

hap Balanced Living®

YOUR GUIDE TO EVERYDAY HEALTH

KEEP MOVING

How Marie & Nino Pacini overcome obstacles to lead an active life.

“
THINK OF
EXERCISE AS
A LIFESTYLE
CHANGE THAT
WILL LEAD
YOU TO BETTER
HEALTH.

”
— NINO PACINI

SPRING
CLEAN
YOUR
DIET

THE FIX
FOR STRESS

FITNESS

POWER COU



PHOTOS Kathryn Gamble | WORDS Julie Weingarden Dubin

A man with short grey hair, wearing a blue t-shirt and khaki pants, is sitting on a wooden stool at a table. He is looking towards the left. Behind him is a large, colorful mural with abstract patterns in black, white, red, and yellow. The scene is outdoors.

PLE

*Why You Should Pedal,
Sweat & Savor the Ride*

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There's no reason not to exercise, according to Marie and Nino Pacini of Grosse Pointe Woods, Michigan. It's cold out? Nope. Tired? Push through it. **Can't see?** Find someone who can see, and **ride on.**

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The Pacinis

are both blind, which they say encourages them to find creative solutions for living an active lifestyle. Passionate about outdoor cycling, they ride a 9-foot triple bike, with a sighted person pedaling in front so they can conquer the terrain, feel the wind in their hair, and hear the energy of the community around them. If they can find two sighted riders, they each hop on a tandem bike, a bike built for two, and hit the roads.

"Biking outside is a fun way to get a two-hour workout," says Marie, 58. "We are with people, getting our Vitamin D, and neighbors are waving to us."

Blindness doesn't slow down Marie and Nino. There's too much to do. The duo, who have been HAP members for more than 20 years, are drawn to adventure and have skydived, climbed mountains, skied and gone white-water rafting. They also motivate people about healthy living and positive thinking.

Nino, 56, has the genetic condition retinitis pigmentosa (RP). At age 7 Nino went legally blind, and by age 22 he had no light perception. Marie has Coats' disease, a rare congenital eye disorder. She could see as a child and gradually lost her vision over many years. "I now have a tiny bit of light perception," she says.

Getting Fit

Nino's motivation for embracing fitness was to attain a healthy weight and blood pressure. "In my 20s, my weight crept up to almost 210 pounds and I'm 5 feet 6. Now, I keep it around 180 pounds," he says. "I enjoy eating, so my chosen method for weight control is burning off as many calories as I intake."

If several days pass without strenuous exercise, the part-time vision rehab counselor at Detroit Receiving Hospital starts itching to do something. "That's a great way to feel because it's the impetus for exercise," he says, "so I can keep my metabolism up and weight and stress down."

A Surprise Health Score

Three years ago an A1C test revealed Marie had high levels of blood glucose – she had prediabetes. Shocking news for Marie, who was hitting the gym and eating healthily. She had no family history of diabetes. But she was a big dessert eater and put sugar in her coffee. Marie wasted no time consulting with a nutritionist.

"I didn't want to have to take medicine or give myself a shot," Marie says. "I thought about the risk of amputations, being on dialysis, an increased risk of heart disease – I didn't want to go there." Marie gets her A1C checked annually, and the results are good. "The beauty with type 2 diabetes," she points out, "is you can make significant lifestyle changes, and it helps."



No-Pressure Spinning

Marie and Nino's passion for cycling led them to start teaching local spinning classes 10 years ago. "I wanted to create a class with more interval training, so we could stay in shape for cycling outdoors," Nino says. "I try to motivate you with stories and get you to compete against yourself when I teach. The feedback is what your body is telling you – not what a machine says."

The Pacinis view fitness as a quality-of-life issue. "As you get older," Marie explains, "you will lose muscle tone, strength and flexibility. We stay fit with yoga and strength classes." In winter, they work out more in the gym and cross-country ski. "You can't stop deterioration of your muscle tone, strength and flexibility, but you can slow it down," Nino says. "A gym membership is part of our health regimen. It's right

up there with yearly medical screenings and eating healthier."

Keep Moving

Marie and Nino's main mode of transportation is walking. "We may rack up five to 10 miles a day just doing errands because we don't drive," Nino says, "but we don't count walking as part of our workout regimen because that's how we take care of our everyday needs."

Devoted volunteers, the Pacinis

both belong to local Lions clubs, and for more than 30 years, they've helped out at the Detroit Institute of Ophthalmology support groups for people losing their vision, run by Henry Ford Hospital. "I think giving back is an important part of being healthy," Nino says.

Nino and Marie say that when you exercise, you have more energy and feel better. "It's a choice — everything you do has a cost and a reward," Nino says. "We all have to decide where we want to be." ■

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