

Laura Duerr: *Leap* OF A *Lifetime*

By Teresa Sellinger

Photos submitted by Laura Duerr

Laura and Kyle fall through the sky.

For 30 years, skydiving remained an uncrossed-off item on Sparta senior Laura Duerr's bucket list, but on her birthday this summer, cheered on by 20 friends who elected to stay earthbound, Laura finally made the leap of a lifetime from 14,500 feet in the sky.

"All of my friends were there to support me and they were absolutely amazed," Laura shares. "My tandem instructor Kyle said, 'There's 20 people here and not one of them is going to jump with you?' I said, 'No, I'm the only one with balls made out of titanium!' I just made the commitment. I made the decision. I have never been as focused on accomplishing anything in my life as I had been in those six months (prior to skydiving.)"

Due to tandem skydiving restrictions, prior to jumping Laura needed to lose 50 pounds.

"I hired a nutritionist, a personal trainer who I met with twice a week and I worked out like crazy in the Sussex County YMCA gym four or five days a week. Everybody there is terrific," Laura says.

Laura's skydiving experience turned out to be quite different than what she had expected.

"In my mind, I had pictured it completely differently. People are floating in the air. They're smiling. They're having fun. There's Tom Cruise. It's romantic. No, it was terrifying," Laura shares with a laugh. "In the plane's doorway, my instructor Kyle took my head, put it to his shoulder, and the next thing I know, we're rolling through the air! How do you try to catch your breath when you're hitting 120 miles an hour? A wall of air! In all of the pictures my fists are clenched. As we're falling through the air, Kyle says, 'Put your hands on my hands.' So I did. Then he took his hands away."

As they fell through the sky, Kyle instructed Laura on how to guide the parachute.

"I said, 'You're serious?' He says, 'Pull it to the left. Now pull it to the right.' And I'm like, 'How about we just pull it going straight and you continue to do it?' But Kyle was absolutely fabulous," Laura states. "The whole time I was planning and preparing for this jump, I kept telling everybody, 'I'm going to have a tall, good-looking guy strapped to my back!' They're like, 'What if it's a woman?' I'm like, 'It's a deal breaker. I don't know if I'm looking forward more to having a guy on my back or jumping out of the plane!'"



Olympia
pools
Family Owned
For Over 30 Years
www.olympiapools.com

41 Ridge Road Oak Ridge, NJ 07438 973-697-1200
329 Route 46 Rockaway, NJ 07866 973-586-1008
NJ Home Improvement Licenses # 13VH00417500

STEP UP YOUR GAME

- Sponsor this magazine with a print ad
- Be part of the action with an ad on BVMSports.com
- Go digital with a Facebook and/or Google ad

CONTACT:

Traci Marotta
tmarotta@bestversionmedia.com
973-738-6006

Or email opportunities@bestversionmedia.com for more information

Best Version Media is one of the top ten fastest-growing private media companies in North America.
www.BestVersionMedia.com



When Kyle and Laura landed, Laura felt slightly airsick.

“So I’m like, ‘Just leave me here. Just go do what you’ve got to do. Leave me in the grass.’ And Kyle said, ‘Laura, I have that effect on women.’ I said, ‘That’s why I chose you as my tandem man!’ Joking aside, people don’t realize the impact they make on other people’s lives. For Kyle, our jump was a moment with a client, but for me, it was a lifetime. It’s a lifetime that he’s created for me. I was overwhelmed by the whole experience. In fact, I still am.”

Laura hopes her own experience inspires more Sparta residents to skydive.

“You’re never too old to live your dreams. You don’t want to leave this Earth with any regrets. They ask people on their deathbeds, ‘Is there anything you regret?’ And they say, ‘No, but what I do regret is what I didn’t do.’ Just do it. It’s your life.”

Laura continues, “My husband passed away seven and a half years ago, so this jump was more than just a birthday jump. This jump was my surviving the past seven and a half years, coming through on the other side of grief and living again. It was a thank you to,

and a celebration of, all the people who carried me when I wasn’t strong enough to carry myself. When you have a love to the depth of your soul and then they’re gone, you can feel there’s no reason to stay around anymore. But God has another plan for me. So now I’m strong. I’m fit. It was a celebration. The best is yet to come.”

Does that ‘yet to come’ include plans for Laura making another leap from a plane?

“Everybody keeps asking me, ‘Well, what’s next?’ I’m like, ‘Let me just enjoy this for now. I’m open to whatever it is that’s coming. Hopefully he’s six foot three!’” Laura jokes. “But no. One and done. This was the fulfillment of a dream whose time had come to make it a reality,” Laura says with certainty before pausing and adding, “Well, maybe. I don’t know. Never say never!”



Laura's friends gather at Skydive Sussex to cheer her on.

Ready to take your own leap of a lifetime? Skydive Sussex is open daily April through November by appointment only and is located at 55 County Road 639, Sussex. For more information, visit www.skydivesussex.com.

Find AND Share more local sports articles just like this on BVMSports.com



Hello Neighbor!

Having grown up in Lake Mohawk, this community and its traditions are very special to me. Its values are evident in my everyday life, especially when working with my clients. I am redefining the culture of local Real Estate through my dedication to providing world-class service and market-leading expertise while keeping true to my small town values. I am passionate about going above and beyond to provide the extra value that others simply will not.



Tara Rodriguez

Sales Associate

Cell: 973.713.0274

Office: 973-726-0088

TaraR@kw.com

25 Centre Street, Sparta, NJ 07871



kw INTEGRITY
KELLERWILLIAMS. REALTY