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PUMPING *personal iron*



Meet two Shawnee-based personal trainers who are catering to clients

Two years ago, Rita Hyde of Shawnee searched for a personal trainer to improve her fitness and her sense of well-being. She also wanted a more customized workout.

“I’m between 40 and 50 and found that one-size-fits-all workouts at the gym sometimes didn’t meet my needs because they weren’t aggressive enough and sometimes were too aggressive,” says Hyde.

All she had to do was look in her neighborhood to find personal trainer Jim Starshak.

ORDERING IN

Starshak, named an Elite Personal Fitness Trainer by the IDEA Health & Fitness Association, is owner of The Home Gym, a Shawnee-based business catering to people seeking training in their homes or offices. A disabled Army veteran of 22 years, Starshak works with Hyde twice a week at her home for the workout she prefers. He sees about 10 clients who opt for this interaction.

“What I find is that there are two kinds of groups of people,” says Starshak. “Some, in order to work out, they have to be in a gym. They need the music. They need the people around. It psyches them up. Others get there and—some can be in excellent shape, some can be in terrible shape—they just don’t like that. They want to exercise in their own home, they want quiet, or they’ll listen to the kind of music they want or the TV they want. They want to go at their own pace. They don’t want to wait at a machine to exercise. They just don’t like the gym at all. Not that one is better than the other. It’s just different kinds of people.”

Julie Niemackl is a Shawnee-based personal trainer who offers additional experience as a massage therapist. She too favors the more personalized attention that in-home visits provide. This is why her clientele base, like Starshak’s, is relatively small.

JULIE NIEMACKL

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JIM STARSHAK

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OPPOSITE PAGE Doug Anderson takes a run with his personal trainer Julie Niemackl. Exercising with a trainer can be a beneficial learning process, Niemackl says.

LEFT Rita Hyde and Starshak go through a workout in a home gym. Starshak is a trainer that will come to his clients for convenience but also offers all the amenities to adapt to their preferences.

“There’s not the distraction of how they’re going to feel performing something that maybe they’re not familiar with,” Niemackl says. “It just feels like a safe place for them to actually ask questions, learn and execute the things that they’re learning.”

GOAL-ORIENTED

Every session is an opportunity to learn new exercises and to be shown which parts of the body will gain from them. It’s the educational aspect that attracted Starshak and Niemackl to personal training in the first place.

With Starshak, no two workouts are the same, because for him the ability to modify exercises and be flexible to the client’s needs is crucial.

“My philosophy is if someone is paying me to come to their house,” Starshak says, “they don’t need to pay me to do one program and then do it eight times over.”

Although a personal trainer’s expertise in devising a safe, efficient program is paramount, people also hire a trainer for a source of motivation. As Starshak points out, some need a “workout buddy” to guide them. Similarly, Niemackl’s unifying goal for her clients is for them to become self-motivated.

“Instead of providing a crutch for somebody forever, I would like to say, ‘Hey, look what you can do. Let me show you what you can do,’” Niemackl says.

For Hyde, it’s about adopting good lifelong habits. “My short-term goal when I started was to get 20 pounds off. And I’m about a third of the way, almost halfway to the goal,” she says. “My long-term goal now is really about my health, my fitness, my future.”

COMPATIBILITY

The challenge then becomes hiring the right person to show you the way. The first candidate could be a well-qualified trainer, but there may not be a connection in the interview

process. It is imperative, Starshak says, to find a trainer you are comfortable with and can trust. Someone with national certification and a degree in personal training is a good prerequisite. For example, Starshak is certified by the National Academy of Sports Medicine and the National Strength and Conditioning Association.

Besides researching trainers, establishing clear goals is a significant task for clients.

As Niemackl points out, “Anyone can say they want to improve, but what are they willing to do to get where they want to go?”

Thus far, Hyde is noticing the results from her workouts at home. Her muscle mass is much greater than two years ago, and she has raised her metabolic rate so she doesn’t have to restrict her eating as much to maintain her weight.

“I’m hooked,” she says. “When my husband and I look at budgeting and decide what’s got to go, the one thing that we both agree on is that we’re not going to give up our personal training.” **ISM**

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