

Norm Cates'

CLUB INSIDER

CELEBRATING 27 YEARS OF TRUST



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COVID-19 *The Re-Opening*

MAY 2020

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COVID-19 *The Re-Opening*

By: Justin Cates

Here we are... one month deeper into the **COVID-19 pandemic**, the *Coronavirus Crisis*. How many months will there be? Now, a month later, some things have changed; other things remain the same. The case count and death toll has become numbing. At the end of each number, though, is a real person and other people touched by the loss, whether family, friends or co-workers. If you're like me, you have pinched yourself at least a time or two to make sure this is real. Unfortunately, yes, this is real, and we are living it day after day. Albeit a "new normal," when will we see "normal" again?

One of the first steps toward normalcy occurred on **April 16, 2020** when the Federal

Government released guidelines for the re-opening of the country. The plan released was methodical and careful, and it took into consideration the independent situations that would inevitably occur throughout the country (i.e. States and municipalities being in different stages of the pandemic). The plan consisted of three phases, each allowing for more and more industries/businesses to open or ease restrictions, as well as easing the social restrictions needed/required to prevent the spread and/or recurrence of COVID-19. Mostly importantly, prior to the start of the entire phasing system, and in between each step, specific "gating" requirements were defined, each with a time period of two weeks to determine if (A) the area to be re-opened was ready to do so and (B) as each

area re-opened, whether or not there was a recurrence and escalation of the disease, in which case the area would not advance to the next stage (instead of having to completely shut down again).

However, this is the United States of America, and federalism is the bedrock of our political system. Thus, though Federal power can be absolute if insisted upon but prior to being challenged in the Supreme Court, States do have significant power, especially when absent of direction from the Federal level. The current situation is the latter. Though, Federal guidelines were issued, there has been no specific direction to follow them. So, led by Georgia, the individual States of the United States of America have entered the fray as each see fit and authorizing general

opening guidelines. And, in many cases, it will be left to individual counties to authorize specific regulations for clubs to follow. Like our country, the opening guidelines are wide and varied, and in time, the results will be as well.

From the psychological perspective of habit and needing to get back to normal, not to mention restarting the economy, the desire and need to re-open is understandable. Related to the health and fitness club industry, though, the disarray of such an approach is easily seen. With "gyms" being defined as open during Phase One in the Federal plan, they are on the backburner of some State plans. The State-led re-opening movement is also vastly varied State-to-State in terms of (See *The Re-Opening Page 8*)

Marsh Founder and Industry Veteran, the Beloved Ruth Stricker, Passes Away at 85

MINNETONKA, MA - March 12, 1935 - April 14, 2020 - Ruth Ann Stricker of Deephaven, Minnesota, passed away peacefully on April 14, 2020. Connected in love and gratitude for her immeasurable contributions over the course of a remarkable life, Ruth's family, friends and professional colleagues around the world honor this visionary of the health and wellness industry. Founder of *The Marsh, A Center for Balance and Fitness* in Minnetonka, Minnesota, Ruth was an industry icon and pioneer in mind-body work. She integrated Eastern and Western practices in her personal and professional life, her philosophy offering a "liberal arts approach to health." In Ruth's words, "The resiliency of the human spirit makes it possible for us to

find a sense of well-being in our lives... that our challenge is to be emotionally resilient and physically healthy to handle change and stress." Ruth believed, "health and fitness are not the chief goal in life but rather the potential to be good citizens of the earth."

Early Years

The daughter of a Presbyterian minister from Windom, Minnesota, Ruth graduated from Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota in the 1950s. Her unique educational studies culminated in a double major in physical education and religion affirming the foundation for her future life work and community leadership. Ruth began

her career as a Health Education and Youth Camp Director. She then began her journey as an entrepreneur, leading group fitness classes and pioneering her studies of mind-body interactions associated with exercise and cognitive components, which made way for new directions in health and fitness. Under her leadership, class participants found so much more than physical experiences with her charismatic energy and sharing of her many life lessons. During this time, Ruth was diagnosed with Lupus, which evolved into a lifelong process of helping others. It transformed her leadership into empowerment with a message... that she was a well person in a diseased body. Ruth's pioneering blend of (See *Ruth Stricker Page 7*)



Ruth Stricker

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Norm's Notes

■ **Hello Everybody! This is your Club Insider Founder and Tribal Leader Since 1993 checking in with our 317th Monthly Edition!** I want you all to know that my son, business partner, and now, *Publisher of Club Insider*, has done another great job with this May edition. I urge you to take the time to read it all. I also want to Thank all of our **Advertisers and Contributing Authors** for their continued support and contributions to this *Labor of Love* we call *Club Insider*. Please take some time to check out our Advertisers' offerings and do some business with them. I know they will greatly appreciate it.

■ **Is America a great country or what? Hmm... hmm... hmm...**

■ I want you all to know that our **thoughts and prayers** are with you all during this awful pandemic era, and we pray that you and your family have been able to avoid the

Coronavirus itself, albeit none of us are avoiding the other effects of the pandemic. If you have had it, we sure hope you have defeated it. **God Bless you all as we all work through this crisis.**

■ During my 45+ years of involvement in our wonderful industry, *I've had the joy and pleasure of knowing some really special and terrific people.* And, when I think back on all those years, I can candidly and honestly say that my good friend, **RUTH STRICKER**, was one of the most outstanding and special people I've ever known. Ruth was the *Founder of The Marsh* in Minnetonka, Minnesota, and during her career, she made The Marsh one of the single most outstanding and excellent clubs on Planet Earth. Ruth was *World Class and Super Special* and saying she was *one-of-a-kind* in our industry would not be an exaggeration but the **TRUTH**. Ruth helped give our industry a touch of class that has

served every one of us in the long haul since Ruth began her amazing life saga. So, it is with great sadness and a sincerity that I bid **RUTH STRICKER farewell. May Ruth Stricker Rest In Peace.** See **Ruth's Obituary** beginning on **Page #3.**

■ Following the *permanent closure of 30 locations*, **GGI Holdings, LLC., owner of Gold's Gym**, announced it has filed for **Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection** in order to financially restructure the company. **Stay Tuned!**

■ My notes this month are brief because I continue to struggle with vision problems. My right eye is essentially blind. Sadly, I suffered what they called a **Retinal Stroke** in my right eye, which decreased my vision about 85%. Prior to that event, my left eye was in need of cataract surgery, a surgery that I had scheduled to happen at the same time that the Coronavirus Pandemic hit... What timing! The **GOOD NEWS** is that I now have cataract surgery scheduled for **Thursday, May 14th**, and they tell me that they expect to be able to return the vision in my left eye to 20/20 or close to it! **WOW!** It will be great to have my vision back. By the time you read this, the result will be in, and I will either be enjoying good vision in my left eye, or God forbid, something went wrong, and I am not. The bottom line is I have the upmost confidence in **Dr. Cobb** of the *Thomas Eye Group* in Sandy Springs, Georgia, who will be performing the surgery. Anyway, enough about my eye problem. I just want all of you to know that we appreciate your support of *Club Insider* and all those who enable us to bring this publication to you each month!

■ **JUSTIN and I want to say Thanks for reading Club Insider!**

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Norm Cates

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■ **God bless our troops, airmen and sailors worldwide and keep them safe.** Thank you, **Congratulations and Welcome Home** to all of our troops who have served around the world. **God bless America's Policemen and women and Firemen and women; keep them safe.** **God bless you, your family, your club(s) and your members. God Bless America! Laus Deo!**

■ **But, wait, there's more! GOD BLESS OUR EMTs, FIRST RESPONDERS, NURSES, DOCTORS, LAB TECHNICIANS and ANYONE who is helping make Coronavirus a thing of the past. You and your families are our warriors.**

(Norm Cates, Jr. is a 45+ year veteran of the health, racquet and sportsclub industry. Founder of Club Insider, now in its 27th year of publication, Norm is a Tribal Leader Since 1993. As IHRSA's First President and a Co-Founder of the Association with Rick Caro and five others, in 1981; the 2001 DALE DIBBLE Distinguished Service Award, one of IHRSA's highest honors; and Club Industry's Lifetime Achievement Award Winner in 2017, Norm Cates, Jr. is a highly decorated veteran who cares about you. And, he wants to hear from you. Norm can be reached by phone at 770-635-7578 or email at Norm@clubinsideronline.com.)

About Club Insider

CELEBRATING 27 YEARS OF TRUST

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An Open Note To Self

Like many of you over the past 45 days, I've had time to do some self-reflection, and I realized that this once-in-a-lifetime "time-out period" - albeit people have, sadly, been dying is... what I NEEDED to re-calibrate who I want to be, and what's important to me.

CEO's and entrepreneurs have been calling Integrity Square to ask how they should defer their lease payments, how to restructure their debt, and nuances on applying for a PPP loan. We are all working to manage our financial obligations, but now we finally have time to THINK and prioritize our personal obligations; realizing that our long-time friends and families are more important than our Balance Sheet and Income Statement and Embedded, Adjusted, Pro Forma EBITDA's.

YES, we are going to go back to normal sooner than later - Technology and Knowledge always win and humans have been around for 150,000 years, I'm not concerned. But...when I do go back to the "New Normal," I am NOT going to drive myself at 120 MPH's like I have for the past 21 years (like most of you who I know personally.) I'm going to go the speed limit, fast but at 65 MPH. I intend to optimize my "Return on Time" and "Return on Relationships," because that is what matters.

I was thinking today, while on a walk in the park in Long Island, what if someone asks me on December 31, 2020 how I did on my Key Performance Indicators but these were the KPI's:

- 1 - What was my Average Stress Ratio? ("ASR" = Stressful Hours / 24 Hours)
- 2 - What was my Return on Relationships? ("ROR")
- 3 - What was my personal Win / Loss Score? (Winning Days / 365)
- 4 - What was my Average Happiness Odometer? (Happy Hours / 24 Hours)
- 5 - What was my personal growth rate in 2020?

How much better of an overall human did I become? Companies want 30% year-over-year revenue growth. What if I/YOU improved at a 30% CAGR... you/I will be a Superhero pretty damn soon.

These are the new set of KPI's we need to infuse into our thinking alongside our business KPI's. Will we still be super-ambitious and play-to-win? Of course, but let's set up a balance of the two sets of personal and professional KPI's because-let's not kid ourselves-we were all moving at an unsustainable pace that didn't yield the personal gratification or stress-free lives we thought would be the spoils of that pace of activity.

During this break, I started watching plants grow, enjoyed home cooked meals from Kay's Kitchen, FaceTimed with my niece and nephew every day, studied a Long Island blue jay in my backyard building a nest, and listening to Audiobooks at the normal speed and NOT at 2.0x speed to "power through it and save myself time." Without this stoppage, nothing would have changed for me, and probably not for many of you.

In closing, I wanted to get this out there to share my perspectives as I'm certain many of you are figuring out how to come out of this better & stronger. I believe in what we can all accomplish in the HALO sector and the service we provide to millions of fitness enthusiasts around the world.

Let's really set the example of how to maintain a balanced lifestyle, and this will lead the way to changing the world...one human at a time. Once we all agree on how to measure and define success, we can spread our mindset, lifestyle choices and career/personal objectives scorecard with others.

So, Hands In. Let's do this. I believe that we will win.

Do Great Things,

Pete

#halotalks
#jerry Maguire



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Exercise IS Medicine!

By: **Mike Alpert**

I am sure that all of you who are reading *Club Insider* this month cannot wait to get back to your clubs and out of your home office. I can never remember a more taxing and stressful time in my business life than these past seven weeks. It is one thing being isolated at home and having to

watch COVID-19 news 24/7, seven days a week, but also having the responsibility of our wonderful staff and vendors is additionally taxing.

Clubs around the world have seen cancellations rise due to members who have been furloughed or laid off, and in some cases, some are simply afraid to come back once we re-open. It is clear that,

from the Federal and State levels, there will be restrictions and guidelines that we will all have to follow going forward, and there will be a "new normal" as far as standard operating procedures go. More importantly, what additional steps will you be taking to make sure that your club is going above and beyond to build and retain the confidence, trust and support from your members and staff?

Over 25 States are already re-opening their economies and many more are getting ready to re-open in the coming weeks. Though in Phase One of the Federal plan, unfortunately, in many State plans, health clubs (they refer to them as gyms) and salons are scheduled to re-open in the third phase. Some have already been told that there will be limits as to how many members will be allowed in the club at any given time.

In order to adhere to the social distancing requirements, you will have to limit the number of members in your classes, in your weight room and studios, as well as in your pools, spas and tennis courts. It will be necessary to have a booking/reservation system that is accessible through your phone app. You will be expected to schedule far fewer classes with laser-focused disinfecting and sanitizing between each class. Temperature checks will be required prior to entry. This will obviously slow down the entry process, and surely, many members will not be happy with this.

Some clubs will make the decision to close steam rooms, saunas and showers during the first phase or two. Many States have made the decision to close schools until mid-July or as late as September, which suggests that there is a real possibility that children will not be allowed in our clubs and that summer camps will not be allowed.

All of this will affect our member's schedules and attitudes towards dues. But, I believe that most members will be willing to support your guidelines and continue to allow you to draft their dues if you are able to show them that you are committed to operating in the safest way possible to assure their health and well being.

Your club will need to be spotless, and disinfecting and sanitizing will need to be visible and going on 24/7. This means prior to and during all operating hours, every day. Hand sanitizing dispensers will need to be visible and available throughout your club. Attention to detail should be obvious to everyone who enters and throughout their visit.

I would highly recommend that all clubs bring in their staff one week prior to re-opening to do thorough customer service and conflict resolution training. As I previously mentioned, most members will not be happy with all the changes that are



Mike Alpert

going to be necessary, and staff will need training on how to listen and respond in a kind and positive fashion.

I have long been a fan of **Coach John Wooden**, the *legendary UCLA Basketball Coach*. I consider him to be one of my mentors and have learned so much from him. I want to leave you with three of my favorite quotes from him:

"Success is peace of mind, which is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you made the effort to become the best of which you are capable."

"Be more concerned with your character than your reputation, because your character is what you really are, while your reputation is merely what others think you are."

"Talent is God given. Be humble. Fame is man-given. Be grateful. Conceit is self-given. Be careful."

It is disappointing that so many States have allowed crowds at big box stores but put health clubs in the final phase for re-opening, especially when the benefits of exercise are so obvious: Building a healthy immune system, helping with anxiety and depression and preventing so many chronic illnesses. And, we now know that the two leading factors of morbidity and mortality from COVID-19 are obesity and diabetes, both that benefit from exercise.

Exercise is Medicine!

(Mike Alpert is CEO and President of The Claremont Club in Claremont, California, and he can be reached at malpert@claremontclub.com. Check out www.claremontclub.com.)



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...Ruth Stricker

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mindful exercise was soon acknowledged by medical professionals as the beginning of the mind-body movement.

In 1985, Ruth founded *The Marsh, A Center for Balance and Fitness*, in Minnetonka, Minnesota. Blending allopathic and alternative disciplines, The Marsh opened with an acupuncturist and a cardiologist working side by side... a blending unheard of 35 years ago. The Marsh stands alone as a comprehensive center of innovative programming and services, welcoming all. **Dr. Andrew Weil** has described The Marsh as "a center of the future... a combination of spa, hospital and health club."

Always at the leading edge, Ruth sponsored a three-year research project on mindful exercise in collaboration with **James Rippe, M.D.** from the University of Massachusetts Medical School, **Herbert Benson, M.D.** from The Mind/Body Institute at Harvard Medical School, **T. George Harris** from *Psychology Today* and *American Health* magazines, and The Marsh. This project was the largest of its type ever undertaken to explore mind-body interactions associated with exercise. In August of 1992, its findings were announced indicating that combining

exercise with a cognitive strategy is superior to exercise alone in terms of promoting psychological benefits.

Compassionate Humanitarian

Ruth's history of leadership and contribution was diverse and global, spanning health education, the fitness and spa industries, medicine, the arts and culture. She generously lent support to groups, causes and hurting individuals where she felt called to make a difference.

In the former Soviet Union, Ruth and her late husband, **Bruce Dayton**, traveled extensively in Moscow, Kiev and Leningrad with professional exchanges in each city. She was asked by the Ministry of Health to advise and teach on chronic health conditions and assisted in establishing a wellness center in the Crimean Peninsula for patients with chronic conditions. As a result, a number of young physicians from the former Soviet Union came to The Marsh for training, describing The Marsh as getting "happiness lessons."

Ruth and Bruce made more than a dozen trips to the People's Republic of China. They funded a three-year research project at the Beijing Institute of Technology to study Qigong and Tai Chi as it relates to general

health and specifically to recovery for cancer patients. On another trip, Ruth traveled to Shanghai with 18 health professionals to study the healing aspects of Chinese medicine and exercise.

Ruth supported Architects for Peace through Relationships and Knowledge (ARK), an international youth group that aspires and works to achieve global peace. The organization leads peace-building summits around the world with youth members representing 18 countries to foster sustainable bonds between young people whose mission is to build a better world.

Ruth worked with Duke University and Mayo Clinic, helping to advance its work

in integrative medicine. She is among the Founders of the University of Minnesota Earl E. Bakken Center for Spirituality and Healing, the first university in the United States to fully integrate complementary principles and practices into the schools of medicine and public health. She sponsored an annual mind-body lecture series at the University which brought world-renowned leaders in mind-body medicine to the University of Minnesota and was historic in bringing "soul and science" together.

In 2018, she was honored with the Board of Trustees Award for Meritorious and Distinguished Service at her alma mater, (See **Ruth Stricker** Page 22)

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...The Re-Opening

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what safety measures need to be in place for various types of business. Finally, the vast majority of States opening still have increasing case counts, while the Federal plan's gating procedures stipulated 14 days of decreasing case counts as one of the criteria. What does this mean for re-opened States two, four, eight weeks, months down the road?

All of that being said, **Part II** of *Club Insider's* two-part cover story on the **COVID-19 pandemic**, the *Coronavirus Crisis* focuses on the re-opening of health and fitness clubs around the country. Many whom you heard from last month and some additional great club owners and managers will share what they are expecting and doing to re-open. As you will see, several key themes and actions will be clear, but because of the varying States in which they operate, you will also see various differences.

I invite you to read on. But, first, from *Club Insider's* **Justin Cates** and **Norm Cates**, we wish you, your family, your staff and your members the best as we all live and work through this time. And, thank you so much for continuing to read and support *Club Insider*. As **Derek Barton** wrote last month, "We Got This!"

Chelsea Piers Connecticut

Greta Wagner, Executive Director/EVP

Club Insider - When the time does come to re-open, what are some of the key issues you foresee?

Greta Wagner - We suspect that there will be new guidelines associated with social distancing. We imagine that there will be different capacity and space guidelines. Clearly, we will also be offering members and customers extra self-cleaning tools within the club, as well as doubling down on our own cleaning staff and procedures as we did prior to closing. This is a community problem, and therefore, to fight this and continue a positive trajectory to full recovery, we all need to be vigilant about cleanliness.

Cincinnati Sports Club

Mary Frank, Sales and Marketing Manager

Club Insider - When the time does come to re-open, what are some of the key issues you foresee?

Mary Frank - Our key issues will be keeping the members and the staff safe! The club's re-opening strategy will include many of the 3Ds (increasing Distance, reducing Density and constant Disinfectant) practices that were happening prior to the Ohio Governor mandated closure. Our focus will be on those 3Ds. Some of the items being discussed for what the new normal may be includes:

- Our new outdoor pool adult-only deck will go from 200 chairs to 120 chairs.
- Our main pool outdoor deck will go from 300 chairs to 200 chairs.
- Temporarily suspending all social events for the rest of the year or until virus solution is found.
- Evaluate fitness/group exercise and monitor

member spacing.

- Temperature scans on all entering the facility.
- Move some cardio equipment outside, as well as any available group exercise class.
- Times to use the club for over 65 and under 12.
- Age 65+ employees wearing masks at work.
- Modifying the club check-in system, looking at two check-in stations based on the size of facility.
- Self-scan member check-in.
- Members reserve time for pool and club usage.
- Extend hours to earlier in the morning.
- Private changing room attendant to wipe down after each use.
- Lockers/showers may be off limits for short-term, unless we can get attendants.
- Steam/sauna/whirlpool may all be temporary closed (too small) or limit the number of people.
- 14-day quarantine rule from coming to club if member or someone in household has traveled to a COVID-19 hotspot.
- UV sanitizer for pens, other small business office items, etc.

The Claremont Club

Mike Alpert, President/CEO

Club Insider (C.I.) - How will you create social distancing: For Fitness Equipment, in Group Exercise Studios, Locker Rooms, etc.?

Mike Alpert (MA) - We will have signs posted reminding members to exercise proper social distancing. Group exercise classes will only go for 30 - 45 minutes, and we will have a 30-minute break between classes to allow for disinfecting and sanitizing. This will also eliminate large groups from forming outside the studios and rushing in after the previous class is finishing. We expect to have fewer classes due to this, so we will continue to add to our virtual library and live streaming videos. We will limit the number of members in the weight room to 35 - 40. The locker rooms present the largest challenge because most of our lockers are personal ones for which we charge members monthly. The dilemma will be how to prevent more than one member at a time from using their locker when there might very well be several people whose lockers are in the same row.

C.I. - What's not opening?

MA - We plan to open our club in three phases. During Phase 1 and probably Phase 2, Steam and Saunas will not be open. Showers will not be available in Phase 1. We have cancelled summer swim school, and we are not sure if we will be allowed to offer summer camps this year. We are not sure what the State mandates

will be, but we will conform to whatever they are.

C.I. - Status of plans for Personal Training, Small Group Training, others?

MA - We intend to offer Personal Training and Small Group Training at opening but with strict adherence to social distancing. We will limit the number of members, including personal trainers in our weight room and studios, and they will be required to wear masks and gloves. All members, including those who are personal training will be required to wipe down and clean the equipment they use (i.e., benches, seats, etc.). Pilates studios will also be limited to the number of members and the number of instructors allowed in each studio at one time.

C.I. - How will you get members back ASAP?

MA - Although I believe that certain members will want to "rush" back as soon as we open, there will be many who will be cautious and nervous, especially in Phase 1. They will want to "wait" and see. So, we will budget for a slow to moderate return and need to be prepared for more if that happens.

C.I. - How will you get Leaves of Absence to reactivate?

MA - We allow members to take a Leave of Absence (LOA) for either medical reasons with proper documentation. To date, we have approved 102 LOAs. We will continue to honor these leaves and encourage those members not to return to the club until they are cleared to do so by their doctor and are comfortable doing so.

C.I. - How will you get all comfortable with cleaning levels, temperature checks, masks?

MA - We plan to take one week prior to opening for staff training in conflict resolution and new operating protocols by department. All staff will be thoroughly trained on our new disinfecting and sanitizing procedures. I have communicated regularly and with full transparency with our members and outlining the changes that will be necessary, such as shorter classes, fewer classes, areas that will be closed, shorter club hours, changes in childcare areas, temperature checks, social distancing, etc. Most of our members are extremely supportive and appreciative of the measures we are taking to ensure our club is as safe an environment as possible during these most unprecedented times.

C.I. - How about prices going forward? How

will you give credits if billed for full month but were open for partial-month?

MA - For the members who agreed to allow us to draft their dues in April, we will be paying them back for the two weeks in March and four weeks in April that we were closed via a 30% discount off their current dues going forward. We are also giving these members a 25% discount on all products and services for 30 days after we re-open and two family guest passes. For those who chose to freeze their dues, we will be drafting dues once we open. We are raising our dues for new members and those who cancelled and choose to come back.

C.I. - How will you now combine at-home virtual content with in-club?

MA - We currently have 239 videos in our virtual library and are adding to them daily and weekly. In addition, we have 85 Les Mills videos that we intend to continue to offer. We are also offering live streaming group exercise videos. All of these will be offered to members as a complimentary add-on. We will soon be offering live streaming personal training and Pilates that will be fee-based (at our regular rates) to our members who choose to either not come in to the club or who simply want to wait to come back in due to a medical reason. We do intend to offer these to non-members as an additional revenue source for the club.

C.I. - How will you deal with the check-in process (plastic shields, mobile app with no human interaction, reservation of time slots, etc.)?

MA - We are going to require a temperature check for all members and staff before we admit them into the club. We will have two staff doing these checks from different lines. Using our single platform mobile app, members can have their bar code scanned at entry. There will be Plexiglas shields in various locations at the front desk. And, members will use the app to reserve/book classes, weight room, cardio equipment and services.

C.I. - How will you deal with a member or staff member testing positive in the future?

MA - All staff must initial a COVID-19 Questionnaire prior to their scheduled shift. If they answer Yes to any of the questions, they will need to get a doctor's release to come to work. We will follow all State and Federal guidelines when handling members or staff who test positive for the virus.

Club Greenwood

Paula Neubert, President/General Manager

Club Insider (C.I.) - How will you create social distancing: For Fitness Equipment, in Group Exercise Studios, Locker Rooms, etc.?

Paula Neubert (PN) - So much depends on what our local and State officials deem mandatory, but at this time, we are doing the following:

- Group Fitness Studios will be limited to ten members. If allowed more than ten members, we will base on the total square footage of the studio with 10' on each side/front/back around the member. Blocks of space will be noted with floor markings.

(See *The Re-Opening* Page 10)



Greta Wagner



Mike Alpert



Problem Solved

1. Not selling enough PT.....

VFP increases personal training revenue.

2. Need to increase the average member spend....

VFP tablet tour optimizes your sales presentations.

3. Inconsistent sales preso

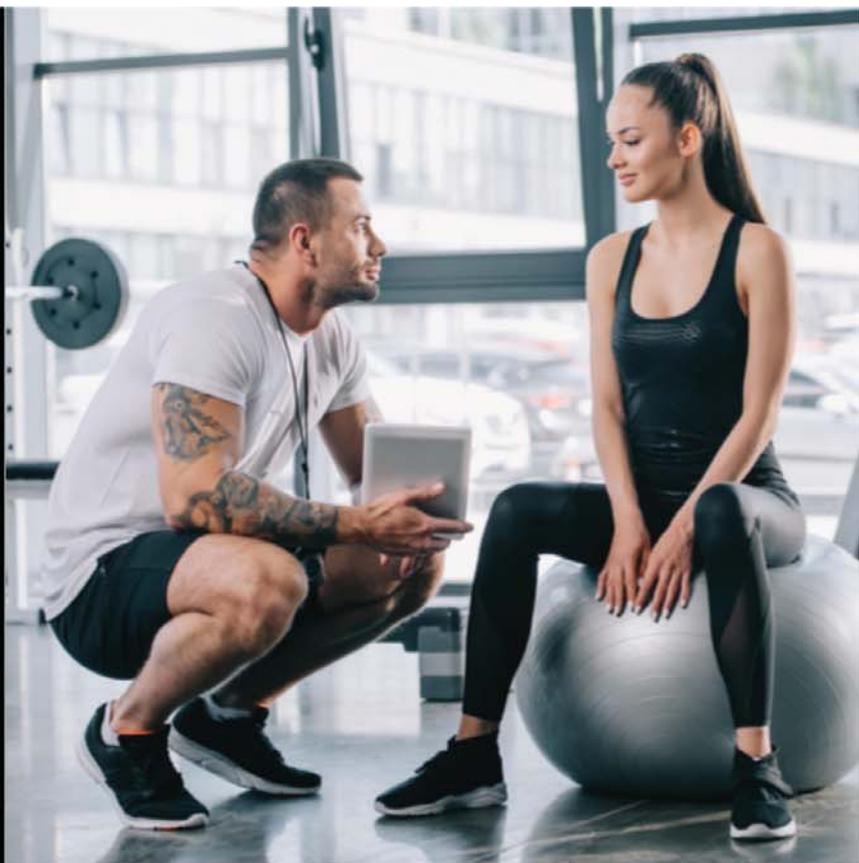
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...The Re-Opening

continued from page 8

■ Weight room equipment will be spaced out, and duplicate equipment will be removed. Capacity is determined by the square footage of the space allowing 6' around each member. There will be an entrance and exit to the weight room via stanchions with a staff member monitoring the number of members.

■ Locker rooms will be open with social distancing parameters. Available lockers will be marked with a Club Greenwood sticker (all spaced 6' apart).

C.I. - What's not opening?

PN - Unless mandated by the authorities, we will be opening all areas of the club except the dry sauna and steam room. This is based on the confined space and size.

C.I. - Status of plans for Personal Training, Small Group Training, others?

PN - We are currently offering online personal training, Pilates and boot camp for a fee. We will continue offering these services, both online and on-site, after we open. Pending approval from the authorities, we hope to offer on-site personal training, Pilates and SGT.

C.I. - How will you get members back ASAP?

PN - Thankfully we still have a portion of our membership that is contributing 100% and 50% dues each month we have been closed. We are very grateful! We have a portion of our membership that is on hold for the month of May and will move to full dues the first full month we are open. We have a portion who have canceled and we have been actively trying to get them back which has been difficult. Loss of job and worry are the two main reasons for leaving

C.I. - How will you get all comfortable with cleaning levels, temperature checks, masks?

PN - This also depends on the mandates put forth by the authorities, but at this point, we are requiring all employees to have temperature checks prior to their shift and wearing masks and gloves will be required for all housekeeping staff and any employee who is cleaning. We are not requiring temperature checks for members. Masks for members will be highly recommended but not required.

C.I. - How about prices going forward? How will you give credits if billed for full month but were open for partial-month?

PN - We will not be prorating. Members who have placed their membership on hold will still have the benefit of using the club during the month in which they did not pay, if the club opens.

C.I. - How will you now combine at-home virtual content with in-club?

PN - We will continue with both after the club opens. Group fitness will be available on-site and via online live streaming. Personal training and Pilates will be available on-site and online private training. Programs may also be offered on-site and online. This is due to capacity if we are limited to a certain number of people in the club and also to continue serving members who are not ready to return to the club.

C.I. - How will you deal with the check-in process (plastic shields, mobile app with no human interaction, reservation of time slots, etc.)?

PN - All desks are equipped with sneeze guards. The check-in scanner is located on the outside of the sneeze guard. We will be cashless in Phase One and Two, and the credit card scanner will be located on the outside of the sneeze guard. All group fitness classes, lessons, etc. will be via reservation only.

Crunch Fitness West Florida/Atlanta
Geoff Dyer, President

Club Insider (C.I.) - You re-opened on Friday, May 1. What didn't open at that time?

Geoff Dyer (GD) - Group Exercise, HIIT, Sauna and Cycle all remain closed.

C.I. - Status of plans for Personal Training, Small Group Training, others?

GD - We are waiting on government approval for group activities. Personal training is up and running when we opened Friday.

C.I. - How will you get members back ASAP?

GD - Many are back after text and email alerts. Traffic over the three-day weekend was solid. Not up to pre-COVID-19 levels but solid. New joiners were higher per day than typical.

C.I. - How will you get all comfortable with cleaning levels, temperature checks, masks?

GD - We are comfortable after five days of in-club training and rehearsals. Members perceive they are safe, and the clubs are clean.

C.I. - How about prices going forward? How will you give credits if billed for full month but were open for partial-month?

GD - We billed in March and froze dues in April. For the time we were closed, members will get a cash credit on the next dues draft, or they can take 'in kind credit' (Retail/PT, etc.) and get 150% of their cash credit.

C.I. - How will you now combine at-home virtual content with in-club?

GD - We will continue to offer it to all members until things normalize.

C.I. - How will you deal with the check-in process (plastic shields, mobile app with no human interaction, reservation of time slots, etc.)?

GD - Crunch has an online reservation system for class activities. We have scanners, so members have hands-free check-in.

C.I. - How will you deal with a member or staff member testing positive in the future?

GD - We will send them home and follow State quarantine guidelines.

DMB Sports
Carol Nalevanko, President

Club Insider - When the time does come to re-open, what are some of the key issues you foresee?

Carol Nalevanko - We will not re-open from the same position of strength with regards to memberships, monthly revenues, etc. as we did before the closures. Some of our staff may have found alternate employment, so we will need to hire new employees for some positions. Members may be afraid to come back to the clubs, even after we have been given permission to re-open, due to the nature of our business with the close proximity of hot yoga classes, spin classes and other club activities.

Newtown Athletic Club
Jim Worthington, Owner
Linda Mitchell, Director of Public and Government Relations

Club Insider - When the time does come to re-open, what are some of the key issues you foresee?

Newtown Athletic Club - The key issues we are stressing now are twofold: **(1)** Communicating with our members to maintain the *trust* they already have in us, and **(2)** to display best practices, especially in the areas of facility sanitation, ongoing cleanliness and commitment to continually improving. Although we are struggling through extraordinary times, we are still committed to

our expansions and renovations. Upon re-opening, we realize that there will be a new normal, which may consist of taking body temperatures as members enter the club, spacing equipment further apart, placing markers on group exercise floors to denote where people stand, scheduling classes and programs to manage member traffic and more. Communication will be key during the first few weeks/months of opening to make everyone feel safe in our new environment. That is why we are continuing to build trust now through hyper-connectivity using all means possible: emails, social media, phone calls and more.

Saco Sport & Fitness
Scott and Beth Gillespie, Owners

Club Insider - When the time does come to re-open, what are some of the key issues you foresee?

Scott Gillespie - Sanitation! Cleanliness! Sanitation! Did I mention Sanitation? Equipment and class spacing allowing social distancing. With reduced class capacity,
(See The Re-Opening Page 14)



Scott and Beth Gillespie



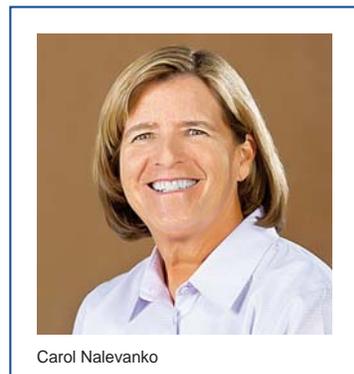
Linda Mitchell



Paula Neubert



Geoff Dyer



Carol Nalevanko



Jim Worthington

"My clubs are closed, but I'm still making money every single day! Here's How I'm Doing It..."

When you offer essential health as your business, your business is essential!



Karrah Foster-Freda

When the pandemic hit, our immediate thought was, "how are we going to pay our employees?" We were telling ourselves, "We can do this for two weeks. But when two weeks turned to a month, we started to worry. Our clubs are still closed, and we don't have any idea when we'll reopen.

We are so grateful for our Wellness income because the club business feels very out of our control right now. And when everything feels out of control, it's nice to know that you have control over something. Having other income streams while the doors are closed is another way to serve our members.

We've deposited close to \$25,000 this month, while we're closed and not collecting ANY dues, which gives us security.

How to serve your members when you can't get in your building. We have the solution!

Right now, people are looking for something to hang on to, something to be excited about. We've had an overwhelming response to the Wellness programs, products and services we're offering. People are searching; they're looking for something to look forward to, something to work on, some way to move forward. People want solutions right now. They are weary. We are providing those solutions to our members.

How to keep members from cancelling...

The fear you're feeling; the uncertainty you're feeling; your members are feeling that too. We reach out, we provide a support system to make them feel heard; to let them know that we're still there for them. We've learned this from the Wealth of Wellness company. While we are doing it ourselves in our club, they are now offering it to you as a "done for you service" for free.

How to serve your members who are scared to come back

We tried to think, once we re-open the doors, the members will come back. We assume they can't wait to come back. And there will be some. But, there are some members that are too afraid to come back, afraid to risk it. Wellness is a way to serve them virtually, keeping them engaged so the connection is maintained, even if they're not ready to walk back through the door. Our members love our club because they feel connected. This Wellness system provides that connection.

How will you recoup the money you've lost during this time?

Using this Wellness system, when you reopen, you'll have multiple, new income streams already bringing in money. And they're sustainable income streams that won't go away. It's offering wellness and not just fitness.

How to survive and thrive if this happens again?

Start taking the steps now to become an essential business. You have to offer solutions that are more than just fitness. You must find alternative ways to serve your members that aren't just related to fitness. When your club has reopened, you'll have multiple new income streams, and have new ways of reaching out and serving your members because you've become "wellness" and not just fitness. And should it be mandated for you to close again, you'll still be making money.

How to become an "essential" business NOW!

You have to see yourself differently. You have to realize that being a one dimensional business is not wisdom. You have to plan for your obsolescence. If you're not growing and changing, you're dying.

The company I work with will do the work FOR YOU and it won't cost you a dime!

Learn how to get this game-changing solution implemented in your club right now. See the details below:

Hurry! This Offer is Limited to the First 20 Clubs Who Apply...

Turn Your Club into an ESSENTIAL BUSINESS with MULTIPLE STREAMS OF INCOME Now!

We get it. You're in the midst of reopening, and are not in a place mentally where you can handle doing one more thing, so we'll do it for you. Apply to the Fit Biz Stimulus now. There is **NO INVESTMENT REQUIRED**, and **No Strings Attached**



Apply For The 'Done For You' Fit Biz Stimulus Program Now.

CALL (903) 277-2709 or visit FitBizStimulus.com

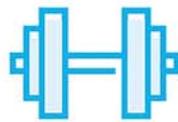
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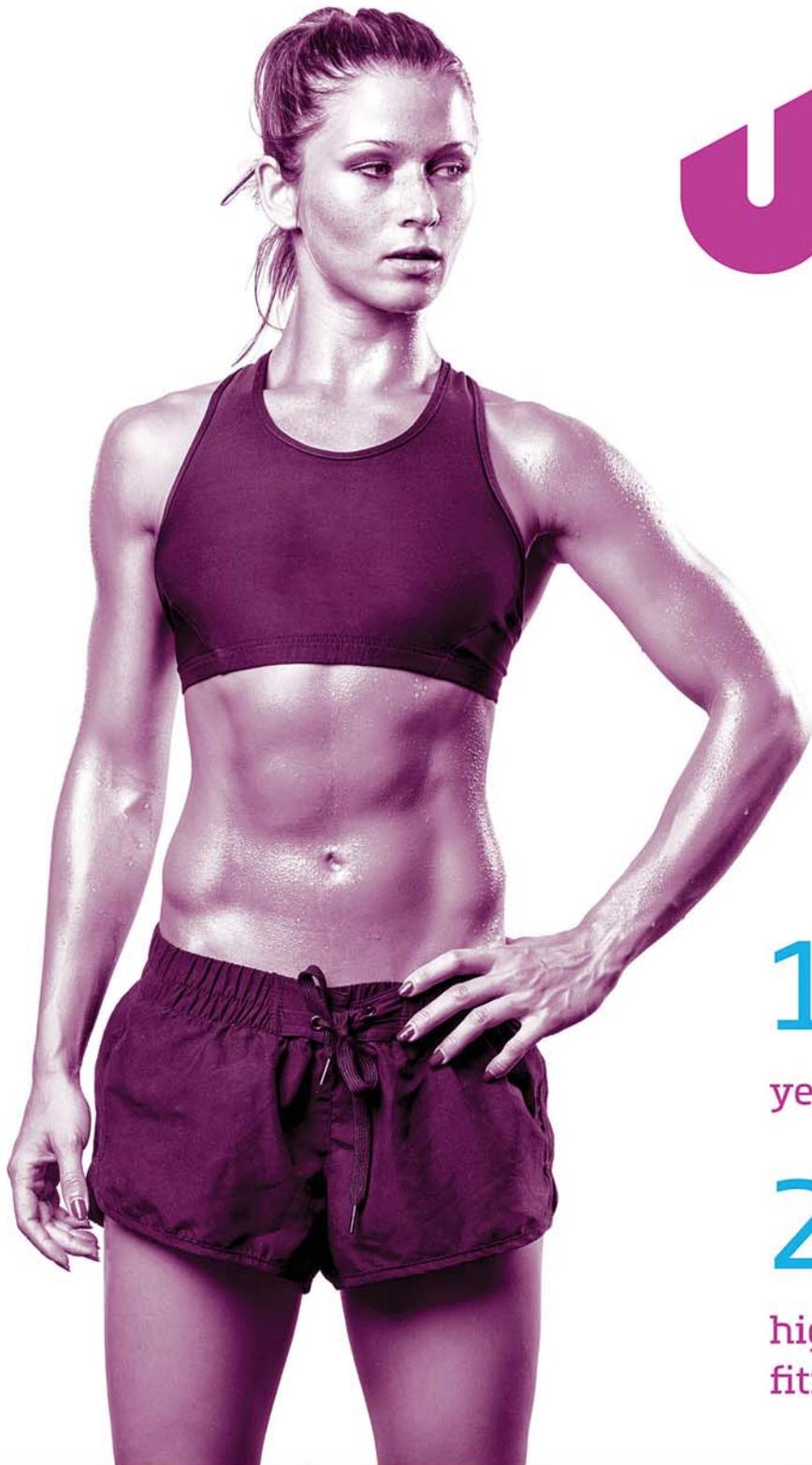
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...The Re-Opening

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incorporate sign-up systems. With fewer members and less capacity, we'll also look at our fees for increases or modifying to tiers. Removing, replacing all surfaces/equipment that are difficult to keep clean. Staff safety and member compliance related to sanitizing and social distancing. Removal of programs/profit centers that no longer fit. Unfortunately, leaning out our hierarchy and looking to tech to replace some staff functions. Using virtual fitness offerings to supplement membership value. It's a curse to be sure, but the blessing is a chance to reset. We get to ask ourselves, 'If I was going to open a club this summer knowing what I know now about the state of the world, the economy and with the resources I have, what would that club look like?'

Stone Creek Club & Spa

Larry Conner, General Manager

Club Insider - When the time does come to re-open, what are some of the key issues you foresee?

Larry Conner - One of our biggest concerns is the percentage of members who will return immediately upon re-opening. We're also concerned with the level of usage and the club's departmental services, making the correct adjustments to departmental hours, offerings and staffing. Opening at the start of summer also poses a challenge to us for hiring and training of summer staff, especially lifeguards. In addition, we know we will have to address members'/potential members' concerns or fears about cleanliness and sanitation. Cleanliness and member safety have always been top priorities at Stone Creek, and our members have recognized, appreciated and praised the facility's cleanliness year after year. We realize that the member and public expectation will be different moving forward, and we'll continue to do all we can to provide a safe, inviting and comfortable club facility and atmosphere.

VASA Fitness

Rich Nelsen, CEO

Club Insider (C.I.) - How will you create social distancing: For Fitness Equipment, in Group Exercise Studios, Locker Rooms, etc.?

Rich Nelsen (RN) - We recognize that our members' gym experience is going to be very different for the foreseeable future, and we want to thank them in advance for their flexibility and patience as we navigate these uncharted waters together. We have implemented specific safety measures for members and team members to follow in order to keep our community safe.

All members are being asked to read and agree to a *Member Agreement Waiver* that outlines guidelines for members requesting that they social distance, follow cleanliness protocols, stay home if they have symptoms or have been exposed to COVID-19, and we suggest wearing a face covering while in the club in order to help keep the VASA community safe. If members don't sign the Member Agreement Waiver, they are not allowed inside the club.

The clubs will observe limited hours of operation Monday through Saturday from 6 AM to 8 PM and Sunday from 7 AM to 2 PM. VASA will also limit the number of members in the club at one time based on the square footage of the club. Through our app for iOS and Android, members can book one-hour time slots at the gym to ensure they are able to work out when desired.

VASA has mandated face masks for all staff and will maintain strong social distancing with other staff and members, and break rooms and common areas will be limited. Our team members have been instructed to notify their supervisors immediately and stay home if they have symptoms or believe they have been exposed to the virus. VASA team members will also continue the vigorous cleaning and disinfecting protocols in place. After clubs close each night, a professional cleaning company will also do a deep clean in every club.

In terms of social distancing, VASA has implemented procedures to help ensure the guidelines are respected, including visual reminders, area closures and staff to monitor and enforce these rules. As one example, every other machine is turned off in our cardio area to help maintain distancing.

C.I. - What's not opening?

RN - VASA has reduced its monthly membership fee for all members to \$9.99 and will not be offering group fitness, studio or team classes, basketball, racquetball and group training sessions. VASA will also not permit showers or changing and will only allow restroom use. Further, the pool, sauna, steam room and hot tub will be closed and child-care services will not be available. In order to reinforce the social distancing guidelines, every other cardio machine will be turned off, and a floor attendant will monitor all exercise areas and help to discourage close proximity workouts.

C.I. - Status of plans for Personal Training, Small Group Training, others?

RN - Group fitness classes are not being offered at this time. We will unfreeze all Personal Training contracts and resume billing on the day each club re-opens (same as membership dues). We will extend the expiration date for unused sessions for three months.

C.I. - How will you get members back ASAP?

RN - We are doing everything we can to make members feel safe and comfortable as

they return to the gym. During our closure, we conducted a member survey to find out what would be most important for members to ease their transition back into the gym. In the survey, 52% of our members indicated that staying healthy would be more important than ever following the pandemic; and 41% of respondents said they would be back in the gym the first day we opened with 35% saying they would visit the gym within the first month of re-opening. We were very pleased to hear that 70% of our members indicated that they would continue their VASA membership for at least the next year.

C.I. - How will you get all comfortable with cleaning levels, temperature checks, masks?

RN - We've put a process into place that has been influenced by our member survey feedback, staff feedback and Federal, State and local guidelines to keep our communities safe. These new protocols are meant to ensure that members and employees feel and remain safe while at the gym. As previously stated, all VASA staff members will wear masks, and we recommend that members wear masks as well. Staff are doing frequent cleaning and disinfecting, and each club is cleaned by a professional cleaning company each night. We also monitor to ensure that members are cleaning equipment before and after use, amongst many other measures.

Through our survey, we learned that 98% of members expressed the importance of thorough cleaning practices in the gym; 81% said they thought social distancing would be important and that they were likely to increase their usage of wipes and hand sanitizer in the clubs. We have implemented policies that address their concerns and are very serious about enforcing our new social distancing and disinfecting procedures.

C.I. - How about prices going forward?

How will you give credits if billed for full month but were open for partial-month?

RN - VASA froze memberships on March 17, the day of its closure. Billing will resume and accounts will be unfrozen once the clubs re-open. Because amenities are limited to keep people safe, all members' monthly dues have been reduced to \$9.99.

C.I. - How will you now combine at-home virtual content with in-club?

RN - We will be creating more V Fit workouts to add to the page for anyone to use, whether they've decided to come back or are continuing to work out at home.

C.I. - How will you deal with the check-in process (plastic shields, mobile app with no human interaction, reservation of time slots, etc.)?

RN - To avoid a line at check-in and to enable touchless entry, we have asked members to sign our member agreement online or via our app prior to checking in and to have our mobile app for iOS and Android to simply scan their barcode for a touchless check-in.

C.I. - How will you deal with a member or staff member testing positive in the future?

RN - Our team members have been instructed to sign their supervisors immediately and stay home if they have symptoms or believe to have been exposed to the virus. If a member or team member contracts COVID-19, we will look into the last time they checked into the club and will notify members via e-mail who have checked in that day.

Active Wellness

Bill McBride, Co-Founder, President and CEO

Club Insider (C.I.) - When the time does come to re-open, what are some of the key issues you foresee?

Bill McBride (BM) - One of the big items we are focusing on is staff training and member training, not just on courtesy behaviors by members and cleaning by staff but the psychological aspects of member fear of other humans. Conflict resolution; member courtesy, etc. This is first time in our lives where humans have been afraid of contact with other humans in society. Everyone is a perceived threat. Members will be on a spectrum, from righteous about how others should behave to carefree about risks. It will be a unique time.

C.I. - What's not opening?

BM - Child Care, Pools, Sauna, Steam or Towel Service in the beginning. We plan to move forward with studio classes by reservation only with markers on the floor. Personal Training and SGT as normal. Staff wearing masks and gloves. Members wearing masks where mandated.

C.I. - How will you get members back ASAP?

BM - We will welcome members back, but we expect some to come back slowly based on treatments and vaccination news as well as comfort level with club protocols.

C.I. - How will you get Leaves of Absence to reactivate?

(See *The Re-Opening* Page 15)



Larry Conner



Rich Nelsen



Bill McBride

...The Re-Opening

continued from page 14

BM - We will reactivate all members unless they request to stay on zero dues holds.

C.I. - How will you get all comfortable with cleaning levels, temperature checks, masks?
BM - We have instituted a thorough protocol of temperature checks, cleanliness, sanitation and disinfecting. Each staff member will have a cleaning bottle as well as sanitation stations near all member touch points. There will be temperature check stations, plastic shields, masks and gloves, self check-in; and reservations for workouts in some sites and classes in all sites.

C.I. - How about prices going forward? How will you give credits if billed for full month but were open for partial-month?

BM - We will continue to offer virtual programming for free for some period of time before considering charging. At this time, our dues will remain the same as before COVID-19.

C.I. - Will you now combine at-home virtual content with in-club?

BM - Yes, we have an extensive at-home programming product line now: Personal Training, Workouts of the Day, Live-streamed classes, Fitness Resources, Challenges, etc.

C.I. - How will you deal with a member or staff member testing positive in the future?

BM - For member or staff testing positive, we will follow CDC-recommended protocols.

C.I. - What's the status of government funds?

BM - Stimulus is still up in the air for many operators based on size, affiliations, need, etc.

■ ■ ■

To close out this cover story, I want to bring special attention to the efforts **The Atlantic Club** is making to literally redesign their club **and** their methods of operation during these times. *Club Insider* presents:

The "New" Atlantic Club

Pat Laus, Owner & CEO

Kevin McHugh, COO

Club Insider (C.I.) - How will you create social distancing: For Fitness Equipment, in Group Exercise Studios, Locker Rooms, etc.?
The Atlantic Club (TAC) - The Atlantic Club - Manasquan is very fortunate to be located on a beautiful and spacious 44-acre campus where we have facilities that have allowed us to create a true Health, Fitness and Wellness Campus through our ability to repurpose areas across our entire complex. We also benefit from our ability to have access to outside areas for our trainers and members to train and exercise on our well-groomed grass fields. These 22 acres of grass fields also includes a one-mile nature trail for walking and running. It is very important to have available space within our club that is socially, or as they say, 'Physically Distanced.' With the use and access to our outside venues, we have been able to successfully create new

opportunities for workout regimens.

For Fitness Equipment: The New Atlantic Club, post COVID-19 closure, will now be featuring three large studios that includes the following:

- One of the largest free weight studios in the industry with very responsible physically distanced equipment locations that will now be relocated from our main building to our fieldhouse where we will also feature our Technogym performance line of cardio equipment.

- Located in our main club's fitness area with the moving of our entire free weight room to our fieldhouse, The Atlantic Club will now be introducing a physically responsible and significantly enlarged cardio studio featuring a special area for virtual classes with Life Fitness treadmills as well as our Stages Virtual bikes and our Espresso bikes. Our new cardio studio with physical distancing floor plan will be providing our members more equipment than our members enjoyed prior to COVID-19.

- Added to the fitness room is a dedicated space for our Technogym selectorized circuit. This is adjacent to the cardio studio that still provides our members with both a cardio and strength workout in the main building. It also is an area where we can use the selectorized circuit for our mature adults as well as the projected new deconditioned population of new members that we will attracting in the future.

- The Atlantic Club was very fortunate to receive outstanding support from our Life Fitness team, who worked with our passionate fitness leadership and operations team in developing new equipment planograms. These drawings will be utilized by our equipment moving specialists to complete the project before our re-opening of the club.

Group Cycling:

- Our group cycling program has been relocated due to physical distancing from a smaller studio to a larger area that was achieved by repurposing one of our basketball courts. The new group cycling center is responsibly distanced for 26 bikes versus our prior studio which would have only accommodated 13 bikes.

- Our prior group cycling studio is being refreshed to become our virtual training studio that will have scheduled classes throughout the day with classes that are 30/45/60 minutes.

- Our virtual group cycling studio will feature a new sound system along with new video screens that will play the virtual cycling classes, as well as highlight their MYZONE effort levels.

- Our members will also be introduced to brand new Stages group exercise bikes that will be installed prior to our re-opening.

Group Exercise Studios:

- The Atlantic Club also made numerous enhancements during the closure to our group exercise areas. These changes will provide our members with the opportunity to enjoy new benefits and programs in spacious settings that were not available prior to our mandated shutdown.

- Our two main studios have been refreshed with new sound systems that will improve the experience provided by our instructors.

- Both studios are now equipped with new video screens and virtual programs throughout the day with a pre-programmed array of classes.

- Reservations will be required to attend our live and virtual classes and will be easy to schedule on our app.

- We added two new large studios on the campus for additional classes to be scheduled throughout the week.

- We are scheduling one special large member event each week in our expansive studio so members have the opportunity to physically distance while in a social environment.

- Outside classes are also being placed on the schedule with the option of an inside class, weather dependent. The offering of outside classes is an excellent opportunity to get our members refreshed.

Child Care/Nursery:

- We converted our conference center into our new nursery, which has doubled the size of our prior nursery.

- Reservations will be required for all children who will be placed into childcare with a two-hour limit.

- Sanitization and cleaning schedules have been increased throughout the day with an aggressive spraying regimen, which will be done throughout the day.

- All children will be checked for their temperature being below 100.4 degrees.

Café:

- Limited offerings will be initially limited to

protein and juice drinks and take out items, such as water, protein bars and take-out meals.
 ■ No grill service initially.

Locker Rooms:

- Limited lockers: We are closing off 2/3 of the lockers.

- Showers but no towel service; members must bring their own towels.

- Physical distancing will be highlighted with signage in all areas that highlight space required for safe use of the locker rooms.

Indoor and Outdoor Pools:

- Initially, we are planning to have our six lanes be scheduled with two swimmers per lane doing circle swimming. Within weeks of re-opening the club, we will add an additional six lanes for lap swimming.

- Swimmers will be limited to 30 minutes and must be pre-registered with lanes being assigned different times throughout the hour: 0/10/20/30/40/50 minutes after the hour

Sauna/Steam Room and Jacuzzi: Will not be opened in the initial phases.

C.I. - Status of plans for Personal Training, Small Group Training, others?

TAC - We are working on developing personal training centers on campus to provide options for members and staff to train, as well as outside options:

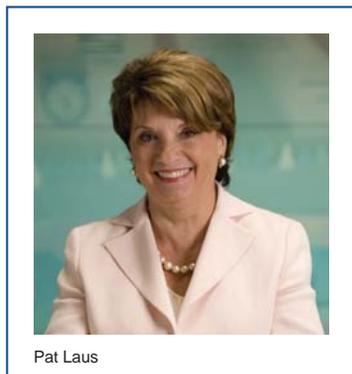
- The three new fitness studios provide additional space for trainers to be able to have safe areas to train their clients.

- Building strategies for regaining our growth in personal training is a priority.

- Adding virtual personal training platforms that will be launched in the next 30 days.

C.I. - How will you get members back ASAP?

TAC - The Atlantic Club has been communicating to our members throughout the mandatory shutdown. Prior to re-opening, we will inform them of Sanitization and Cleaning Plan that encompasses strategies and commitments that will be ensuring our staff and members will feel safe and comfortable within all areas of the campus. We will inform members of our new sanitizing and cleaning products, and the equipment that we will be using, which are hospital grade as well as safe to use throughout all of our facilities. In addition, will be posting the MSDS Sheets throughout our facilities, providing full transparency to our members and staff. Our members will also be informed of our schedule of cleaning in each key area of the club. Prior to opening, members will also be informed of our new Social/Physical Distancing Plans. This effort will introduce all our members to the new group cycling studios, our re-configured group exercise studios, as well as our three new fitness studios. Our website will also host videos on our physical distancing and sanitization and cleaning efforts, as well as our policies. Lastly, we will clearly show our members that The Atlantic Club is safe for them to visit and enjoy an outstanding workout in a controlled, sanitized environment
 (See *The Re-Opening* Page 17)



Pat Laus



Kevin McHugh

Doing All You Can Do to Safely Re-Open a Club Amid COVID-19

By: Bruce Carter

Never before have most clubs in the entire country been forced to close out of safety for its members and staff. It's an unprecedented situation that is almost hard to believe.

Yet, as with most things, time heals and so clubs are starting to re-open. Questions abound on what a club can do to make things safer, and yet, still take steps to get operating again as a profitable enterprise. Since this is a new situation, there are not "tried and true" methods on what to do, but what follows are a number of things that are a consensus of what most clubs will do regarding their physical facilities.

It should be noted that COVID-19 is a "new" virus, yet pandemic viruses have come and gone, some with far more devastating effects than others. The infamous "black plaque" in the 1300s left 350 million dead. The Spanish Flu in 1918 - 1921 affected a third of the world's population with between 50 - 100 million deaths.

Even the great Babe Ruth was not exempt. In 1918, he was a 23-year-old pitcher in spring training, and because the Red Sox had lost so many players to signing up for WWI, they called up Babe Ruth. As players started getting sick from the Spanish Flu (there are pictures of baseball players wearing masks while at bat in games), so Babe Ruth was asked to pitch and hit... and the rest is history, except for one thing. Babe Ruth also got the Spanish Flu and was close to death, but he recovered.

One thing history shows is that, after such pandemics, things eventually get back to normal. The question is "when." But, it can be assumed that, post COVID-19, clubs will eventually get back to the way they were but with more consistent and extensive cleaning and sanitation practices.

The Federal government has designated three phases for things to get back to "normal." The reason we are addressing this is because the question arises: *Should all future design and renovations be adjusted to meet current distancing guidelines?* Should everything be designed to be 6' apart? This would include treadmills, group exercise class participation (including spin), check-in points, toilets, urinals, lockers, sinks, showers, free weight benches, dumbbell accessibility (should the 20-pound dumbbells be 6' away from the 25-pound dumbbells?), etc. If this were to be the case, then the business model of just about every health club would change dramatically. Clubs would be at least twice the size (with associated build-out costs), with much higher expenses such as rents (or debt), utilities, cleaning and maintenance. Other options would be to

just have spacing requirements marked on floors, so someone wanting to get to the 25-pound dumbbells next to someone already getting 20-pound dumbbells would wait 6' from the rack until the other person cleared away. Other possibilities include providing less equipment and serving fewer members. Obviously, these options are complicated and far from being practical. Therefore, for now, it would not be feasible for health clubs to do any future planning with such social distancing variables.

For a reference point, here is a summary of the Federal Government's three phases to "getting back to normal."

Phase One - Vulnerable groups will still be asked to shelter in place, and non-vulnerable people will be expected to avoid groups of 10 or more people unless they can do social distancing. Sit-down restaurants, movie theaters, sports stadiums and churches will be allowed to re-open but only if there is social distancing inside. Gyms will also be allowed to re-open, but in addition to having social distancing, they will have to follow strict sanitation guidelines. When the number of new COVID-19 cases again trends down 14 straight days, and there is no evidence of a rebound in cases, a State will be able to enter Phase Two of re-opening.

Phase Two - Again, vulnerable groups will shelter in place. Meanwhile, others will be asked to avoid groups of 50 or more unless social distancing can be observed. Places like movie theaters and gyms that re-opened in Phase One will be able to operate with only moderate social distancing. When the number of new COVID-19 cases trends down 14 straight days again, and there is again no evidence of a rebound in cases, a State will be able to enter Phase Three of re-opening.

Phase Three - Vulnerable groups should finally be able to go out in public, but they will still be asked to use caution and minimize gatherings where social distancing is not practical. People will also once again be able to stand around in groups at bars. Places like churches and gyms that re-opened in phase one will be able to operate without worrying much about social distancing.

So, clubs will re-open, go through strong social distancing guidelines, then to a lesser degree, get back to normal. That is the hope and I think the best way to plan. Here are some general things clubs can do to make their environments safer. Some of these require more time, dollars and space to implement:

1. The first thing is obvious and that is the concept of "social distancing." This is

clearly a strong action needed when re-opening. The separation of equipment will happen in a variety of ways. Many clubs do not have the luxury of space or storage to achieve the 6' spacing with all of their equipment. So, the next best thing will be to separate pieces as much as possible with the goal of 6' apart or have different pieces not available for use. Cardio equipment such as treadmills may result in every other unit either being unplugged, cordoned off or "not in use." In addition, some States are mandating that only so many members can be in a club at the same time, such as five people per 1,000 square feet.

Normally, check-in at a club can easily result in people close to one another, so clubs are adding a check-in station if their systems and equipment allows them to do so. More importantly, clubs are marking the floor with 6' apart markers so people will know to wait a safe distance away from a person who is checking in, then they can move forward in a social distancing manner. The proper signage will be necessary to help implement such a practice.

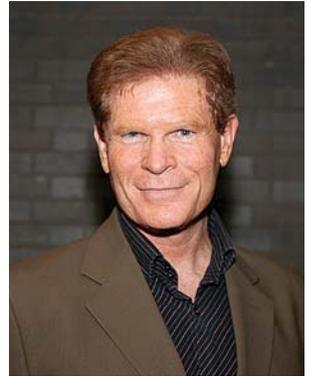
In locker rooms, where possible, a toilet, sink or shower adjacent to another would be closed off. Similarly, only lockers at a safe distance from one another would be available for use. Others would be closed off. Some clubs have decided to close off the locker section.

Along with social distancing is the wearing of masks and gloves but especially masks. Many clubs are requiring that all staff wear masks, and some clubs are requiring members to do so, also. There may also be State or even local mandates requiring the use of masks. Initially, as things get back open, the more masks worn the better. As one owner of a large, well-established club said: They are doing everything possible, because they do not want to be "that club" where many might contract the disease.

2. The second thing is also very obvious. Whatever cleaning stations (hand sanitizer and wipes) you previously had, plan to double or triple the amount. Make them very visible. Ideally, use hospital strength sanitizers or the more well-known brands, for there have been numerous cases where some sanitizers are of a low-quality and only marginally effective.

Display posters promoting hand-washing (look on www.WHO.int). Surfaces (e.g. equipment, desks, lockers, etc.) and objects (e.g. telephones, keyboards) need to be wiped with disinfectant regularly. Obviously, members also need to take a strong role in this. Make sure all areas are extra clean.

3. The third thing is to minimize the touching of areas such as doors, faucets, toilet handles, etc. Clubs are adding products



Bruce Carter

such as foot-operated door openers and hands-free door openers. Consider also switching out faucets, toilets and urinals to touchless units which can be retrofitted to existing units. Concurrently, clubs are taking a visible all-out approach of having staff regularly cleaning equipment and any other constantly-touched surfaces. According to research, which is still progressing, the amount of time the virus stays on surfaces is as follows:

- Metal - 5 days;
- Wood - 4 days;
- Plastic - 2-3 days;
- Stainless Steel - 2 - 3 days;
- Cardboard - 24 hours;
- Aluminum - 2 - 8 hours;
- Glass - up to 5 days; and,
- Paper - from a few minutes to 5 days.

Therefore, continually cleaning and washing of hands is a must. Some items which would be hard to keep clean (such as bands, small handheld weights, mats, etc.) are being removed from the floor, minimizing what a person can touch while working out. On another note, obviously, water fountains should only be used for filling bottles.

4. The fourth thing is more long-term and that is to design with antimicrobial materials. Most building finishes can be found with antimicrobial materials, such as laminates, paint, metal finishes, rubber flooring, carpet and porcelain tile. Fortunately, today's manufacturers are already integrating antimicrobial technology in interior design elements including faucets, window shades, paint and door hardware, applying coatings that work to keep them cleaner from multiplying bacteria. These types of materials are popular in the healthcare sector and will now start to find their way more into the health club sector. Ask your design or building professional to use such products, and if you do, it is recommended

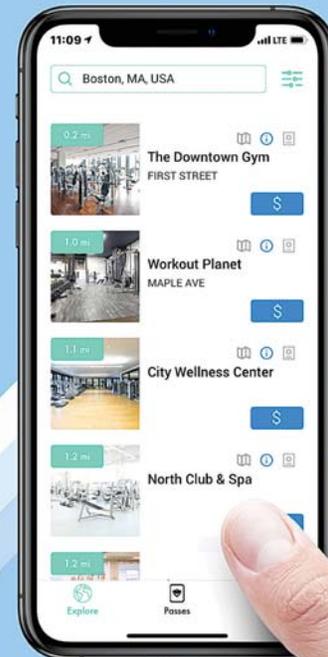
(See **Bruce Carter** Page 18)



Reach the Unreachable

Zeamo makes it easy for gyms and clubs to attract employees and health plan members with money to spend on fitness via their company-sponsored wellness subsidies and reimbursements

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- Seamless check-in experience for the end-user and the club staff
- Total transparency-access user information to market to them for membership



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...The Re-Opening

continued from page 15

that is available on our campus.

C.I. - How will you get Leaves of Absence to reactivate?

TAC - Communication through all member advertising vehicles that initially focus on our new club enhancements in the areas of fitness and group exercise that are successfully addressing physical distancing as well as our new sanitization and cleaning strategies. Our efforts will focus on informing our members that The Atlantic Club is safe and that they can feel comfortable returning to their club. Through September, The Atlantic Club will also be providing the opportunity to suspend their account at no fee to avoid members from terminating and possibly getting lost. We will be able to stay in communication with our suspended members and will have a special marketing plan solely focused on these members returning to the club.

C.I. - How will you get all comfortable with cleaning levels, temperature checks, masks?
TAC - All employees will have their temperature checked before reporting to work and will be required to wear masks. All employees, upon returning, will have additional new responsibilities in their job roles as an Atlantic Club Team Member that

include sanitization and cleaning. There will be increased monitoring and supervision in all areas of the facility to insure we, as a team, are meeting and exceeding our sanitizing and cleaning requirements.

C.I. - How about prices going forward? How will you give credits if billed for full month but were open for partial-month?

TAC - We will be opening with the strategy of charging full dues for the month that we re-open. If provided the opportunity to open mid-month, we will pro-rate the membership dues.

C.I. - How will you now combine at-home virtual content with in-club?

TAC - This is an area that The Atlantic Club will be focused on over the next 90 days and will provide our members with a virtual component to their membership. In addition, it will also include a personal training virtual platform.

C.I. - How will you deal with the check-in process (plastic shields, mobile app with no human interaction, reservation of time slots, etc.)?

TAC - The Atlantic Club is installing glass partitions throughout the Club where there is close human interactions. Employees will be provided plastic shields for key areas of the club, as well as masks. Our current mobile app will become very important, as

well as a much more powerful app that will be introduced in the next 60 days after re-opening the club. This will be used for check-in, as well as booking all the classes. All live and virtual group exercise classes within the club, lap lanes in our pools as well as our nursery will require pre-registration: no walk-ins initially. Our club will utilize the scheduling and reservation software that is available within our member management system.

C.I. - How will you deal with a member or staff member testing positive in the future?

TAC - We will follow CDC guidelines as well as mandated policies that will be issued by our local Board of Health.

TAC - The Atlantic Club is grateful for all the support it has received throughout the COVID-19 closure from all sectors of the health and fitness club industry. It has truly been a time where the industry has come together and showcased its greatness and generosity to clubs of all sizes.



Last month, in the introduction of this two-part cover story, I discussed **HOPE** and **PURPOSE**, and of course, I said: **WE are all in this together**. *Hope and Purpose will help us all persevere, and WE are all in this together*. To that end, for their

contributions across both parts of this cover story, I sincerely thank the following: **Bill McBride, Carol Nalevanko, Donna Krech, Ed Williams, Geoff Dyer, Greta Wagner, Jim Worthington and Linda Mitchell, Joe Cirulli, Larry Conner, Mary Frank, Meredith Poppler, Mike Alpert, Paula Neubert, Phil Wendel, Scott Gillespie and Rich Nelsen**. And, a special thanks to **Pat Laus** and **Kevin McHugh** for their in-depth breakdown of **The Atlantic Club's** re-opening plans. Everyone listed has taken valuable time out of their schedules while keeping their staff, membership and club(s) intact and ready to re-open to share what they are doing with you. That is: **WE are all in this together**.

(Justin Cates is the Publisher of Club Insider. Having been born into a club business family in 1985, Justin grew up in the health and fitness club industry. He has lived and breathed this industry for 35 years, since his own day one, and he loves it dearly. Graduating from the Terry College of Business at The University of Georgia in 2007, Justin has run day-to-day operations of Club Insider for 12 years. Justin was elevated to Publisher of Club Insider on April 5, 2020. Justin's Dad, Norm Cates, continues to serve as Founder and Tribal Leader Since 1993. You can reach Justin by phone at 423-314-4310 or email at Justin@clubinsideronline.com.)

How Health Clubs Can Fulfill Their Legal Duties Owed to Members, Guests and Employees While Re-Opening During the COVID-19 Pandemic

By: Paul R. Bedard, Esquire

Health clubs have always owed a duty of reasonable care to their members and guests, protecting these people from harm caused by reasonably foreseeable risks and warning these people of risks that are known or reasonably should be known by the club. Clubs must also provide a safe workplace for their employees. Although most premises liability claims have historically involved slippery floors, uneven surfaces and malfunctioning equipment, the advent of COVID-19 has made it likely that lawsuits alleging exposure to COVID-19 will likely join the top of the ranks.

As health clubs plan to re-open, these clubs will need systems in place to adequately monitor the health of members, guests and employees, and the sanitary conditions within the club. Should a club know of an infected member, guest or employee, and the potential exposure of others to COVID-19, the club may be deemed grossly negligent when failing to warn the people potentially exposed to the virus. This liability will result whether the club had knowledge --or reasonably should have had knowledge-- of the exposure. Additionally, any deficiencies from a sanitary or cleanliness standpoint may further increase a club's legal liability.

Due to the rapid spread of COVID-19 throughout our population, it is anticipated that we will see a dramatic increase in lawsuits alleging a failure to safeguard members, guests and employees from contracting the virus. Best practices indicate that health club owners and operators should self-impose a heightened duty of care towards their members, guests and employees. A duty that may feel heightened today may merely seem reasonable within tomorrow's new reality.

At a minimum, health clubs must adhere to any applicable laws governing capacity, social distancing, etc. However, clubs would be well-served by incorporating the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) guidelines into as many aspects of daily operations as possible, above and beyond the minimal legal requirements. The latest CDC guidelines can be found at: bit.ly/clubinsider92.

By implementing a heightened duty of care for members, guests and employees, health club owners and operators can help protect the health of the people they serve while minimizing the club's legal risk within this area. Some key recommendations that may prove particularly helpful to health clubs fulfilling their legal duty are as follows:

- Employees who show symptoms, such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath, should

notify their supervisor and stay home.

- Infected employees should not return to work until CDC-recommended steps are taken and the criteria to discontinue home isolation are met. Healthcare providers and State and local health departments should also be engaged within the decision for the employee to return.

- Employees who are healthy but who have an infected family member or person at home should notify their employer and follow CDC-recommended precautions.

- Employers should minimize face-to-face contact between employees and customers, particularly for older or more at-risk employees.

- Employees who report to work appearing to be symptomatic should immediately be separated from other employees, members and guests and be sent home. If it is confirmed that an employee has COVID-19, other employees should be informed of their potential exposure while maintaining the confidentiality required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

- Implement policies and procedures related to cleaning and disinfecting. Regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched objects such as fitness equipment, workstations, keyboards, telephones, handrails, doorknobs, light switches and other surfaces. *Document these practices.*

- Educate employees regarding proper hygiene, including handwashing and sneezing. Practice social distancing and discourage the sharing of other employees' phones, desks, offices, etc. Post signage to encourage these practices. Discourage handshaking while encouraging noncontact methods of greeting.

- Ensure that sick leave policies are flexible, non-punitive and consistent with CDC guidance and public health recommendations. Train employees to be aware of these policies.

- Be prepared to alter business operations. Have alternate supply chains and develop contingency operation plans should suppliers fall short, should operations require alteration or suspension, should employee absenteeism increase, etc. Cross-train employees to cover for absent employees when necessary.

- Allow work to be performed remotely when feasible.

- Increase physical space between employees. Increase separation between employees and customers. Utilize partitions where required and wherever practical.

- Maximize ventilation within the club and increase the percentage of outdoor air that circulates into the club.

- Provide no-touch paper towel and tissue dispensers and disposal receptacles.

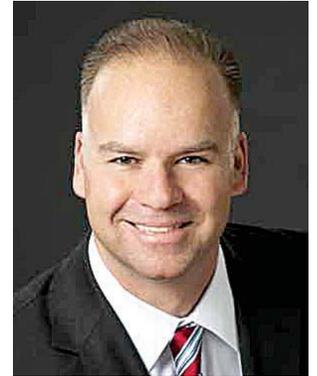
- In addition to soap and water in the locker rooms, place no-touch hand sanitizer dispensers throughout the club. Keep

excess supplies in stock to guard against supply chain disruption.

- Utilize video conferencing or teleconferencing for work-related meetings and gatherings when possible. Those meetings that must occur in-person should be held in open, well-ventilated spaces with social distancing measures in place.

The health and safety challenges faced by health clubs during this pandemic, and the resulting duties placed upon these clubs, will be many and varied in the days to come. However, those clubs that rise to the challenge will rightfully earn increased trust and commitment from their employees while boosting customer loyalty. **However, during this unique point in time, it is essential to note that this article is not intended as legal advice.** Now more than ever, unusual facts and circumstances, and varying applicable laws, prohibit one-size-fits-all recommendations. Therefore, the information presented in this article is meant for educational purposes. Please consult an attorney for specific direction in this regard.

(Paul R. Bedard, Esquire has nearly twenty years of management, leadership, and operations experience in the health and fitness industry. As a practicing attorney, Paul's health and fitness industry experience provides him with a unique perspective when advising health clubs



Paul R. Bedard, Esquire

regarding employee training, handbooks, policies, contracts, disputes or premises liability claims. When not practicing law or spending quality time with his wife and daughters, Paul strives to be active in his local community. Paul has served as the Assistant Town Attorney for the Town of Southington, Connecticut. He has also served on the Southington Zoning Board of Appeals and the Board of the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency. Paul is a solo practitioner at The Law Office of Paul Bedard, LLC, in Southington, Connecticut. Paul can be reached by email at AttorneyPaulBedard@gmail.com or phone at 860-414-0110.)

...Bruce Carter

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that you let members know that you have made such choices to add to their comfort level.

5. The fifth thing is to improve air quality by keeping you HVAC systems efficient. In most commercial buildings, indoor air is made up of about 25% of outside air. The rest is recirculated and filtered, meaning it's already been breathed by other occupants. If indoor air is not regularly exchanged, it can actually contain greater levels of pollutants than outside air, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. As a result, experts recommend at least 20 - 30 air exchanges per hour for health clubs.

Another thing clubs will be adding are Infrared Fever Screening Systems (IFSS). A member or guest entering a club will be screened for elevated body temperature. If a fever is detected, the person will be told of their fever and asked not to enter the club.

Whatever you do, make it a point to create signage to communicate and educate members on cleaning and sanitation practices in the club. This would include all that they need to do and all that you, the club, is doing to keep everyone safe. An example would be indicating pre-use and post-use wipe down protocol on all equipment and any items regularly touched.

Clubs have always taken on the role in a community as a place where people can go to improve their lives. Health and wellbeing are a club's foundation. Obviously, clubs have always wanted to achieve a "safe" environment, but now more than ever, in the history of health clubs, there is the need for an entirely new level of safety. Club owners and staff will be up to the task, because they understand their role of being there for people to make things better in their life.

(Bruce Carter is the owner of Optimal Design Systems, International. Bruce can be reached at bruce@optimaldsi.com.)

Preparing Your Gym for a Comeback

By: **Jim Thomas**

As of this writing, many gyms across the United States are slowly beginning to relaunch their business, and others will be conducting a relaunch in the coming weeks. One thing is for sure: We're not going back to the same place we left a few weeks ago. It's a different marketplace, and it's a different economy. We will need a plan. Here are a few questions to ask yourself before you begin: (1) What are you willing to give up to hit your goals? (2) What will you have to change to hit your goals? And, (3) What will you have to learn to hit your goals? Now, here are some things to consider:

1. The need for certainty. This is where it all starts. We need to be sure we get our head right. Of course, we need to understand the problem, but we need to give power to the solutions and what we're trying to accomplish. Owners, managers and staff all need to work with a high level of certainty and confidence if they want the customer to have certainty. People will still buy.

2. Overcommunicate. Keep your members in the loop on what is happening and continue to provide them with valuable information on how to get the results that they are seeking. Create signage throughout the clubs on washing hands, cleaning equipment, social distancing and even consider arrows letting people know what direction they should go. Use all forms of communication to let everyone know what is happening with your gym.

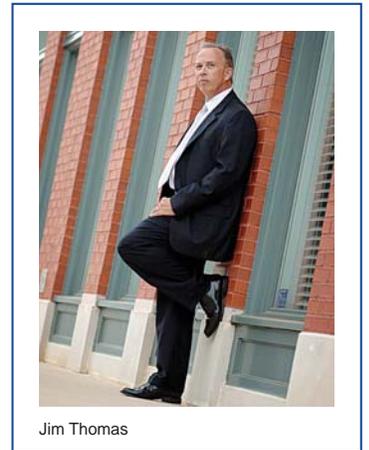
3. Provide unprecedented value. Give more than ever before. The goal here is to keep all your members and sign up new ones. You will need to provide an unprecedented level of value. Continue your digital programming with hangouts, expert Q&A, lives streams, private sessions, etc. Continue to focus on the member experience and celebrate success stories during the break, celebrate member anniversary dates, etc.

4. Prepare for member health and safety. I suggest doing more than what is required by your State. Temperature screenings for members, guests, employees and any

vendors. Increase the number of cleaning stations throughout the gym. Prepare a FAQ to help address any potential issues of members not social distancing, coughing, sneezing, etc. Depending on your member base, consider a specific time for those 60+ to come in and work out. Have plenty of signage throughout the club as well as directional signage moving members down the right path for proper social distancing.

5. Prepare for staff health and safety. With all the talk about member health and safety, don't forget about your staff (not that anyone would). There will be some staffers who are simply not comfortable returning just yet, and that's okay. Perhaps, they can help work on your digital product. The key thing here is to educate everyone on what you are doing to keep them safe. Many clubs are conducting temperature checks on staff twice per day. Two-a-day cleanings, rubber gloves, masks if desired, etc.

6. Marketing to your members. This is one to start doing *right now*. Prepare videos to walk your members and guests through what they can expect upon entering. You



Jim Thomas

need to let your members know what you're doing to keep the gym clean, healthy and safe and what you'll be doing to keep your members healthy and safe. Social media and email marketing is ideal here. Showing new protocols and what to expect will ease potential fears your members and guests may have.

(See *Jim Thomas* Page 21)

Getting Back to a New Normal

By: **Nancy Trent**

COVID-19 came, and it hasn't yet left. As a society, we initially dealt with the shock, we learned to adapt and we continue to power through. Now, consumers and the brands they use need to dive into the recovery process. COVID-19 has made us more resourceful and resilient, and we expect the fitness industry to come back stronger.

Traditionally, in a recession, companies that have a lean operation, a relevant value proposition and a loyal client base will survive. It has also been said that brands that invest during a downturn capture three times more market share. Going dark in a recession, downturn or crisis can cause more suffering. The more marketing cuts, the longer it will take to recover.

It's not what you say; it's how you make people feel. Everyone wants to feel good about the future. You need to show your clients that they can be confident that you will make it. Your customers want to be on the healthy, winning team. People vote with their dollars, and they want to be aligned with the brands that are giving back.

Consumers coming out of this will have more self confidence and trust in their abilities and decisions. They will be less dependent on company sales pitches and

more aware of what is really needed to live, be healthy and be happy. Thus, companies need to evaluate what they know, what they learned and how they changed, culturally.

- People were forced to try new things (i.e. virtual classes) and also started to seek out the familiar (at-home workouts).

- They quickly adapted to all things virtual and learned how to use Zoom despite early discomfort for many, which has left us craving real time, in-person interaction even more.

- Some have learned to be quite happy at home; however, it hasn't stopped the itch to get back out.

- Health consciousness and immune boosting is on the rise; so is junk food and eating for comfort instead of fuel.

- People put more personal pressure on themselves while peer pressure continues to rise with more time to surf and post on social.

Through this, we have all realized new needs. Based on these contradictions and behavior patterns, we can expect customers to want more connection, more truth, more meaning, more bonds, yet also, more simplicity.

What they will want is support, quality, inspiration and versatility. They will have the following questions about every purchase: Do I need it? Will it work for me?

Can I get it? What are my other options? As a fitness brand, you need to answer these questions before the consumer even asks.

During this pandemic, many businesses have discovered that they need to stay connected to their regular customers while they are forced apart. Your personal touch has never been more important. You have to find a way to do so, despite the required distancing as we work through the pandemic. You should also be quickly building loyalty with an irregular customer looking for a temporary fix. Ultimately, what many in the fitness business learned was that the core of the business must be expanded to whatever consumers need in the moment, which changes from week to week.

Recovery will look much the same. Each week will bring new findings and cause new habits to develop, and we must continue to adapt, persevere and market to existing and new audiences.

(Nancy Trent is a writer and speaker, a lifelong health and beauty advocate, a globe-trotting trend watcher and the Founder and President of Trent & Company, a leading wellness PR firm. Trent & Company, which launched many health and beauty brands, grew out of Nancy's personal and passionate commitment to helping people live longer and healthier lives. A former journalist for New York



Nancy Trent

Magazine, Nancy has written seven books on healthy lifestyles, serves on the editorial boards of several magazines and travels around the world speaking at conferences and trade shows on trends in the marketplace. She is a recognized expert in PR with more than 30 years of experience creating and managing highly successful campaigns. Nancy can be reached by phone at 212-966-0024 or email at nancy@trentandcompany.com. You can also visit www.trentandcompany.com.)

The Fitness Industry's Response to COVID-19

Insights into the Collective Improvisation, Innovation and Resilience of Global Fitness Operators

By: Stephen Tharrett & Mark Williamson

It came out of nowhere, and within just a few months, fostered a level of business disruption never experienced by the fitness industry. In just over a month, the COVID-19 pandemic forced over two-thirds of global fitness operators to temporarily close their doors, and in the U.S., had fitness clubs and fitness studios in 46 States temporarily shuttered. Fitness companies large and small, franchises and independents, clubs and studios, all found themselves in uncharted waters without their motors nor a compass to guide them.

The crisis is one that can be framed in the words of **Abraham Lincoln** in his 1862 address to the Congress, "We can only succeed by concert. It is not can any of us imagine better but can we all do better. The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate for the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, we must think anew and act anew."

Taking the lead from Lincoln's words, we decided to bring operators around the globe together to study their collective responses to the challenges steeped on the fitness industry by the rapid and unprecedented number of closures resulting from COVID-19. Our goal, aligned with the words of Lincoln, were to bring forward new ways of thinking and acting as improvised by fitness operators around the globe. We launched our survey to global operators in late March, and by the third week of April released our findings in a report entitled, *The Fitness Industry's Response to COVID-19; Insights into the Collective Improvisation, Innovation and Resilience of the Global Fitness Industry*. The balance of this article will bring forward some of the most important insights uncovered by the research, along with some strategies for fitness operators seeking to gain a competitive advantage during the crisis.

Data Speaks

What follows are some broad insights, driven by the data, that we believe offer fitness operators, as Sun Tzu brought forward in the Art of War, an opportunity in the midst of chaos.

■ Digital fitness content emerged as a mainstream tool for engaging members and clients. Digital content included on-demand and streaming group exercise content (ODSGX), as well as on-demand and streaming personal instruction and coaching (ODSFC); 74% of fitness operators indicated they were offering ODSGX and 61% indicated they were offering ODSFC.

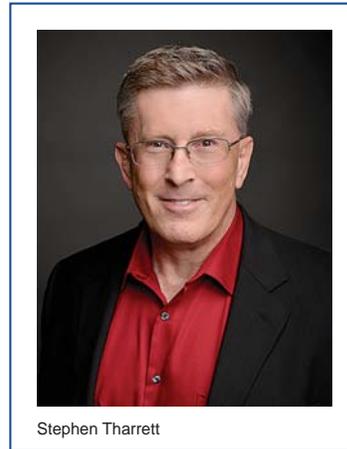
To frame just how extraordinary this development is, we go back to *ClubIntel's 2019 International Fitness Industry Trend Report - What's All the Rage* where 13% of fitness operators reported offering ODSGX and 11% ODSFC. While not a valid orange-to-orange comparison, it reflects a nearly six-fold increase in the percentage of clubs and studios that moved to digital content in a matter of a few months because of COVID-19.

■ Fitness studios, compared to their siblings, heritage fitness clubs, were more likely to engage their members, often by 10 percentage points or more through digital content, including offering virtual hangouts, virtual parties and virtual competitions to keep their clients socially connected and emotionally engaged.

■ Fewer than 50% of operators indicated they proactively froze members' dues/subscription fees upon closing. Of the 44% who froze member dues, 57% did so in an amount equal to one month's fees. Clubs were significantly more likely to offer freezes than fitness studios. As seen in the press, many fitness operators who chose not to extend freezes found themselves at the wrong end of legal action brought on by members. We believe the failure to immediately freeze fees will be an opportunity missed, not to mention a damaging action in members' minds.

■ Only 17% of fitness operators indicated they had extended members an in-facility credit they could use once the facility re-opened. Similar to what we saw for membership freezes, clubs were significantly more likely to offer in-facility credits than fitness studios (24% to 7%). We believe extending in-facility credits is an enormous opportunity for bringing people back once the physical doors open, giving the 17% who did it a competitive advantage once fitness facilities re-open.

■ We saw a small percentage of operators, both clubs and fitness studios, who offered members equipment they could use at home (24% collectively). From a percentage perspective, fitness studios were nearly twice as likely to provide this type of service to their clients as clubs (40% vs. 23%). In the comments and case studies we received, operators reported lending their equipment to clients and members, either for free, a voluntary donation or for a small fee. Some even partnered with equipment manufacturers to provide special discounts on new equipment. We feel these operators demonstrated a high degree of caring and improvisation that will benefit them upon re-opening.



Stephen Tharrett



Mark Williamson

■ When it comes to their employees, approximately 60% of operators indicated they had guaranteed their staff jobs once business re-opened. In this instance, fitness studios were more likely than club operators to extend this offer.

■ To provide employees economic security through paid sick-leave, partial compensation, incentive payments, severance payments or extended healthcare coverage, the percentage of operators who indicated they offered one or more of these economic security blankets was between 20% and 37%. We believe that those operators who were able to package some form of economic security blanket for their employees are better positioned for re-opening than those who were unable to offer economic security.

Moving Forward

As the earlier quote from Abraham Lincoln stated, "...our case is anew, so we must think anew and act anew." What follows are some of our thoughts on how the fitness industry can act today, and just as importantly, act moving forward.

■ Digital content (ODSGX and ODSFC) are no longer operational luxuries; instead, they are a necessity for operators who want to be engaged with members during the crisis and post-crisis.

■ Shed the old ways of thinking and acting. The data, not to mention the press, showed us the old ways of thinking (holding clients hostage to contracts, not being proactive in communicating to members, thinking sales before service, not having a digital strategy that includes mobile and streaming content, etc.) are not the pathways to success during the crisis, nor once the brick and mortar business re-opens. Operators need to shift their thinking and acting, including

learning a lesson from those operators who engaged their members and clients creatively during the crisis. These lessons offer a window into how business will be conducted in the future.

■ Create a crisis plan. COVID-19 caught most operators by surprise. While many operators were able to respond quickly and definitively to the crisis, far more found themselves in uncharted waters. This statement speaks to both small independent fitness studios and clubs to large multi-facility operators. Not having adequate capital reserves, being highly leveraged, not having a strong digital presence and failing to demonstrate caring and empathy during the crisis need to be addressed going forward as part of a well-devised crisis plan.



In closing, we share the words of **Alan Watts** who said, "The only way to make sense of change is to plunge into it, move with it and join the dance." We hope more will join the dance and be part of the post-COVID-19 success story.

For those who want to obtain a complimentary copy of the report, they can download it from the *ClubIntel* website by going to bit.ly/clubinsider91.

(Steve Tharrett and Mark Williamson are the Principals of *ClubIntel* and can be reached at stevet@club-intel.com and markw@club-intel.com.)

Club Financing During the COVID-19 Pandemic

By: **Paul Bosley**

I started working in the fitness industry 46 years ago, and I became the operating partner of my first fitness center at the age of 27. Among the many lessons that my senior partner and mentor taught me, the one that applies to our current situation the most is **"Cash is King!"** Fast forward 46 years, and I am still an entrepreneur specializing in providing financing to the fitness, franchise and RV and campground industries. Over this time, I have witnessed many changes in the fitness industry. The main equipment manufacturers back then were Universal and Nautilus, and now, they are Life Fitness, Precor and Matrix. The growth in our industry changed from racquetball clubs and big box gyms to franchises and group fitness studios. All businesses must change with the times and have the financial staying power to weather the storms we face. Remember Sears? TWA? Bally Health and Tennis Corporation of America? To be able to make the changes necessary to survive and thrive, the one constant that remains unchanged is that **"Cash is King!"**

As a result of this pandemic, I believe that offering fitness in a brick and mortar location alone will be more effective if augmented by virtual fitness offerings. As we re-open our clubs nationwide, this article focuses on three key financial options for club business owners to access

working capital to navigate the "new normal" operational climate, we will all begin experiencing for the first time.

Equipment Leasing - Financing New Equipment and Sale Lease Backs:

Do you need new fitness or non-fitness equipment to set up an audio-visual area in your club to film and support members looking to work out at home? Do you need cash and own your fitness equipment outright?

When financing new fitness equipment, the typical terms require a down payment or a security deposit ranging from one lease payment up to 20% of the dollar amount being financed. With equipment lease backs, you are selling your fitness equipment to a leasing company to access cash. In both cases, the repayment term ranges from 3 - 5 years, and once the lease is paid, the ownership of the equipment is transferred to the company leasing the equipment. The main benefits of equipment leasing are that the transactions are completed quickly and the collateral for the transaction is the equipment package being financed.

Small Business Administration (SBA)

7(a) Loans - Debt Consolidation: When an existing business owner is applying for an SBA loan for debt consolidation, the resulting monthly payment must reduce the total monthly payments of all

debt being consolidated by at least 10%. Debt consolidation can include existing mortgages, equipment leases and loans, but credit card debt CANNOT be included. SBA offers loan guarantee reduces the lender's risk which, in turn, makes securing an approval more likely. These loans offer the lowest APR available amortized over a 10-year repayment term. The collateral for this transaction is the business, and if there is a short fall in collateral, the owner(s) personal and/or commercial real estate only up the loan dollar amount.

A couple of years ago, we secured financing for a multi-gym owner to consolidate his mortgages and equipment leases totaling \$3.2M, which reduced our client's monthly overhead over \$22,000 per month! Our client was a very happy camper and extremely pleased with the outcome!

Unsecured Business Credit Card and Lines of Credit:

Our company works closely with an aggregator specializing in unsecured business and personal credit cards and lines of credit. This use of these funds is totally unrestricted, unlike equipment leases and SBA loans. If you want to see if you are prequalified, please visit capwellfunding.com/prequal-bfd. The credit pull is a soft pull, so it has no impact on your personal credit. If approved, there is no obligation to accept the terms, so there is no downside.



Paul Bosley



If you want to learn more about how we can help you with any of these three financing opportunities, please contact Paul Bosley at **(800) 788-3884** or paul@businessfinancedepot.com. For more information, please visit www.businessfinancedepot.com.

(Paul Bosley is the Managing Member of Healthclubexperts.com dba Business Finance Depot. Paul can be reached at paul@businessfinancedepot.com.)

...Jim Thomas

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7. Marketing for your business to advance into the marketplace. You won't be able to use just one or two things and get the results you want. The plan should be to show differentiation and market to an uncontested marketplace. You want EVERYONE to know who you are and what you are doing. Start writing your plan of action now. A press release is a great way to start. This is a great time to conduct a membership drive or a re-grand-opening.

8. Prepare to be ready to sell in a new marketplace and a new economy. Include your health and safety standards in your process, but stay on point. Business and sales fundamentals will be more important than ever. You will likely have fewer inquiries and fewer prospects for a while. A good habit to get into is to treat each guest like it's the only one you will see that day and work to bring them up to your level of certainty. Get your staff trained and follow up to be sure they are on track. You can't afford not to. As mentioned, conduct a membership drive, have referral contests, host a re-grand-opening, etc. Revenue is the oxygen of your business;

keep it flowing. In addition, look for ways to increase the amount you collect per new membership sale with additional added value. Consider new membership offerings to accommodate a new economy.

9. Continue with Digital Programming. Digital programming is here to stay and is something you should continue even when you open your doors. Remember, you want to deliver unprecedented value to your customer. Initially, this should be continued at no additional change, but as you move forward, this should be included as part of a premium membership offering or even sold

online through your website.

10. Develop existing profit centers or create new ones for ancillary sales. Since many people have poor diets that lack the vital nutrients the body needs, consider selling supplements online. Investigate selling gift cards online, meal planning, etc. You want to find ways to encourage additional sales to your current customer base.

11. Not every gym will return. Some gyms will not return because of financial reasons, and others simply will not want

to continue, which is okay. This presents an immediate opportunity to grow your business. In nearly every case, this will be done with no money out of your pocket, and you will be able to increase your recurring dues, perhaps your personal training, email lists, renewal lists, have URLS and phone numbers pointed to you and more. This is something to investigate immediately.

Now, let's make this the greatest comeback ever!

(An Outsourced CEO and expert witness, Jim Thomas is the Founder and President of Fitness Management USA Inc., a management consulting, turnaround and brokerage firm specializing in the gym and sports industry. With more than 25 years of experience owning, operating and managing clubs of all sizes, Thomas lectures and delivers seminars, webinars and workshops across the globe on the practical skills required to successfully to overcome obscurity, improve sales, build teamwork and market fitness programs and products. In addition, his company will buy gym equipment from gyms liquidating or closing. Visit his website at www.fmconsulting.net or www.jimthomasondemand.com.)

Make It Fun

...Ruth Stricker

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Macalester College, where the Ruth Stricker Dayton Student Center was named in honor of her lifetime achievements. As a patron alumnus, Ruth helped welcome the former Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, when Macalester renamed the Global Institute for Citizenship to the Kofi Annan Institute for Global Citizenship.

Ruth was an Honorary Board Member and "Luminary" of the International Spa Association Foundation. A passionate innovator for over three decades, Ruth had a significant influence on the spa industry with her "liberal arts approach to health." Former ISPA Chair Jeff Kohl said when Ruth won the 2004 Alex Szekely Humanitarian Award, "Ruth's commitment to health and wellness is profound and an inspiration. She was a driving force behind the evolution of people no longer seeing spas as pampering, but instead as a requisite to staying physically, emotionally and spiritually healthy. The promotion of lifestyle behavioral changes that contribute to longevity and quality of life is not only something that she is passionate about and works toward; it is something that she and

her life's work embody." Often referred to as "the conscience of the spa industry," Ruth was an inductee of the Washington Spa Alliance Inaugural Hall of Fame.

Ruth and Bruce generously supported the Abbott Northwestern Hospital Foundation. She contributed to the Minneapolis Heart Institute Foundation supporting heart research, women's heart health, vascular programs and internship programs. Ruth and Bruce were among the Founders of the Bravewell Collaborative, a community of leading philanthropists who work together to transform healthcare and improve the health of the public through integrative medicine.

Ruth and Bruce gave generously of their leadership and resources to the Minneapolis Institute of Art where Bruce was a trustee for 73 years and donated more than 2,000 works of art. Originally inspired by Ruth's studies in Eastern philosophy, Bruce and Ruth made several trips to China with MIA's Chinese Art Curator Emeritus Robert Jacobsen to systematically develop the museum's Chinese art into a world-class collection of more than 1,400 items that fill 14 galleries. Ruth and Bruce also sponsored shows at the China Institute in New York and

gave generously to the art museum at Yale University where the Asian galleries were renamed in their honor.

A champion of the arts and humanitarian causes for decades, Ruth was an Honorary Board Member of St.ART, a creative festival in St. Louis that harnesses the power of renowned street artists to celebrate diversity, bridge socio-economic and racial barriers and unify the community.

She funded the production of several independent short films that seek to inspire and uplift in the face of life's harsh realities. The first, Grandfather's Birthday, a moving story about aging, has won 23 international awards including a regional Emmy. Another film, The Wagon, whose central character is a young adult living with Down syndrome, premiered in 2019 at the Minneapolis/St. Paul International Film Festival. The Flow, a full-length documentary still to be released, features Tai Chi Master Chungliang Ai Huang. Finally, in cooperation with Gilda's Club, Ruth supported the documentary LISTEN/Stories of Cancer and Resilience. She has also given generously to Gilda's Club.

Ruth worked with and mentored inmates at a Federal Prison Camp to develop a Positive Attitude Development Program

which is now available online. The program is successful in rehabilitating inmates, and assisting their transition to the outside world.

Ruth received many national honors including: IDEA Association for Fitness Professionals' Chris MacIntyre Award; International Spa Association 2004 Humanitarian Award; IHRSA Vanguard Award; Healthy American Fitness Leader by The President's Council on Physical Fitness; and American Spa magazine's 2019 Women in Wellness Industry Icon.



Preceded in death by her beloved husband **Bruce B. Dayton**, and her parents **Eleanor and Peter DeBeer**, Ruth is survived by her daughter and son-in-law **Kim and Bob Griffin**; grandchildren **Grace and Jack**; son **Mark Stricker**; brother and sister-in-law **Paul and Kathleen DeBeer**; former spouse **David Stricker**; and her ever faithful yellow lab, **Beau**. A gathering to celebrate Ruth's wonderful life will be held at a later date. In lieu of flowers, please consider making a donation on her behalf to Interfaith Outreach (iocp.org) or the Lupus Foundation of America (lupus.org).

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FROM FOOD TO FITNESS

Aaron Davis's story...

Aaron is a serial entrepreneur and experienced multi-unit franchisee owning 17 Little Caesars. He was looking for an opportunity to diversify his portfolio and has always been a fitness nut, so branching out into the fitness franchise segment was the logical next step. Food service operators know firsthand the challenges of the restaurant industry, which include high labor costs, extensive employee turnover and skyrocketing operating costs. Aaron was very impressed with the ease of operations and the need for only 3-4 employees to operate the club. After speaking with Workout Anytime franchisees, he was equally impressed that 73% own multiple units. Aaron leaned on Workout Anytime's proven franchise model to 'hit the ground running' and opened two locations within one year with a third on the way. Workout Anytime has more than tripled their club count over the past 5 years and have averaged 38% growth in new club openings.

"Adding fitness was a very profitable way to round out my business portfolio."

Aaron Davis, Owner
Boiling Springs, SC & Duncan, SC

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