



## 2020: New Year's resolutions

### SOME INSPIRATION FROM CAALA MEMBERS, ESPECIALLY OUR MARATHONERS

News flash – If you haven't looked at the calendar, it's a new year! Welcome to 2020.

For most of us, the beginning of a new year is the time to take stock and think about how we can make our lives better. Yes, I'm talking about New Year's resolutions.

OK, you might think they are old-fashioned, silly and often impossible to meet. Be honest, though, if you don't formally make a list you probably have an informal list of things you'd like to change or do better.

Since this column strives to provide readers with resources and information, I've done some research for you and found the most popular New Year's resolutions:

- Learn a new skill or hobby
- Quit smoking
- Read more
- Drink less alcohol
- Spend more time with family and friends
- Lose weight
- Live life to the fullest
- Save more money/spend less money
- Travel more

Sorry, those seem a bit mundane and not very imaginative or inspiring. They sound like they are fresh off a fortune cookie or a Hallmark greeting card.

I'm going to make it even easier for you. I'm going to give you one single New Year's resolution that's guaranteed to improve your physical and mental well-being, reduce stress and make you look and feel better. That one resolution is "Get More Exercise."

Every doctor will tell you that exercise can improve your health and reduce your risk of developing serious diseases. Every therapist will tell you that regular exercise will improve your quality of life. Everyone who already exercises will tell you they feel and look better.

If you are looking for tips about what type of exercise is best for you, that's beyond me. Exercise is like beauty, it's all in the eyes of the beholder.

For me, my New Year's resolution is to get to the gym three times a week, exercising on a treadmill and a stationary bike.

For CAALA members, exercise routines run the gamut from yoga to weightlifting, training in martial arts, jogging, tennis, basketball, racketball, spin/cycling or other organized classes.

And then there is running, which brings me to the point of this column. I'd like to introduce you to some CAALA members who take exercise and running seriously – very, very seriously.

There are many CAALA members who like to jog or run, sometimes working their way up to competing in 5K or 10K races, maybe even longer ones.

I know several who get together before sunrise to train for upcoming races. They are Belinda Theam, Megan Klein, Tim Loranger, Denisse Gastelum, Christian Pereira and Arnoldo Casillas, and I'm sure there are others. They all value the benefits of exercise, especially running and cycling and they all take it seriously.

And then there are Michelle West and Minh Nguyen.

West is a Partner at Robinson Calcagnie in Orange County, specializing in catastrophic injury cases. She is also a runner, but not your run-of-the-mill weekend jogger.

West has completed more than 50 marathons, 10 full Ironman® triathlons (achieving All World Athlete status), several 50-85-mile runs, several 100-mile runs and the 135-mile Badwater® ultramarathon.

Minh Nguyen is the principal lawyer at Nguyen Lawyers in Long Beach and is a member of CAALA's Executive Committee.

He took up running later than most, but he has competed in numerous running and cycling events including marathons. He has also done two full Ironman races, three half Ironman

competitions and one Olympic distance Ironman.

For those who don't know, a full Ironman race consists of swimming 2.4 miles in open water, biking 112 miles over sometimes rough terrain and then running a full marathon, 26.2 miles. There are no breaks between the swim, bike and running portions and the whole event can take up to 16 hours to complete.

Nguyen was invited to try an Ironman by CAALA attorney Arnoldo Casillas. Minh had no idea what an IM race was or what it involved, but not wanting to be a wuss, said, "sure," and something along the line that anything Arnoldo could do he could do.

The training and competing led to several serious injuries for Minh, including ACL surgery and a torn MCL. One training crash on Pacific Coast Highway left Minh with a broken clavicle requiring surgery consisting of a plate and 10 screws.

But despite the injuries, Minh persevered and completed half Ironmans and finally full Ironman competitions in 2018 and this past November.

Minh describes parts of the Ironman competitions as being "insanely hard." Michelle West will say the same thing when you ask her about ultramarathons. The 135-mile Badwater ultra marathon is run from Death Valley to Mt. Whitney without rest in temperatures exceeding 120 degrees.

Michelle and Minh and other CAALA-member runners have the focus, drive, determination and dedication that lead to awesome results, just like all successful trial lawyers.

Whether your New Year's resolution is to exercise three days a week at the gym or to emulate the incredible feats of Michelle West and Minh Nguyen, my advice is to follow the Nike maxim: "Just Do it." Have a happy and healthy New Year. 🍷