

Los Alamos: A Special Town for Fitness

By Kent Pegg

I just returned yesterday from a trip back to Alaska to take care of some business left unfinished when we moved to Los Alamos nearly two years ago. And boy, am I ever impressed with Los Alamos!

Upon returning, seeing people in the gym and around town reminded me quickly of just how fit and active the people in this community are.

Now, Alaska has its share of fit people. It's an active population with a high rate of gym attendance. But, even so, there was a stark contrast between the people in Alaska and those here in Los Alamos.

The people in Los Alamos are, in whole, the fittest group of individuals I have ever had the opportunity to be around. Sometimes it seems as if everyone here is competitive in some sport or active in the gym.

Young or old, thin or muscled, fitness is a part of the lifestyle here in our community.

And even those who may not look like competitive bodybuilders or triathlon runners are involved in this culture of fitness.

Every day I have the opportunity to work with people in the community who are striving to improve their health and their lives.

Some of these people are competitive athletes looking to improve in their sport. Some are new to weight training and are looking to set up a program for the first time. Others are looking to lose weight. Still others are rehabbing from injuries or overcoming physical challenges.

The one thing that each of my clients has in common is a strong commitment to bettering themselves and improving the quality of their lives.

I can't begin to tell you how rewarding it is to work with clients who are serious about their exercise program and work hard to realize their goals.

If you are part of the fitness craze in Los Alamos, good for you! Keep up the hard work and don't look back.

If you haven't yet joined in, now is as good a time as any to start. Go for a walk with your dog, try a gym workout, play some tennis or golf with a friend, or swim a few laps. Getting started will be much easier than you think.

If you're new to an activity, consider getting some help from a trained professional or from a friend or family member with extensive knowledge in the particular field.

But be careful! Not everyone who offers, or even charges for, his or her knowledge is qualified. That brings up another thing I noticed on my trip to Alaska.

A new trend has developed at some of the gyms I frequented when I lived in Alaska. More and more, these gyms are turning away from health professionals and certified trainers with extensive program design experience and toward lower-paid and under-trained helpers.

While this may benefit the gym, since helpers with only a few hours of training come much cheaper than experienced fitness professionals, it certainly doesn't help those clients trying to get results.

And while it will hamper your results, even worse, it can get you hurt. Over the years, a large number of clients came to me for rehab after being injured by a trainer who had placed them on a bad program.

Every client is different and unskilled trainers who try to use the same program for all clients often do more harm than good. Before trusting your health and your body to anyone, make sure they have at least a few thousand hours of program design experience with a wide variety of clients.

If you have special injuries, conditions, or concerns, make sure that many of those hours have come in the form of rehab training or have been done in conjunction with a physician or medical professional.

Having someone with only a few hours of training set you up on a circuit training program or listening to a friend who took a weight training class in high school twenty years ago, is not what exercise program design is all about.

Before accepting any advise or training, talk with the person about their experience and background. Ask questions and trust your judgment as to whether or not that person can safely help you attain your goals.

If you're going to get in on the fitness craze that's happening in Los Alamos, you want to do it safely and in a manner that will allow you to realize your goals.

And the next time you travel, look around and appreciate the fit and active community you live in. You might be amazed at just how special the lifestyle and fitness culture are here in Los Alamos.

Kent Pegg is a certified personal trainer and the co-owner of the Los Alamos Fitness Center. If you have any questions about the information in this article you can call him at 662-5232.