

Gold's Gym Challenges Area to Health and Fitness

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Twelve weeks. 84 days. That's all the time it takes to get on track to better health.

Co-owner of Gold's Gym, Juan Pozo-Olano guarantees results in just three months.

Gold's Gym, together with chief personal trainer Sandy Ervin, and Karen Kennedy, whose Healthy Inspirations nutrition program recently relocated to the gym, is making the Body Life Change challenge, a program combining strength, weight-loss and overall health.

The 12-week challenge, which begins Monday, Feb. 9, includes meal planning, a weekly weigh-in, nutrition counseling, regular body fat analysis, workout guidance and small-group strength training.

Overall winners will be named — the man and woman recording the biggest percentage weight loss will be awarded flat-screen televisions.

But, Kennedy pointed out, everyone that participates in the program is a winner.

"It's amazing how much less stress you feel when you're eating right and exercising," she said. "Think about your usual trigger points — when you have a stressful day at work, you used to run for the Ben and Jerry's [ice cream]. When you're in an exercise program, a nutrition program, you run for the gym. After you work out, you're amazed how good you feel."

Ervin agrees. "Working up a good sweat, pushing yourself, that's what makes you feel good about yourself," she said. "You might come in here not feeling too motivated, but you work out and work up all those endorphins and leave feeling great."

Working out and eating right, they noted, are habits, but they are habits that lead to better physical and emotional health.

Membership to neither Gold's Gym nor Healthy Inspirations is required to take part in the Body Change Life program. Anyone can sign up for the \$99 special.

Naturally, the Body Life Change program coincides with New Year's resolutions.

Around the holidays, Jack Pozo-Olano said, people tend to "say they need to get in shape, lose weight, eat healthier. They say 'I'm going to do it. I'm going to do it.' And they don't," he said. "But then, all of a sudden, something pushes you into it. This program is the perfect answer."

"We like to say, change your body, change your life," he added.

In Body Life Change, participants first weigh-in to get baseline measurements. Kennedy's Healthy Inspirations analysis takes height, weight and age into account to record body mass index, percentage of body fat and metabolic rate. She provides a food journal keep track of daily intake, with a meal-planning guide and counseling to help steer meal choices. Kennedy said she wants weigh-ins three times a week.

"You've gotta get control of your diet first," said trainer Ervin. "Then we begin



Photo by Betsy Burke Parker

WEIGHTING TO HELP: From left, Juan Pozo-Olano, personal trainer Sandy Ervin, Jack Pozo-Olano and Karen Kennedy, of Healthy Inspirations, have teamed up at Gold's Gym to offer the Body Life Change challenge, a program combining strength, weight-loss and overall health. The 12-week challenge begins Monday, Feb. 9.

adding a strength and training component."

Ervin said she guides participants to the correct strength and cardio equipment for building strength and endurance, providing a workout schedule that she monitors throughout the program.

"I like to remind women, especially, of how strong we are," she said. "With gentle nudges, I push you so you can see how far you can go."

Ervin uses the gym's cardio and strength training equipment to keep routines lively.

"I like to use circuit-style training," she said. "You need to keep your heart rate up, keep moving, from one exercise to the next." She includes stability balls and other pilates equipment for core strength.

"Look at your body as a machine," Ervin added. "A very efficient machine. You have to put the right fuel in, and you have to move the parts to exercise. If you treat your body right, it shows," both in your shape and your overall health.

Kennedy was one of the 15-year-old program's early participants — she lost 35 pounds and gained perspective on her physical and emotional health, and the power of taking control of her life.

Needing to lose some weight, she said she'd "tried diet programs before, but I found myself always gaining the weight back. Then I got involved with Healthy Inspirations. I realized, finally, that I had to make changes in my behavior, not continue trying to be a smaller version of my larger self."

"It does not matter if you start out at 120 pounds or 220 pounds," Kennedy said. "There are still changes you can make to your diet and exercise that will greatly affect your health."

Ervin noted that pounds of muscle burn more calories than pounds of fat. "It is a total life change," she said of the Body Life challenge.

Gold's Gym was opened in the Warrenton Town Center in 2005 by brothers Juan and Jack Pozo-Olano. They added a Gold's in Culpeper in 2004 and one in Front Royal in '07.

The pair had worked at Gold's Gym's corporate headquarters in Arlington for more than a decade before opening their own franchise.

"We wanted to bring service and amenities to rapidly expanding communities" found all over Northern Virginia, Jack Pozo-Olano said.

Though less than 16 percent of Americans work out regularly, closer to 50 percent are overweight. "We saw the need," he said.

The Body Life Change program, he said, is a natural way to reach out to more people.

Warrenton Gold's Gym is more than 13,000 square feet, with more than 60 pieces of cardio equipment complemented by strength training and a group exercise studio.

Classes range from group cycling and pilates, to yoga and kick-boxing. The Zumba fitness class, taught in the evenings, incorporates salsa dance with cardio and strength workouts.