

Text by Michelle McKinzev • Photos by Heather Yost and Photojeania

Major Life Adjustment

Heather Yost has always led a very active life. She grew up on a farm in western Iowa as the middle of five children. Her family spent Sunday mornings biking before breakfast. She played volleyball in high school and became interested in running as a senior. Though she never competed in school, she began training for marathons.

After high school, Yost attended Iowa State University with the intent to major in audiology. She left that major after one class. She knew she wanted to work with people and spend her life helping them so she switched to physical therapy. She was working as a volunteer in a physical therapy department when a patient treatment awry.

That's when she decided physical therapy was not for her. Yost needed another change but she wasn't sure where to turn. It was then that her life was changed by a bike ride and a pickup truck.

It was July 2nd, 1999. Yost was training for RAGBRAI. She had just finished her second marathon and was out on her bike – two weeks into her training. An occluded view of cross traffic led to a collision with a pickup truck in an intersection in Slater, Iowa just south of Ames.

The truck and the bike met at a 45 degree angle; the bike went underneath the truck and Yost was laid out to the side of it. Her

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That was when someone told her to look into visiting a chiropractor.

“Every storm cloud has a silver lining.”

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helmet cracked resulting in a concussion. She broke her ribs and fractured her pelvis from her hip socket up to the ilium (the crest of the pelvis) and back down towards the tailbone. She was bleeding internally and her brain began to swell.

“Without the helmet, without the modern medicine, had I been in the country, I probably would have died,” she says. Yost was transported to Mary Greeley Medical Center in Ames where she spent ten days. She was experiencing short term amnesia and received four shots in her stomach daily for internal hemorrhaging.

She spent weeks on crutches before graduating to a cane. After spending some time with the cane, she asked the doctor when she'd be able to lose the cane and run again. “When you're on crutches, people want to help you. When you're twenty-one and using a cane, people stare.”

When the doctor told her she'd need the cane for awhile, always walk with a limp and never run again, Yost fumed. “I was always told I could do anything and I thought *I'm not accepting that.*” She was told she'd need a hip replacement in eight years and, because her body was so messed up, that she may never be able to conceive children – let alone deliver them.

On her visit to the chiropractor, Yost was x-rayed and examined. The chiropractor told Yost the best way to help her body was to realign all the things that were imbalanced during the accident. Since the accident, the damage to her hip has halted. She has not had a hip replacement and she has not stopped running. She runs everyday. Yost has run three half-marathons this year alone.

“When I started running again, I thought *I’m going to do this for one other person. I’m going to give back to them something that has been taken away and give them back their quality of life.*” That’s when she decided to pursue chiropractic as a profession. “One person said to me, try chiropractic and it changed my life.”

For Yost, running was a part of her and if that was all she got out of being healed, it may have been enough. But, as if it wasn’t, Yost and her husband conceived twin girls a little over five years ago. “When I was gifted twins, I remember thinking *I don’t believe two would be put in if I can’t get them out,*” she says. She delivered them completely naturally at 38 weeks and at around six pounds each.

Despite her medical history, she believed that giving birth was what her body was made to do. Three years later, she gave birth to a baby boy at just over nine pounds. “I was bawling like a baby, saying to Ben ‘remind me to never do this again!’ It was the hardest thing I’ve ever done and the most amazing. It’s the most empowering thing I’ve ever gone through.”

Before trying chiropractic, Yost was skeptical but once she began educating herself, she began understanding it more in depth. “When I was in the hospital, I was a big fan of [modern medicine] but once I got to the point where I was stable, I knew I needed something different.” That’s what she gives to others. “I have never wanted to be an alternative doctor. I don’t want to be me or them. I want to be complementary and work with other professions.”

The Work of a Healer

Most people think that running your own company and raising three children would be a juggling act. Yost, however, sees it as a great way to make time for her family. “You don’t work to make a living,” she says. “You work to make a life.” She doesn’t tell her children she has to go to work; she tells them she has the opportunity to go help people.

Her office has what she calls “mommy friendly hours” that allow her to be home with her children when she needs to be. “I really think I’m honing my skills at the balance between working and being a mother. I think you can have your cake and eat it, too. I really do.”



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Yost has a Bachelor’s Degree in Exercise and Sports Science, Bachelor’s in Human Biology, Doctorate in Chiropractic, and she has completed post-graduate studies in nutrition, pregnancy and pediatrics, acupuncture and balancing female hormones. She is one of twenty-two chiropractors in the state of Iowa with a Diplomate in Chiropractic Pediatrics and Pregnancy Care.

While in chiropractic school, she took one course on the care of pediatric and pregnancy patients. “As I started learning about it I thought if I really want to work with those populations that I should probably be the best of the best.” So she began the three year post-doctoral study finishing up just two years ago and receiving her Diplomate last year.

This allows Yost and her team to serve patients of all shapes and sizes. “I love birth and I love children and just the dynamics of the family unit and fighting over who gets to go first with the adjustments. It’s so amazing.” Her office is equipped with all the state of the art gadgets but she also tries to make it feel like home and put her patients at ease.

She is a strong advocate of community outreach – including both wellness programs and helmet safety (a topic she is very passionate about). Her goal is to educate every family so they can make the best choices for their health. “I don’t twist arms. I don’t make people do what they don’t want to do. I want educated and empowered patients who work with me to get the best possible results.” *



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