



Team Red and Alesha Vample Win Mission: Slimpossible

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On Aug. 13, 50 employees accepted the Mission: Slimpossible challenge. While their reasons for joining varied, their end goal was the same—to become healthier. After 12 weeks, all participants have plenty of reasons to celebrate, but one individual and one team had the greatest percentage of body weight loss. The participants found out who the winners were during The Big Reveal event, Friday, Nov. 30.

The crowd erupted in cheers and applause when CEO Donna Hyland announced that **Alesha Vample** was the individual winner and Chief Administrative Officer Linda Matzigkeit named **Team Red** the 2012 Mission: Slimpossible team winners. (We'll post pictures from the event and a new video next week.)

Aspiring Children's Celebrity

Alesha, Team Purple, signed up for the program to change her life and lifestyle. Having served as a Strong4Life Wellness Ambassador for two years, she wanted to become more of a wellness role model and according to her, "look the part." She also wanted to have more energy.

"I've been so tired. Life gets in the way. It can be so stressful and draining, especially when you're out of shape," Alesha said at the beginning of the program.

Well, after losing 35 pounds and more than 13 inches, she looks amazing and achieved her goals. Her body mass index decreased 6.13 points, and her blood pressure dropped from 130/78 to 102/70 over the course of the program. Alesha's coach, Linda Byams knew she could do it from the beginning.

"If I had told Alesha that by the end of the program she would have jogged around and walked up Stone Mountain, played basketball and rode a bike for 20 miles, she would have said 'You are crazy.' Yet, she had a plan and no matter how tired she was, she worked out faithfully," Linda said.

Though she works a 12-hour shift, Alesha didn't let anything stand in her way. Linda said she became a "beast" when it came to fitness. She did all that her coaches asked and more.

"She would even leave a Last Chance Workout, go around Stone Mountain and then come back to work. She was on fire, and her energy pushed everyone on her team. She put in the time, energy and effort to win weekly challenges, while encouraging her team every step of the way."

When asked how she wanted to feel at the end of Mission: Slimpossible, Alesha said that she would be thrilled if, "I'm looking good, feeling great and can finally take this sweat jacket from around my waist." She also welcomed the opportunity to become a Children's celebrity—she's become just that, as well as an inspiration to many.

As winner, Alesha will spend one week (all expenses paid) at the Biggest Loser Resort in New York. Don't worry, we'll check in with her after she gets back to find out how the trip went, what she learned and if she spotted any celebrities.

A True Team Effort

When Mission: Slimpossible started, members of Team Red were virtually strangers. Today **Windy Wyche, Marshia McPhatter, Charlene Cunningham, Debra Owens** and **Robert Lott** are a close-knit group that together lost 131.6 pounds and 47.5 inches. Linda was also their trainer, and Amanda Wooden was the team's dietician.

"What all the teams accomplished is truly remarkable for many reasons. Working in a clinical setting, with long hours and rotating days off it is such a challenge just to get sleep and feel human. Team Red made many sacrifices not just for themselves but for their teams. They were like a machine—each part seemed to push the other," Linda said.

Linda dubbed Windy and Marshia the dynamic duo when it came to pushing their team. From day one they were all about supporting Team Red. They organized regular hikes up and around Stone Mountain. They sent encouraging emails to the team, and when it came to working out, according to Linda, "they brought it every time."

Windy started her wellness journey at 369 pounds two years ago. Prior to Mission: Slimpossible, she had lost more than 140 pounds. She joined the program to help reach her next weight loss goal in a competitive way. She lost more than 34 pounds (13.6 percent of her starting weight) and her cholesterol dropped by 26 points.

She credits her team for encouraging her to never give up.



"My teammates were so supportive and uplifting throughout this competition. One particular Saturday, we were working out together. I was trying to make it up a hill and fell behind. Robert came back down the hill and grabbed my hand. Marshia cheered us across our make-shift finish line. As our other teammates crossed, we all celebrated together," Windy said.

According to her teammates, **Marshia** was their ultimate cheerleader. Whether it was during weekly challenges or weekend workouts, Marshia was the one clapping, shouting and gently pushing her team to do their best. She joined Mission: Slimpossible to change her lifestyle for the better and become healthy to start a family.

"I want to be able to live a long and healthy life. That keeps me focused. Looking back on where I was compared to where I am now is motivation itself, I smile every time I am able to run on that treadmill or walk the stairs without feeling like I want to fall out," she said.

Marshia is now 34 pounds lighter. She lost more than 14 inches, and her cholesterol decreased by 26 points. She is well on her way to becoming healthier, and there no doubt that she'll continue cheering her teammates even after the program.

Actually, one of Charlene's favorite memories from Mission: Slimpossible was Marshia cheering her on to complete the weekly challenges. She also enjoyed the camaraderie.

"One of my favorite parts of Slimpossible was listening and learning from others and beginning to believe that good health is possible. I could actually see it in the faces of my team members as we all worked together on this journey. The friendships and encouragement are such precious gifts. I am encouraged each day and enjoy celebrating with my team and coaches," she said.

Before the program started, Charlene could barely make it through her 12-hour shift. Now, she has no trouble at all. She even has enough energy to go home, care for her family and keep up with the kids she volunteers to teach in her church's children's choir.

"Charlene spends a lot of time caring for others. She came to the program with a lot of stress, and her body was beginning to take the toll. When she first started, she faced several physical challenges, but that didn't last long. Soon, Charlene was doing the Stair Gym with the class and anything else I asked them to do. Nothing was going to stop her. It was the change she needed in her life," Linda said.

Now, Charlene walks the Stair Gym twice a day, has walked around Stone Mountain and up Kennesaw Mountain. She has lost nearly 11 percent of her body weight, eight inches from her waist and five from her hips. Her new attitude about taking care of herself first so she can care for others is one of her biggest gains.

Debra knows all about caring for others. She's been with Children's for 23 years and in the House Supervisor at Egleston. She also cares for her 90-year-old aunt. Despite her other responsibilities, Debra never missed a meeting or workout. Her aunt was hospitalized during the program for a blockage in her heart. Her condition was serious, but the weekend that she was released, Debra showed up at Stone Mountain. Her team and coaches were shocked, but Debra said simply, "I didn't want to let down my team."

"My motivation comes from my teammates. I'm amazed how committed we are as a group. I am pushing myself more because I don't want to let them down. When I see how much we have progressed and learned from each other I get excited," Debra said.

Debra decided to participate in the program to improve her overall health and challenge herself to do better. She's lost 24 pounds, but knows this is just the beginning.

"It has taken a lifetime to get where I am now. I now know that this is a life-long journey in learning how to do it correctly for the rest of my life."

This is also just the beginning for Robert. Like his teammates, he had scheduling conflicts and other challenges, but that did not deter him from reaching his goals. He credits his coaches and teammates for his terrific progress.

"They are the only people I know who can take a 50-year-old sedentary overweight man and turn him into an athlete," he said. Read more of [Robert's story](#) and how his family also motivated him.

"Robert really stepped it up and did what he had to do to reach his goals. He didn't have a ton of nutrition knowledge going in to this, and I feel like he has really grown in knowing what to eat, how much, etc. He rallied his family and his team," Amanda said.

All Team Red members will receive a day at the spa, \$500 clothing shopping spree and healthy lunch—complete with limousine service to and from each venue. Children's also is covering the costs for a 6-month gym membership.

"I could not be prouder of the relationships Team Red has built, the confidence they have gained and the increased mental and physical strength they now have to continue on their journey," Linda said.

Visit the [Mission: Slimpossible hub](#) to watch a video recap of all the teams' journey throughout their 12 weeks and find out how they plan to keep the momentum going.



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