."

Nevertheless, both intend to be back next year.

Another training group alumna, Francesca Passiglia of Greenfield, chairwoman of the volunteer Greenfield Recreation Commission, also finished her first full sprint triathlon Sunday.

"It's about an hour and a half of nonstop exercise," Passiglia said, clarifying that this is a good thing.

"The after-race is amazing," Passiglia said. The race itself has its ups and downs. "I really enjoy the bike ride the most. There's just a nice sense of camaraderie; you go by someone they say, 'Good job.'"