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Work & Money

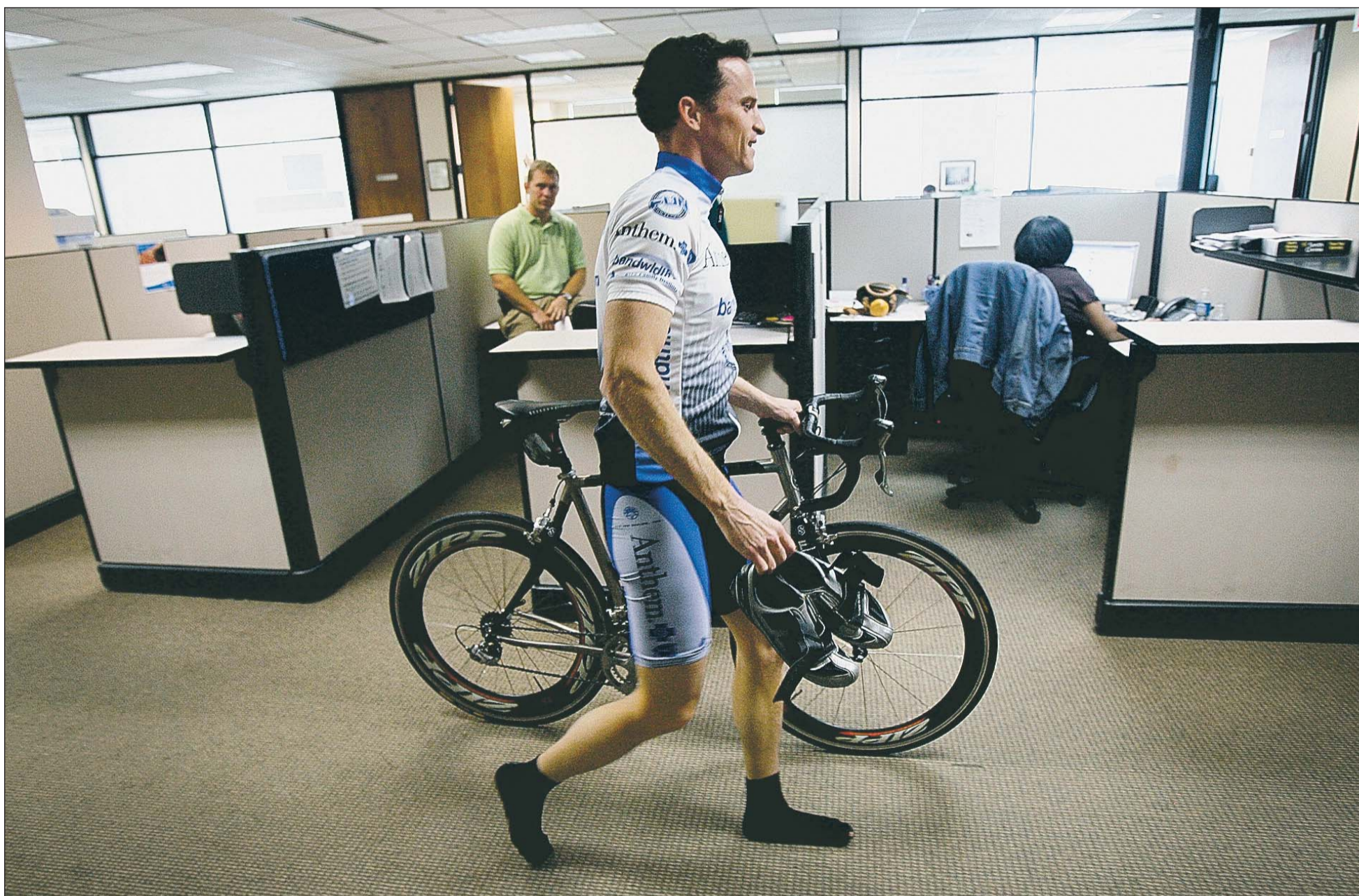
COMING MONDAY

An eyesore on Hillsborough Street in Raleigh could be revamped.

Commercial Real Estate

Racing to the top

Entrepreneurs say endurance sports push them to go the distance



David Morken, president of Bandwidth.com in Cary, heads out of the office for a lunch-break ride. He is training for a 100-mile race. 'I find it very exhilarating,' he said.

STAFF PHOTO BY JASON ARTHURS

BY GRACE W. UENG
 CORRESPONDENT

David Morken's first triathlon wasn't a triumph. "I finished dead last and darn near drowned," he said. "But I loved it."

Leap ahead 10 years. Morken, president of a fast-growing Cary technology firm, is training for the Wasatch 100 in September. It's a 100-mile ultra-marathon through the Utah mountains. Over about 30 hours, runners climb and descend 26,000 feet in elevation, the equivalent of sprinting up and down Mount Everest.

"If you have to ask why I do it, I won't be able to explain it, but if you do this kind of thing, I don't have to explain it," Morken says, borrowing a line from legendary Notre Dame football coach Lou Holtz. "I find it very exhilarating to push and stay in great physical form."

Business leaders such as Morken are known for their 24/7 work ethic; finding time to sleep — much less train for endurance races — seems at odds with that image. But successful CEOs and corporate managers have much in common with successful athletes: discipline, extreme drive, confidence and vision.



Chef Sarig Agasi of Zely & Ritz in Raleigh runs in Umstead State Park.

STAFF PHOTO BY TAKA AKI IWABU

"As an entrepreneur and an athlete, you face challenges and a level of intensity that sometimes seem too great to overcome, but in both cases, you push through," says Ryan Wuerch, CEO of Motricity, a Durham technology company.

Having completed the New York City and Virginia Beach marathons, Wuerch expects to complete six triathlons this summer, including the New York City Triathlon and the Escape from Alcatraz Triathlon in San Francisco. Then he'll be back to train for the Chicago Marathon in October. All that while running Motricity, which develops technology for ring tones and other cell-phone content. The company has expanded rapidly to 350 employees in Durham, attracted high-profile partners such as MTV and raised \$216 million in private funding — a record in the Triangle.

Certainly, there are capable leaders who are sedentary or overweight. But it's no secret that many successful people enjoy exercise,

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and often, intense workouts.

There is a class of entrepreneur and endurance athlete that elevates the connection to another level. As with other regions of the country that are hotbeds for entrepreneurial companies, the Triangle is home to a large share of that type of achiever.

Donna Jensen-Madier, an adjunct professor at UNC's Kenan-Flagler Business School, thinks that the correlation between entrepreneurship and endurance sports is "a good, healthy supply of endorphins. ... The most successful entrepreneurs have high energy levels and tremendous stamina, probably due to the powerful effect of endorphins."

Jensen-Madier, who is the former CEO of Startups.com, always loved to

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