



CARI DRAFT OF ECOTREK FITNESS HAS ONLY ONE SPEED: FAST

## MOVING MOUNTAINS THREE AT A TIME

Cari Draft of EcoTrek Fitness only knows one speed: fast. So for her, founding a unique outdoor fitness company that has grown to 12 locations around West Michigan was not enough. Add to her list of conquests a regular radio program, a new TV show, and a line of fitness bars that are set to take the Midwest by storm.

### A fitness bar that actually tastes good goes "viral"

The fitness/energy bar industry has grown to over \$1 Billion annually, with thousands of varieties at our fingertips. This saturated market can be overwhelming and frustrating to everyday consumers; how can we find an energy bar that's packed with the nutrients needed to be healthy? In 2010, Draft was continually asked by participants in her EcoTrek Fitness program what type of protein bar can maintain energy and help them eat smart. As Cari explains, "Fitness and healthy eating go hand-and-hand, and to provide the best value to my clients, I tracked down fitness or 'energy' bars that not only tasted good, but would be good for my troops' well-being."

This was not an easy task. Like most people would do, Draft began investigating energy bar manufacturers online, who could sell to her at wholesale or in bulk so that she could in turn provide them to her clients. This research led her to a company that made private-label bars for other companies, as well as their own lines.

In talking with the company, Draft learned that the U.S. based manufacturer actually had two bar lines that would possibly be discontinued. Opportunity knocked. In reviewing the recipe, she found that there were some ingredients she could change to increase the nutrition and taste of the bars. She removed bee pollen to prevent allergy sensitivities and added hemp powder to keep them gluten-free. She suggested using a higher-quality dark chocolate and boom, two new bars were born: **EcoTrek Whole Food Bars** in dark chocolate raspberry and dark chocolate peanut butter.

Draft wanted these new bars to be available to not only her clients, but anyone interested in a

contemporary approach to healthy eating. She approached and successfully got her bars on the shelves of over 60 locally-owned retailers and outlets, including health food stores, cafes and markets throughout the state of Michigan. Then in November of 2011, Draft approached WESCO convenience stores, and soon had EcoTrek Whole Food Bars on the shelves of their 50 locations spanning the entire West Michigan region.



Being the guerilla marketing guru that she is, Cari spends much of her downtime traveling around Michigan, visiting the stores, checking on her displays and inventory, and talking with the clerks about her product. Cari explains "It's important to me that the store owners, managers and employees get to know me personally, and that they understand my product when they talk to customers."

From early December 2011 through mid January 2012, just over 1000 EcoTrek Whole Food Bars flew off the shelves of WESCO. That seemed like a great deal of inventory to Draft, considering it started as a side business to her fitness classes. But she would soon learn that 1000 energy bars to one retailer is a mere drop in the bucket to another. Enter Meijer.

### Everything is bigger at Meijer

In mid-January of 2012, EcoTrek Whole Food Bars hit it big time. After months of negotiations and taste testings with Meijer, one of the Midwest's largest retailers decided to take a calculated bet on Cari's bars. Meijer agreed to distribute them in all 197 of its stores throughout 5 states: Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio and Kentucky. In addition to that, Meijer's first order would be about 10x the volume that had been sold in the previous 6 weeks, per bar. Full throttle.

### A TV show and a fitness challenge

Not to be satisfied with a growing statewide

fitness company and an exploding fitness bar craze, Cari Draft has a new television show in the works. **The Lakeshore Slimdown Challenge** debuts in February of 2012, following a casting call that will take place on January 30th. The show airs on MCCTV, which is the local Muskegon Cable TV outlet, and will run for eight weeks every Tuesday through early April.

Partnering with Anytime Fitness and Muskegon Community College, the Slimdown Challenge will take eight participants through an eight-week exercise and healthy eating regimen. Cari explains that "While no one on the show will be 'voted' out like similar reality shows, the competition will be intense and the expectations high."

The goal is to find participants from all over the lakeshore region, that represent all different levels of fitness, different body types, different ages, and a diversity of other physical attributes that will resonate with a broad audience. The podcasts will appear on Vimeo after it airs on MCCTV, for people not in the Muskegon area.

### What's next on the radar?

Two things are on the docket for Cari Draft in 2012: working to expand her fitness classes to the East Side of Michigan, and picking up additional retail distributors. While she has Whole Foods with its 310 stores in the United States and the U.K. as her #1 target, she's also working with other regional and Michigan based grocers for distribution. But if these obstacles are anything like the dunes along the lakeshore that she traverses every week, they're merely speed bumps on the road to success. ###



Lakeshore SlimDown Challenge TV show on MCCTV