

Oxford Gets Fit

By Kimberly Rivers



year-in and year-out millions of Americans make pacts to fight the battle of the bulge. Trends for getting in shape in 2009 have included boot camps, dance classes, outdoor recreational opportunities and holistic approaches to fitness.

Oxford residents have access to many of the top fitness trends in the country. With at least six gyms and numerous private studios in town, the opportunities to find fitness regimens that not only captivate but also motivate are unlimited.

Zumba is the newest trend to pick up loyal followers in Oxford. It mixes body-sculpting moves with dance steps from hip-hop, meringue, salsa, flamenco and others. It is beneficial to the heart because it is cardiovascular work done at intervals. The fast pace of the dance moves can easily be changed from class to class and region to region, which keeps attendees interested and involved. Zumba also builds coordination, and it strengthens the



Keri Meagher (front) begins class with an active warm-up. Photo by Kimberly Rivers

legs, arms and glute and abdominal muscles.

Keri Meagher, Baptist Healthplex's Zumba instructor, has been teaching the class since August 2008.

"I think people enjoy the dancing and the music, which makes people have fun and makes them forget they are working out," she said. "The movement enhances peoples' long-term health and mobility. I think people just benefit from having fun."

Class participant Micah Quinn said Zumba is a fun way to work out. "I like the fact that I look forward to going. It is a great cardio workout and the perfect way to end a long day of work."

Within the class, participants are able to work at their own pace and level. Costs of equipment to participate in Zumba are low as well, as one only needs a comfortable pair of shoes that allow pivoting and clothing that breathes.

Yoga is another popular form of exercise that allows participants to practice on multi-level platforms. Celebrating her first year in business, Stevi Woolworth of Southern Star Yoga noted that the total mind-body connection resulting from participation is what draws residents to her studio.

"Because it requires a level of mindfulness that doesn't exist in other forms of exercise, the benefits [of yoga] extend beyond those of the physical body to culminate a calmness of mind, reduce stress and balance emotions," Woolworth said.

Classes, which last anywhere from 45 minutes to an hour and a half,



Stevi Woolworth corrects a student's alignment in a yoga pose.



Oxford firefighters enjoy an early morning spin class. Photo by Kimberly Rivers

stretch and tone all muscles while creating a mental balance that cannot be practiced without the participant paying close attention to the body's needs. Those who practice yoga for years are noted in studies to be happier, healthier and more agile than others in the same age group, according to Woolworth.

"My favorite advertisement of yoga stated, 'The surgeon general warns yoga has been known to cause health and happiness,'" Woolworth said.

She said all one needs to practice yoga is an open mind. Participants will also need a sticky mat for safety purposes. Long-term benefits of practicing yoga are weight loss, agility, lower blood pressure, spinal health and stress reduction.

For those looking for smaller classes and more personal one-on-one attention, Rebel Body owner Lawrence Muruako offers personal training packages as well as a tight-knit boot camp class offered in eight-week cycles.

"I have a passion for health and wellness and the need to help not only individuals but whole communities live a healthy lifestyle," Muruako said.

The benefits of seeing a personal trainer, especially one who incorporates nutrition training, are seemingly limitless. Results are usually quickened, and they last because accountability creates a life shift that many clients are seeking.

Results range from better cardiovascular endurance, muscular strength, muscular endurance, flexibility and body composition. Personal sessions

last an hour, can be scheduled at the client's convenience, and are specifically targeted for the client's needs.

Boot camp classes are held two days a week at the Powerhouse and incorporate strength training and bursts of cardio movements meant to quickly tone and build endurance.

"My clients can trust that they will have an educated, motivated, driven, diligent and inspirational trainer to help them attain all of their health and wellness goals," Muruako said.

For those seeking a more private, self-driven form of exercise in town, biking has become a popular sport again. Now, with city funding for bike paths, it's also much safer for participants.

"I enjoy the non-impact fluidity



Lawrence Muruako works with a client on personal strength training goals. Photo by Kimberly Rivers

associated with biking," Oxford resident Paxton Little said. "I was once an avid runner but have learned to enjoy the absence of pounding in my knees and joints. Plus, biking is a great way to reconnect with your childhood. No matter how young or old you are, nothing is more exciting than the feeling you get riding your bike on the road or on the trails. It brings out the kid in everyone."

Little, who has competed in five downhill races this spring and summer, prefers mountain biking for its sharp turns, jumps, roots and rocks. "I'd rather hit a tree head-on than a car any day," Little said with a grin.

To participate safely, riders will need a helmet that is fitted properly, a water bottle, comfortable riding shorts and a bike that has been properly tuned. Oxford Bicycle Company offers this service

rather inexpensively, and it can prevent costly repairs or injuries. Once a member of the Oxford Cycling Club, Little participated in their Brian Dahl Birthday Ride, which took place Oct. 31. Dahl, who died in 2007 at age 29, was a star in the local road biking scene. All funds raised through the benefit will go to Angel Ranch.

No matter one's interest, there are plenty of opportunities for Oxford residents to get and stay fit. Many gyms offer a variety of classes that give customers options to stay active. Studies prove that those who work out with a friend stick to their regimens longer and live longer, healthier lives. *So*



Paxton Little races through the Clemson Downhill Challenge.

Classes of Interest

Rebel Body Boot Camp

The Powerhouse
8 a.m. Mondays and Wednesdays,
6 a.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays

Southern Star Yoga

Gentle Yoga for Special Needs
5:30-6:30 p.m. Mondays

The Turner Center

Cardio BOSU
3:30-4:15 p.m. Tuesdays

Baptist Healthplex

Spin
7:45-8:30 p.m. Thursdays

Zumba

6 p.m. Wednesdays, 9 a.m. Thursdays

Orion Fitness

Zumba
8:30 a.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays

Curves

8 a.m. - 1 p.m., 3:30 p.m. - 7 p.m.

YPS Studio

Pilates
8:30 a.m. Fridays