

# MASTERS ATHLETES

## KAREN MOREHEAD SMALL

*IFBB Bikini Pro, North Carolina*

**K**aren started her fitness journey as a cheerleader but found a love for running while in college. Her new passion helped her keep her weight down. She later married and had children, taking a five year break from running. During that time, both her and her husband got involved with drugs. When it got so bad that they were dodging the drug dealers, she discovered God and it changed her life. She took up running again, doing marathons and triathlons. However, as a 50 year old, it was no longer enough to keep the weight off anymore.

She was on a journey to lose 20 lbs and started doing a nutrition program that was working for another woman at church. She struck up a conversation one day with a fit woman while on a shopping trip to Goodwill and discovered that the woman was a bodybuilder. Karen says, "I told her I had always wanted to do that! I don't even know where that came from; the words just flew out of my mouth." Karen will tell you, her whole fitness journey has been a "God thing" which eventually led her to meet and start training with IFBB Pro and Personal Trainer, Johnny Stewart. She says, "At the time, I didn't really know how fortunate I was to find such an amazing coach." That was her springboard into lifting; it was a different lifestyle where she gained an understanding of what to do in the gym. Karen also learned how resistance training would be of benefit, how to track macros and how to use cardio to manage her weight.

She prepared for her first show, but didn't really know how to pose. Karen explained, "My coach really didn't



want me to do the show because I hadn't learned how to pose yet, however, the Lord spoke to me saying this is the show you are going to do, so I competed at the NPC Elite Muscle. I placed 3rd and fell in love with competing but I learned that if I was going to be successful, I needed to communicate better with my coach."

Another hobby of Karen is professional entertaining. At the cast meeting for a show at the christian theater, she knew she was facing a conversation with the Lord but was afraid of what he would say. A fellow actor, coincidentally named Pastor John, prayed with her. Karen knows the Lord intervened when he turned to her and said, "the word the Lord has for me to give to you is TRAIN and to become a professional at what you do." That's exactly what she did, earning a pro card in less than three years. You can still hear the excitement in her voice when she describes, "When I won that pro card, I felt like I had won Ms America! I made my pro debut at the 2020 Tampa Pro. It doesn't really matter where I place; I want to win, doesn't everyone? But whether I place 1st or 16th, I'm already a winner and in the process I've made such great relationships. I know what I'm doing is a godsend."

Karen recently opened a wellness center that includes products inspired by minority women or minority owned businesses. In addition, she has begun the process to get a NASM Personal Training certification. During the pandemic, she set up a full gym in her house. Her ultimate goal is to help women, especially women of color who don't have access to, or the knowledge of the benefits of health and fitness. She is an example that women, no matter what age, color, or background, can be healthy, strong, eat clean and exercise. She says, "I feel like if I can, anybody can, there's no excuse. Don't give up on yourself, It's never too late!"



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