

There is nothing more inspiring to me than watching someone overcome and persevere to achieve their goals. In our inspirational stories, at 60+ years young, Vanessa King not only took her fitness program to another level but stepped on stage in a bikini. Her commitment, discipline and determination are unwavering! With a combined weight loss of over 140 pounds, Christina and Randolph Jean Simon epitomize happy and healthy and are an example of how to work together to get the results you want. Finally, Joey Webb, is not only grateful to be a cancer survivor, but is a testament to the value that exercise contributes to your overall wellness and is just one of many stories of how the sport of bodybuilding has provided the path to recovery — from illnesses of all types. I invite you to read these stories and use them as inspiration for your next workout. And if you're looking for more inspiration, there are many more stories on our website at [southernmuscleguide.com](http://southernmuscleguide.com)

## Vanessa King

Age: 62, weight loss: 50lbs

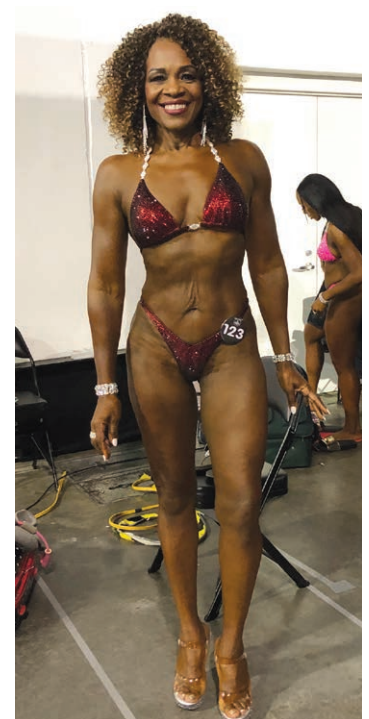
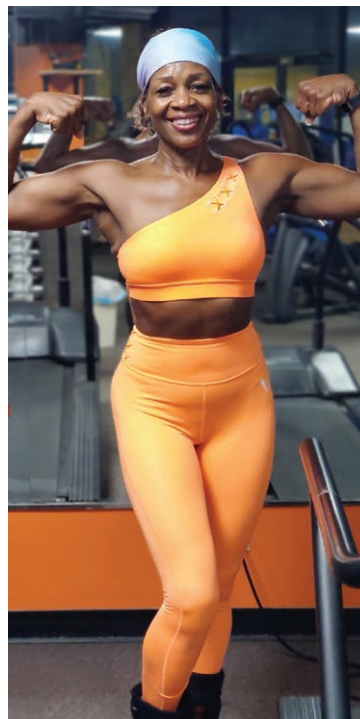
I've been working out for many years, some might even call me a gym rat. My job even has a gym and they bring instructors in for lunch. A few years ago, I had lost some of my motivation for training but I was still showing up. One day a man approached offering some tips on how to better use the machine I was on. He was a trainer named Markell Thomas. I told him I was interested in getting a trainer but it was a couple months before I reached back out to him. He offered me a trial session and I enjoyed his training methods, so we began training together. I met his wife Jessica and as time went by, Markell mentioned that he and his wife competed and he thought I would make a good competitor. I just laughed, I really did. I didn't have any knowledge about figure competitions and I didn't think that was for me. Markell continued to bring it up during our training sessions. Finally, I said I would do it.

### Setting the Goal

That was early 2020 and I had been training with Markell for about a year. We had planned to do a show in 2020 and then the pandemic hit and shut everything down for 6 months. I continued to train in the park with friends and finally got back with Markell in October when the gyms opened back up. We decided to shoot for a competition in 2021.

### The Challenges & A Testament to What Can Be Achieved

Like I said, I have always worked out, I love a challenge and I love to compete. In high school, I played basketball and volleyball. But being more disciplined with my diet, that was one of my biggest challenges. Some people ask how can you eat the same thing everyday? I say, if you're hungry you'll eat whatever is there. I like to keep it easy. I was already prepping my meals on the weekends because I don't have time during the week. Give me some green beans and chicken breast in the air fryer and I'll eat that all week because I'm just cooking for myself. I try not to bring snack foods in the house. I have a little niece that when she comes over she says, "Auntie, you never have any treats in the cabinets!" If I don't bring it in the house, I won't eat it. Whatever my trainer told me to do, especially with my



diet, I did it because I don't have any temptations in my house, no distractions in front of me. Some people have kids or their husbands and they have to cook certain foods for their family, but I don't have that. It was really an advantage that helped me so much. However, I do enjoy relaxing with a glass of wine on the weekends. So when Markell said I would have to give that up, that was hard. It wasn't the first time I have given up something though. My 20's and 30's were my fun time followed by being a young mother and I was a smoker during that time. When I turned 40 I gave up cigarettes and started working out. It's been 22 years and I'm just loving it.

Another big challenge was learning that once I put my mind to something, that it is possible. I say that because, I was recently looking at a video of my very first posing session and I tell you, I've come a long way! When I first stepped on that practice stage with Steve Payne, I had no idea what I was doing. It was scary because you're putting yourself out there. But with a lot of practice, I gained confidence in what I was doing over time.

## The Competition

It was finally my time to shine at the 2021 NPC Southern Muscle Showdown. I competed in Bikini True Novice, placing 4th and Bikini Masters 60+, placing 4th. I competed again six weeks later at the 2021 NPC Lee Haney Games where I competed in both Bikini and Figure where I won Bikini Masters 60+ 3rd place, Figure Novice Class D 4th place and Figure Masters 60+ 2nd place. After the show, I got some feedback from the judges and I knew this already as well, that we need to build more muscle in my quads and hamstrings and I could have dropped at least five more pounds. So that's my goal, to make sure I'm more muscular and that I'm at my goal weight. I'd like to do two shows next year. I started with the Bikini division, but I think I'll focus on Figure for 2022.

.....

**“ When I first stepped on that practice stage with Steve Payne, I had no idea what I was doing. It was scary because you're putting yourself out there. But with a lot of practice, I gained confidence in what I was doing over time. ”**

.....



## The Impact

I've had so many people reach out to me since I've done my competition. I would sit down with them and let them know that if this is something they want to do, it is possible. You just have to put your mind to it and enjoy what you're doing as you go. Set goals, small goals and before you know it you have achieved that bigger goal. I've had several people reach out to me and just pick my brain. **It's not always about the competition, it's about being active, moving and being healthy so you can have a good quality of life.** That is so true; my hairdresser was at the show with me and she said, "Vanessa, this is something I would like to do. I don't want to compete, but I would love to get my body to a place where I am happy with the way I look and feel." I am so amazed by the number of people that have come up to me and say that I inspired them to do more and to push themselves more. Even my job did a write up on me for the monthly newsletter, so that was exciting for me as well. People do ask how I do it. For me, I'm at a good season in my life. I've been divorced for many years, I have one daughter, Keisha (33), who lives in South Carolina. So it's just me here. I have family and they've been encouraging as well. But for me, being single and where I'm at in my job of 43 years, as an IT manager enables me to leave work and my time is my time. I've been really blessed with that. I can come and go and apply myself towards all the other things I want to do. Just being able to have that time for me works out nicely. I just go and workout plus I have a gym at home that allows me to workout there as well. I'm just in my season. I have sisters and a couple of them have kids. They complain they have to do this and that for the kids and I just say, "It's not your season yet. Your season is coming." I just love this season that I'm in in my life.

