

Norm Cates'

CLUB INSIDER

CELEBRATING 30+ YEARS OF TRUST

The Industry's Best Friend, "Uncle" Rick Caro Passes Away



SEPTEMBER 2025

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CLUB INSIDER

CELEBRATING 30+ YEARS OF TRUST

The Industry's Best Friend, "Uncle" Rick Caro Passes Away

Richard "Rick" M. Caro, Jr., 79, of New York City and Sarasota, Florida died suddenly on August 31, 2025 at *Weill Cornell Hospital*. Rick spent his last day doing what he loved; attending the *U.S. Open*, which he had done every year for the last 71 years (asterisk for 2020 due to COVID) and having dinner at home with his adoring wife of 24 years, **Susan Denison**, whom he loved passionately and unconditionally.

Rick was a Co-Founder of the *Health and Fitness Association* into whose inaugural Hall of Fame class he was inducted earlier this year. He was the *President of Management Vision*, providing consulting services for over 1,900 clients in the health and fitness industry. In addition, Rick served on many for-profit and not-for-

profit boards.

Rick received his undergraduate degree from *Tufts University* and his MBA from *New York University*. Rick prided himself on mentoring young entrepreneurs and was instrumental in the development of many of their businesses and endeavors.

Rick was an avid sports fan and closely followed the *Yankees*, *Giants* and *Rangers*. But, perhaps his biggest love, only second to his wife, was his "Dukies." He rarely missed *Duke* basketball games on TV and often went in person to see his beloved *Blue Devils*. His wife knew that *March Madness* was sacrosanct, and she would not make any plans that would conflict with it.

In addition to his wife, he is survived by his sister, **Cathy Caro-Bruce**,

and her husband, **Calvin**, of Madison, Wisconsin; his brother, **Peter Caro**, also of Madison, and his sister, **Patty Caro Levine**, and her husband, **Steve**, of Port Charlotte, Florida, as well as many nieces, nephews and great-nieces and great-nephews.

Rick had asked that in the case of his death, donations be made in his memory to the *Safe Children Coalition* in Sarasota, Florida (sccfl.org) or to *Augie's Quest* (augiesquest.org).

Comments From Friends/Colleagues

John McCarthy, 25-year Executive Director Emeritus of IHRSA:

Rick was a staunchly loyal and thoughtful (See *Rick Caro Page 8*)



Rick Caro, Inaugural HFA HOF Inductee

Workout Anytime Teams Up with Viral Baseball Star Kyle "KJ" Jackson to Inspire Fitness Journeys Nationwide

ATLANTA, GA - *Workout Anytime*, a leading 24/7 premium fitness franchise dedicated to making health and wellness accessible for all, has launched a social media collaboration with viral baseball star and influencer **Kyle "KJ" Jackson**. The collaboration is part of "The After," a system-wide initiative designed to encourage members everywhere to celebrate the mental and physical benefits of completing a workout.

With over a million social media followers and a reputation for bringing joy, athleticism and creativity to the game, KJ has become a cultural phenomenon in his own right. His high-energy performances and ability to connect with fans across generations have built him a loyal audience



that mirrors Workout Anytime's diverse member base, making the campaign collaboration a natural fit.

"We brought KJ into this campaign not only for his incredible athletic background, but also because of the kind of person he is," said **Lynsay Flynt**, *Director of Marketing at Workout Anytime*. "He's a phenomenal human being who loves to build community, embodies resilience and reflects the values we hold as a brand. KJ's (See *Workout Anytime Page 6*)

Health & Fitness Association Launches The HFA Show 2026 Registration and Announces First Keynote Speaker

BOSTON, MA - Registration is now open for *The HFA Show 2026*, to be held March 16 - 18 at the San Diego Convention Center in San Diego, California, where entrepreneur **Jesse Itzler** will headline as one of three keynote speakers.

Itzler, an endurance athlete and best-selling author, will take the main stage on March 17, bringing his signature energy and unconventional wisdom to the global fitness community. Sponsored by *Matrix*, Itzler's keynote promises to challenge, inspire and ignite attendees with stories from his wild journey, from selling Marquis Jet to Warren Buffett, to completing Ultraman at age 53, to founding All Day Running Co., a brand that blends extreme (See *HFA 2026 Page 6*)



Inside the Insider: Edition #381

- What I Learned from Rick Caro - **By:** Frank Guengerich
- Why is Teaching Soft Skills so... Hard? - **By:** Jeffrey Pinkerton
- Skincare as the Next Revenue Stream: What Gyms Can Learn From Cosmoprof North America 2025 - **By:** Nancy Trent
- Health & Fitness Association Announces Strategic Reorganization to Drive Industry Growth
- Health, Wellness and Lifestyle Services and Fusion Fitness Announce Partnership
- And, of Course, *Norm's Notes*

Norm's Notes

■ **Hello Everybody!** This is your **Club Insider Founder and Tribal Leader Since 1993** checking in with our **381st monthly edition of this 30+ year running club business publication** I refer to as: **A Labor of Love!** I'm very thankful that you've tuned in again for this iteration of **Norm's Notes**, as I proceed on my keyboard with my longtime habit of **"Telling-It-Like-It-Is!"** I'm really happy that you're reading this edition, and I want to **THANK YOU ALL** for sticking with us every month! As usual, we have a bunch of health and fitness club business news, **so please read on!**

■ **Is AMERICA a GREAT COUNTRY, or WHAT!?** Hmm... hmm... hmm! And, as usual, let me start these **Norm's Notes** with my normal monthly salutation to you all: **GOD BLESS AMERICA and GOD BLESS YOU, YOUR FAMILY and YOUR BUSINESS!!!**

■ On Sunday, August 31, 2025, I received the **extremely SAD and incredibly BAD news** that **RICK CARO**, my friend of 50+ years, and a **Co-Founder of IRSA (then IHRSA and now HFA)** with me and five others, has passed away. For many years now, Justin and I have called him **"UNCLE"**

RICK. And, I've always referred to Rick as our **Industry's Best Friend**. Please see the **Cover Story on Page #3**.

The following announcement from the HFA was sent out, and I quote the HFA words verbatim: "With deep sorrow, the Health & Fitness Association shares the news about the passing of Rick Caro, President of Management Vision, and one of the Association's founders, who left us on August 30. Rick was a pioneer, a mentor, a visionary and a tireless advocate for our industry and the people within it. His influence shaped generations of leaders, and his legacy will continue to inspire us all. This past March, Rick was honored as part of the inaugural class of the HFA Hall of Fame, a fitting tribute to a life dedicated to advancing the industry, championing its credibility, and building a strong professional community. In the days ahead, we will share additional reflections about Rick and details about a funeral service. Please keep his beloved wife Sue, his family, and the many friends and colleagues who were touched by his generosity and wisdom in your thoughts and prayers."

**MAY "UNCLE" RICK CARO
REST IN ETERNAL PEACE.**

■ **Crunch Fitness Franchisees** Honor 9/11 First Responders with Stair Climb Remembrances - **CR Fitness Holdings and Fitness Ventures**, leading and fast-growing franchisees of Crunch Fitness, once again hosted their annual 9/11 Stair Climb on Thursday, September 11th. This event serves as a powerful tribute to responders who bravely served on that tragic day in 2001 and those who continue to protect our people today.

■ **24 Hour Fitness**, a leader in the health and fitness industry for more than four decades, announces an education partnership with the **International Sports Sciences Association (ISSA)**, a global leader in fitness and wellness certifications. In an industry first, 24 Hour Fitness will ensure that its nearly 250 General Managers (GMs) are certified Certified Personal Trainers (CPT) and most with ISSA, elevating leadership expertise across all club locations and enhancing the member experience from the top down.

■ **Gold's Gym**, the iconic global fitness brand, has signed a master franchise agreement to open 60 locations in Brazil within the next ten years. A Gold's Gym Brazil flagship location is slated to open



Norm Cates and Rick Caro

in 2026, with other initial openings in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Brasília. The franchisee group is led by **Dan Chor**, a fitness industry veteran and **Co-Founder of BodyTech**. He's joined by **Felipe Frajhof, Washington Kasprzykowski and Michel Amorim**, seasoned entrepreneurs with extensive experience in real estate development and scalable business operations in Brazil.

(See **Norm's Notes Page 7**)

About Club Insider

CELEBRATING 30+ YEARS OF TRUST

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Thanks and Appreciation

At **Club Insider**, we are excited to be in our **32nd Year** of this home-based health and fitness club trade publication! The thought that this publication was **founded to serve an industry I truly love**, and so that **I could become a Mister Mom for my son, Justin**, is still **intriguing and amazing** to us. So, I wish to extend my most sincere **Thanks and Appreciation** to everyone who has made this amazing 30+ year run possible.

Very sincere **Thanks and Appreciation** go to the **late Rick Caro**, the **late Dr. Gerry Faust** and the **Faust Executive Roundtable #1** for helping me decide in 1993 what my home-based business would be. **Thanks and Appreciation** to my long-time friends, **Ron Hudspeth** and **Cathy Miller**, formerly of **Atlanta's Hudspeth Report** for the tremendous assistance they provided. **Thanks and Appreciation** to all of the folks at **Walton Press** in Monroe, Georgia. They did an absolutely excellent job for us all these years and printed every one of our monthly printed editions! And, of course, **Thanks and Appreciation** to the **United States Postal Service** for sending those editions to our readers!

Now, as we have gone all digital, **Thanks and Appreciation** to all of our **READERS**. Sincere **Thanks and Appreciation** to our **Club Insider Advertisers**, past and present, for their kind and dedicated support of this publication. **Thanks and Appreciation** to all of our **Club Insider Contributing Authors**, past and present. **Thanks and Appreciation** to the **Health & Fitness Association** for all it does for all of us. And, sincere **Thanks and Appreciation** to my son, **Justin**, our **Publisher**, who is a truly great business partner. You name it and Justin does it each and every month!

Last, but surely not least, this writer who refused to fear failure when many told him he didn't have a chance of surviving the publishing business for even a year did survive. And, he would like to give his sincere **Thanks and Appreciation** to the power that made that survival happen: **God**.

Very sincerely, with love in my heart for you all,

Norm Cates, Jr.



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Health & Fitness Association Announces Strategic Reorganization to Drive Industry Growth

WASHINGTON, DC - The *Health & Fitness Association (HFA)* announces a strategic reorganization that reflects the Association's successful growth and strengthened position as the voice of the industry. Building on recent momentum, HFA is expanding its leadership team and investing in organizational capacity to sharpen its focus on advocacy, research and education.

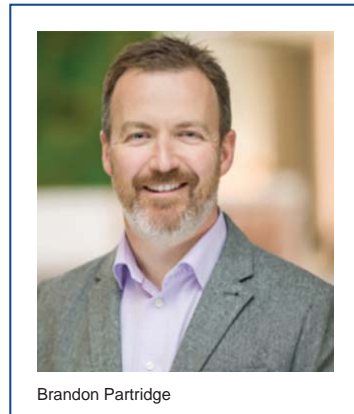
As part of this evolution, **Brandon Partridge** has been hired as *Chief Operating Officer*. Partridge brings deep experience in public affairs, business strategy and trade associations, having served as an advisor and strategist to a wide range of consumer industry associations. His expertise in membership, events and industry affairs will help HFA scale its reach and build the infrastructure needed to sustain continued growth.

In addition, **Mike Goscinski** has been promoted to *Chief of Staff*. Over the past three years, Goscinski has accelerated HFA's advocacy efforts, helped usher the rebrand from IHRSA to HFA, and guided multiple departments through a period of transformation. His promotion reflects the confidence of the board and leadership in his ability to continue steering the Association's external affairs at a time when the industry's voice is more important than ever.

"HFA exists to deliver results for our members and for the entire industry," said **Liz Clark**, *HFA President and CEO*. "This reorganization is not about change for

its own sake; it is a sign of our growth and strength. Brandon's operational expertise and Mike's proven leadership will ensure we are sharper, more focused and better equipped to protect, promote and grow the industry."

The reorganization creates a strong balance across two complementary areas of leadership. Partridge will concentrate on strengthening the Association's operational backbone --membership engagement, events, sponsorship and organizational resources-- ensuring HFA has the infrastructure and reach to deliver value globally. Goscinski will lead the outward-facing strategy --advocacy, research, communications and public affairs--ensuring HFA continues to shape policy, produce actionable insights and amplify



Brandon Partridge

HEALTH & FITNESS ASSOCIATION

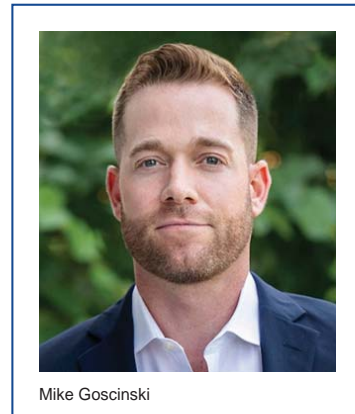
the industry's voice. Together, they will keep HFA both operationally strong and externally impactful.

Underscoring its growth, also joining the team is **Christine Solomon** as *Marketing Manager*. Solomon will expand the Association's communications capacity, helping HFA sharpen its message, extend its reach and showcase the value of advocacy, research and education to members, policymakers and the public.

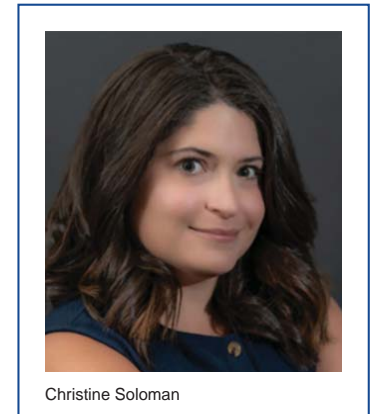
"As the only non-profit trade

Association for our industry, every dollar invested in HFA goes directly back into protecting fitness businesses, promoting the benefits of physical activity and growing the industry worldwide," Clark continued. "With these changes, we are building on momentum, scaling our impact and positioning HFA to lead the industry into its next era of growth."

See the **HFA Ad on Page #9**.



Mike Goscinski



Christine Solomon

...Workout Anytime

continued from page 3

story of overcoming injury, returning to the field, and now, inspiring millions through his platform, is a relatable journey many of our members take in pursuing fitness and wellness. For us, it's about showing that no matter who you are, athlete and/or not, we all share the same struggles with motivation and the same joy when we push

through and succeed."

KJ was on track to go pro before injury temporarily sidelined his career and has since become a fan favorite for his energy, creativity and positivity. His authenticity and ability to connect with fans make him an ideal partner for Workout Anytime.

"'The After' is that feeling of accomplishment when you finish a workout," said KJ. "Mentally, I feel clear

headed and proud, and physically, I feel strong and confident. Even with a busy travel schedule, staying active helps me show up as my best self, on and off the field. I hope to inspire others to discover that same feeling in their own journeys. No matter where you're starting, every workout is a step toward becoming stronger and healthier. Workout Anytime makes it easier to stay consistent, no matter where life takes me."

By highlighting KJ in this special collaboration, Workout Anytime is amplifying "The After" campaign across its nationwide network of 190+ clubs, encouraging members of all ages to experience the post-workout feeling of confidence, clarity and strength, wherever they are in their fitness journey.

See the **Workout Anytime Ad on Page #20**.

...HFA 2026

continued from page 3

physical challenges with transformative wellness experiences.

"Jesse embodies the spirit of pushing boundaries and building community, exactly what The HFA Show is all about," said **Liz Clark**, *Health & Fitness Association (HFA) President and CEO*.

Others who pushed boundaries will be inducted into the second class of the HFA Hall of Fame during a ceremony on the evening of March 15. The seven inductees will be announced in October. Tickets for the event are required, and all proceeds from the HFA Hall of Fame tickets will go to

the HFA Foundation, which is a 501(c) (3) public charity that works to support health through exercise.

The HFA Show is hosted each year by the HFA (formerly IHRSA), the global trade association for health club and studio operators. With 10,000+ attendees expected from more than 80 countries, the show is a true international gathering of health club and studio professionals.

The 2026 event's theme, **Stronger Together**, reflects a call to action, reminding us that progress in our industry depends on unity and collective effort.

"The HFA Show is more than an event; it's a rallying point for our global community," Clark said. "When we come

together to share knowledge, we strengthen our partnerships and amplify our message that exercise is essential for better physical and mental health. That's the spirit behind our theme Stronger Together, and it's what makes this event so vital to the industry."

The event's education will feature brand new tracks, fresh expert speakers and over 100 sessions designed for fitness industry professionals: owners, executives, managers, personal trainers, and group exercise instructors alike. We're expanding our global reach at the HFA Show 2026 with enhanced, tailored forum education for our international communities in Latin America, Brazil, Canada, Oceania, EMEA, Japan and China. For those looking to earn

continuing education credits, stay ahead of industry trends and/or connect with peers from around the world, the HFA Show 2026 will deliver the most dynamic and comprehensive learning experience yet.

The full education agenda, along with the names of the additional two keynote speakers, will be released in the coming weeks. More than 400 exhibitors are expected, and a list of 2026 exhibitors will be made available soon. More details, a link to registration and hotel information are all available at healthandfitness.org/show. Discounts on registration are available to Health & Fitness Association members.

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...Norm's Notes

continued from page 4

■ **Genesis Health Clubs**, the largest privately owned health club chain in the United States, announces the acquisition of **Pelican Athletic Club** in Mandeville, Louisiana, just north of New Orleans on the Northshore of Lake Pontchartrain. This marks the company's 78th location nationwide, its third in Louisiana, and its ninth acquisition of 2025, adding to existing Louisiana clubs in Slidell and Baton Rouge.

■ **Pickleball Kingdom**, the world's largest indoor pickleball entity, announces its continued expansion in New Jersey with a new facility planned for Old Bridge. With its Hamilton club already open, new locations slated for Watchung and Tinton Falls this

winter, and another site under consideration in South Brunswick, the brand continues to accelerate its growth across New Jersey.

■ **The American Council on Exercise (ACE)** announces establishment of its Certification Advisory Board, which will provide strategic guidance to ACE's Credentialing Department in its ongoing effort to deliver high-quality certification programs to health and exercise professionals worldwide.

■ After years of welcoming the health and fitness community in person, **ACSM** will present its 2026 Health & Fitness Summit in an online, on-demand format. This decision was made following thorough consultation with key stakeholders, including certified professionals, the ACSM Employer Advisory Board, regional chapter leaders

and **ACSM** leadership. The consistent message: multiple days away from clients and rising travel costs make it challenging to attend in-person.

■ **JUSTIN** and I want to **THANK YOU** for reading **Club Insider!** We appreciate you being with us. And, in particular, **WE VERY SINCERELY APPRECIATE ANY and ALL SUPPORT OF OUR ESTEEMED Club Insider ADVERTISERS! PLEASE DO BUSINESS WITH THEM and WHEN YOU DO, PLEASE TELL 'EM Club Insider SENT YOU! THANK YOU ALL!**

■ **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. Finally, God bless you, your family, your club(s) and your members. God Bless America! Laus Deo!

(Norm Cates, Jr. is a 50+ year veteran of the health, racquet and sportsclub industry. He is the Founder and Tribal Leader Since 1993 of Club Insider, now in its 32nd year of monthly publication. In 1981, he was IHRSA's First President, and a Co-Founder of the Association with Rick Caro and five others. In 2001, he was honored by IHRSA with its DALE DIBBLE Distinguished Service Award, one of its highest honors. And, in 2017, he was honored with Club Industry's Lifetime Achievement Award. You can reach Norm by phone at 770-635-7578 or email at Norm@clubinsideronline.com.)

Make It Fun Every Day!

...Rick Caro

continued from page 3

friend to me and to hundreds of his IHRSA and industry colleagues. For years, Rick and I had lunch together in New York at the time of the U.S. Open Tennis Tournament. He was an immensely loyal man to all his friends and colleagues. And, can you believe it, every year, he sent birthday cards to each of my four children. Rick was a World Champion in the art of warm and thoughtful friendship. I will miss him. We all will miss him.



Daron Allen, Co-Founder of VFP:

Rick was a great mentor and friend. I first met Rick in 1995 when I attended the IHRSA Institute for Professional Club Management at *Wheaton College* as a young club manager. He taught the Financial Management course. The following year, I got to know Rick quite a bit better and spent more time with him at the Institute held at *Michigan State*.

Rick became a mentor, and over time, a great friend. I engaged with Rick to provide consulting for my clubs and learned so much. If you knew Rick, you know he liked to talk. If you were focused while talking, you learned. If you were patient, you learned a LOT. Rick had access to what I call "the way back machine." The way, way, way back machine with regards to industry knowledge. His wealth of knowledge was amazing and will be missed. As the old saying goes, Rick probably forgot more than many in the industry ever learned.

One of my fondest memories of Rick was from 2016. Rick asked me to help him coordinate a Roundtable trip to Austin. He moderated the *Faust Roundtable #1* group, now part of REX. If you know Rick, preparation and detail are key. I thought it would be a little different to have the dinner

at my house, and I was able to keep a few details away from him, surprising the group by renting a huge Longhorn for my front yard (See **Photo on This Page**). It was a hit and a very "Texas" experience. Rick, his wife, Sue, and the entire group loved it. Rick would love to share his memories. So, I thought I would share some for him. Here's to you my friend. May you rest in peace.



Eddie Tock, CEO of REX:

I was fortunate to know Rick since my first day in the fitness industry. He was the consultant to the IHRSA Board member, **Jim Farrell**, of three *Sportset Clubs* in New York that I got to see on a very regular basis. In my second year, I went to Rick and asked for a marketing budget telling him I did a \$1.2 million dollar increase in revenue... he responded, 'You didn't seem to need it last year; I am sure you'll figure it out.' Over those 42 years, he became a good friend and my mentor, helping me grow REX Roundtables from four groups in 2008 to the 28 we have today.

He was never boastful or egotistical but rather always caring and thoughtful. His passion and desire to share as well as his generosity of always talking with and helping others made him an amazing person. It's because of Rick that we have grown as an industry, as he's responsible for the start of IHRSA, The IHRSA Institute, The Profiles of Success, as well as our industry getting the attention of Wall Street and so much more.

Some of my most memorable conversations were not talking about work but when we were talking about the Yankees. I will miss that part of Rick the most!

Rick was instrumental in our decision to bring back the IHRSA Institute, which he was a huge part of, and rebrand



Daron Allen, Rick Caro and a Longhorn

it as the *REX Leadership Academy*. He helped us shape the agenda, but the best part was having Rick spend a day with us in person at the REX Leadership Academy this past July (See **Photo on This Page**). He told me he was so proud of all of us for making it even better than any IHRSA Institute!

I speak for all REX Members around the world when I say we are all grateful, inspired and appreciative for what Rick has given us and done for our industry! As a result, **we have created a scholarship to the REX Leadership Academy in his name.**



Rodney Steven II, Owner/President of Genesis Health Clubs:

One of a kind - Rick Caro. Our most valuable asset is our time, and Rick would literally give you as much time as you needed on any topic and as often as you would want to discuss it. He would never forget a topic and would ask you how you are doing on the topic from literally years ago.

He would remember all your kids names and what they were involved in, and he was genuinely sincere with his follow-up on how the family was doing and growing. When Rick would call me, I would get so excited because it would be such a highlight of my day. He made me feel very special, and I will always be indebted to him for the time he gave me and the free wisdom he so kindly and sincerely shed.

Thesetypesofpeoplecomearound once in a lifetime --someone dedicated to making all of our lives better in this small industry-- there isn't anything he wouldn't do for us or this industry. I am forever grateful.



Sean Gagnon, CEO of The Abs Company:

When we just started the company 18 years ago, I was getting my feet wet attending all sorts of industry events. I'd see Rick at many of them, and he always took the time to say, "Hello." He would always compliment me on the business and tell me about something we were doing. It always struck me as incredible, because in those days, we were new and not very established. Yet, he knew about us and took time to give me his thoughts. Not only was it educational but extremely humbling that a guy in his position was noticing us. Now, 18 years later, I still remember those early conversations. He was an incredible human, and I wish him eternal peace.



Geoffrey Dyer, President of CR Fitness Holdings:

Rick has been a true friend and mentor to me these past 30+ years. When Rick would visit Sarasota in the winter months, we would assemble a group of club owners to share best practices and learn from Rick. Of course, Rick did most of the talking! He took a genuine interest in the success of each of us and knew all about our family and friends. I will miss Rick, but the breakfasts will continue in his honor. Prayers and condolences to Rick and Sue and their family members and friends. I am still in shock that he has passed.



Jim Worthington, Owner of Newtown Athletic Club:

It is not an exaggeration to say that the fitness industry as we know it would not be what is today without Rick Caro. One of the few pioneers over 40 years ago that founded what became IHRSA and now (See **Rick Caro Page 10**)



Always Learning... Rick Caro at the 2025 REX Leadership Academy

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Questions? Contact aseverin@healthandfitness.org.

HEALTH & FITNESS
ASSOCIATION

...Rick Caro

continued from page 8

the Health & Fitness Association, Rick was the leading fitness mind and consultant in the world sharing his knowledge with literally hundreds of thousands of fitness professionals at the annual international convention as well as his writings, webinars, roundtables, IHRSA Institute, etc. His clients, which consisted of the Who's Who in the Industry, was extensive, who when asked, credited Rick with much of their success. I, for one, can attest that meeting Rick in 1982 at the second IRSA Trade Show and Convention was the turning point in my career and that of the Newtown Racquet Club, now known as the Newtown Athletic Club - NAC. It is truly hard to believe and imagine our industry without Rick Caro, an icon who gave so much and was loved by all who knew him. Rest in peace friend, and God Bless both you and your loving wife, Sue.

■ ■ ■

Michael S. Levy, *President and Chairman of Zenith Fitness:*

I first met Rick in 1982 at the IHRSA Conference in Las Vegas. Here was this tall man, dressed in a navy suit, with a cowboy hat and boots. His smile welcomed everyone, and he made me feel like I belonged. Over the past 44 years, I have spent so much time with Rick and Sue... first, on the Board of IHRSA where his mentorship and guidance was instrumental in our ability to learn and grow. Rick and Sue, and my wife, Caren, and I traveled together to Europe and China... it was fun, and we laughed for days on end. Rick was the kindest, most giving and thoughtful person I have known. His memory will be a blessing to all that knew him. Rest in peace.

■ ■ ■

Larry Conner, *Regional VP/Club Acquisition in the South of Genesis Health Clubs:*

Rick was the financial guru with the industry, and I learned so much from him. It was a special day when he asked me to take over the financial part of the IHRSA Institute the year before COVID hit. I am so glad I got to experience that honor.

He was always approachable, and he kept in touch with everyone over the years. Rick was the best and will be missed deeply. My prayers and thoughts go out to his family. I just hope they know how much he meant to all of us.

■ ■ ■

Dave Cardone, *General Manager of Memorial Athletic Club:*

Rick was a constant foundation to our

industry, from the start of IRSA, to IHRSA, to HFA... Always advocating for our recognition in the private and public financial markets. Rick generously spent hours on the phone with me following a hurricane and many other times along the way. He'll always be on the Mount Rushmore of our industry. Thank you for all you've done for us.

■ ■ ■

Adam Zeitsiff, *CEO, Dominique Dawes Academy:*

What a very sad day. Rick was a true pioneer who, for 40+ years, helped to shape what the U.S. fitness industry has become today. He was also a gentleman and genuinely supportive to everyone he met in the industry. Rick would make it a point to call me out of the blue to congratulate me about a new role, give me his advice and supportive warnings, and provide me with encouragement about my future. He didn't even know me that well, yet he shared and cared and supported me as if we had known each other forever. Our industry lost a great one and he will be sorely missed.

■ ■ ■

Fausto Di Giulio, *Owner and CEO of Medical Sport, Fitness and Physiotherapy Center:*

Rick Caro was an architect of our industry and a mentor to so many of us around the world.

His wisdom, vision and generosity shaped not only the fitness business, but also the people fortunate enough to cross paths with him. I will always carry with me his lessons and his example of leadership rooted in kindness, integrity and passion.

Together, with **Howard Ravis** and **Will Phillips**, they were my mentors since my very first IHRSA Congress in 1995, and they helped me to start my international path. A great Italian-American person, who made an everlasting impact on my life and on our industry.

My deepest condolences to Sue and the Caro family. Rick's legacy will live on in the countless lives and organizations he inspired. May he rest in peace.

■ ■ ■

Alan Leach, *CEO of West Wood Club:*

Rick was one of the true greats of our industry. Over the past 35 years, whenever I met him at conferences, he was always so open, generous with his knowledge and genuinely kind. He always asked me about Ireland, which showed the personal warmth behind his professional brilliance. He was an absolute gentleman and a legend whose influence will live on in all of us he inspired. My deepest condolences to Sue, his family, and all who were fortunate enough to



Rick Caro's Financial Panel

know him.

■ ■ ■

Lynne Brick, *Co-Founder of Ohana Growth Partners and John W. Brick Mental Health Foundation:*

I am so saddened to hear of Rick's sudden passing. My thoughts and prayers go out to Sue, Rick's family and our entire industry. Rick's legendary contributions, coaching and collaborations will truly be missed. As well as his very, very, very long "signature" IHRSA name tags with multiple credentials and titles (See **Photo on This Page**). May he rest in peace. And, may our industry reflect Rick's wisdom in all we do.

■ ■ ■

The Club Industry's Best Friend

As Published in January 1995

By: Norm Cates

This story is about a great man. The health, racquet and sportsclub business has undergone radical improvement and change in the last 15 years. Much of this massive club industry change can be traced back to the brilliance and efforts of this man. He is the club industry's best friend. His name is Rick Caro.

My good friend, Rick Caro, objected vehemently when I told him that I wanted to publish a front-page article about him in our January, 1995 edition. This is typical of Rick. Always low key. Always wanting to remain behind the scenes. Always giving but not expecting to receive the credit he deserves. But, ignoring Rick's objections, I now present to you the story of an incredible human being.

Rick Caro grew up in Scarsdale, New York, an upscale suburb of New York City. He graduated from high school in



Rick Caro's Long Name Tag

1963 and enrolled at Tufts University near Boston. While at Tufts, Rick majored in psychology but took on many advanced-level courses because he wanted to be challenged more and felt that, even though he did not have the pre-requisite courses, he wanted a rigorous liberal arts education.

He graduated from Tufts in 1967 and entered New York University to obtain his MBA in Marketing. Rick excelled at NYU, earning high honors with a 3.93 G.P.A. and finishing second in his MBA class of over 600. He was awarded NYU's Hector Lazo Award as the top Masters' student in marketing. A highlight of this accomplishment was when he carried his school's flag during NYU's graduation ceremony held in the Madison Square Garden.

Immediately upon graduation, Rick was selected to become the Assistant Dean in charge of the full-time MBA Program at NYU. He also served as a member of the faculty in the Marketing Department. All at age 23! During his 3 ½-year tenure at NYU, he worked with and came to know two men: **Peter Drucker** and **Edwards Deming**, who have since gone on to earn fame in
(See **Rick Caro** Page 12)



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venmo

...Rick Caro

continued from page 10

the world of management and total quality management.

“Gang Buster”

In 1972, Rick was approached by the Chief of Staff of the Mayor of New York City (John Lindsay) to help straighten out the Youth Services Agency (YSA), an organization devoted to helping underprivileged New York City children. The former Commissioner of the \$50-million Youth Services Agency had embezzled over \$900,000 and left the organization in a state of disarray.

Rick spent eight months in this position. Part of his responsibility in this role was to wear a beeper and be on call for situations where New York City youth gangs were going to war. Once, Rick was called to go to a section of New York City which was rife with gang activity. You may recognize the area... it was called Ft. Apache in a movie a few years back. On his way to meet with the YSA Director for the area, he encountered one of the gangs which was preparing for war. The gang leader challenged him about why he was treading on their turf. Explaining his mission, Rick was invited by the gang leader to tour the gang headquarters.

Rick was astonished at what he observed. He came away with three distinct memories: (1) The gang headquarters had the most sophisticated and high-tech stereo system that he had ever seen anywhere. (2) The gang's arsenal was huge... with weapons of all sizes and descriptions only seen in Schwarzenegger and Van Damme movies. (3) The sociology of the organization was amazingly sophisticated with a very well-structured leadership and with all roles of the gang members well defined and understood with perfect lines of authority and responsibility.

New Career

After his experience with the Youth Services Agency in New York City, Rick began to research new business opportunities along with two local friends who would ultimately become Rick's partners. After significant research and study, the trio decided to enter the recreation industry, specifically in the field of indoor tennis clubs. Going into the club business, they believed that, ultimately, the laws of supply and demand would dictate the future of their business.

At the time, the tennis business was booming. They also went into the indoor tennis business with a sense that, ultimately, a plain vanilla indoor tennis club providing only indoor tennis would not last and would some day need to be changed into a multipurpose club in order to survive. They had a vision of today's multipurpose club, but they were not sure of what the

exact components for the future club would be.

CitiSport, Inc. was born in early 1973. *The CitiSport Club* group grew to eight locations: three multisport clubs in Syracuse, New York; three multipurpose clubs in Connecticut; one pure tennis club with air structure enclosures on Long Island and one Westchester County indoor and outdoor tennis-only facility. They operated the Westchester County facility only on a summer basis. With singles programs, adult and youth tennis group teaching programs, they were able to make it profitable in the first year, when they had been warned that such facilities in summer were losers.

After eight years, illnesses in the family of one of Rick's partners forced that partner to turn his attention to his family's diamond business. Other family obligations which came along at this time with the second partner made the partnership decide that they should sell the clubs. Starting in 1981, they began to sell off each of the eight facilities. The experience was enlightening because each club had its own set of issues and conditions that needed to be handled in order to accomplish the sale. Due to that fact, they had to develop eight different strategies for the marketing effort to sell the clubs. The last of the eight clubs was sold in mid-1983. Interestingly, one of their clubs was sold to a local Jewish Community Center, one was sold to the village where it was located, and another sold to their nearest competitor.

IHRSA Was Born

During the timeframe when they were selling their clubs, Rick was serving on the Board of Directors of both the *National Tennis Association (NTA)* and the *National Court Club Association (NCCA)*, the racquetball club owners' trade association. Rick was President of the NTA in 1979. He was the only person to ever serve on both Boards.

Once, Rick was scheduled to attend an NTA Board Meeting on one weekend and an NCCA Board Meeting the next weekend, both at the same Chicago O'Hare Hotel. While attending the second (NCCA) Board meeting, Rick accidentally pulled out of his briefcase the meeting agenda for the NTA meeting held the previous weekend. It was not until the NCCA meeting had reached the fourth item on the written agenda that Rick noticed that he was looking at the wrong agenda (the NTA agenda). Rick was surprised to see that the first three items on both agendas were the same!

This experience caused a light bulb to go off in Rick's head. While serving on these two Boards, Rick had seen the NTA begin to languish and become stagnant, going downhill as time went by. The NCCA, on the other hand, was on the move with new ideas and innovations for its members. However, neither Association was doing well financially. The more Rick

examined the situation, the more he became convinced that the two groups were both after the same results and were in fact duplicating many of their efforts needlessly. These two organizations also could be expanded to attract other types of clubs where racquet sports were not the featured element.

Rick believed that a new Association could be created by combining both the NTA and the NCCA. However, he also believed that this vision should be shared with others representing the groups before they could move forward. Rick set up another meeting at a Chicago O'Hare Airport Hotel. This meeting was not to be attended by Rick. Instead, three people from each Association were selected to go to the meeting to discuss the idea of merging and to discuss the common ground that they all shared. **Dale Dibble, Curt Beusman and Todd Pulis** were selected from the NTA Board (Curt could not attend due to a last-minute conflict). **Jennifer Michell, Peter Donahue and yours truly** were selected from the NCCA Board. We met for a full day. And, we were to report back to Rick to let him know how we felt about his idea.

The meeting was fantastic! It turned out to be an eight-hour roundtable session in which we talked about all kinds of club issues and challenges. Through this illuminating time together, we all agreed that Rick's idea of the merger of the two Associations was an outstanding idea, and we should immediately pursue it. That we did! Three weeks later, another meeting was scheduled, this time in New York City at Rick's office. Attending representing the NTA was Caro, Dibble, Beusman and Pulis. Attending representing the NCCA were Caro, Michell, Donahue and Cates. On that day, in 1981, *The International Racquet Sports Association (IRSA)* was born.

By the time the meeting was adjourned, we had discussed staffing, the name, key objectives, the first convention, winding down the offices, integrating the two Boards of Directors into one, and we even elected the first President of IRSA. I still wonder what these people were thinking when they elected me to serve as the first President of this new Association. And, Rick would have no part of our desire to elect him as the first IRSA President, instead feeding us some story that, because the NCCA people might be sensitive to the new merger, the first IRSA President should come from the NCCA. Rick Caro should have been the first IRSA President, but he declined. The next year, however, we elected him as IRSA's second President.

By spearheading the effort to create what has become known as the most significant force in the club industry in the world today, now called *IHRSA (The International Health, Racquet and Sportsclub Association)*, Rick Caro ignited a fire in the development of new, professionally-operated clubs. *IHRSA* has been instrumental worldwide in truly

revolutionizing the club industry. The changes and improvements in the club industry since the founding of IRSA have been huge and for the good of the club consumers of the entire world. *IHRSA* now has over 2,400 clubs in over 35 countries (*Today, HFA now has 7,500+ member clubs in 60 countries*). What is more, the *IHRSA* clubs have begun to see the standard by which all clubs everywhere are measured. All because of a very good idea.

Management Vision

In 1983, after selling the CitiSport Clubs and founding IRSA, Caro established *Management Vision, Inc.*, a New York City-based Club Management Consulting Company. Rick got into the club consulting business because during the early days of IRSA, he was frequently asked to help other club operators with their challenges and issues.

Once, he went to a faraway place called Idaho to do what he called, "helping out a friend." He worked with the club owner for a few days, and then, they went fishing. On the way to the airport, the owner asked Rick to tell him how much he owed for his services, so that he could write a check before Rick got on the plane. Rick was stunned because he thought he had come there to "help a friend and to go fishing." Instead, his paid consulting career was born.

Management Vision, Inc. provides club feasibility studies, expert witness testimony, club valuations, business plans, loan packages, marketing guidance, advice on buying and selling clubs and operational analyses. Rick's work in every area can best be described as, "the best you can get." He is extremely detailed almost to a fault. You can rely on him to provide excellent work... work that truly sets a standard in his field of consulting. Those who know him have a deep respect for his judgement, his vast knowledge, his intellect, his credibility and his ethics. In two words, Rick Caro's consulting services can be best described as "world class."

A couple examples of the results Rick obtains for his clients are: (1) He saved \$740,000 on a real estate tax reduction for two clubs over a 10-year period! (2) He created a transition system after the sale of a club which resulted in \$150,000 in savings in refunds. But, here I am talking about what he does that he bills clients for and gets paid to do. What he does for people in our industry everywhere, where he does not get paid, is to me the most incredible thing about this guy.

He has written industry articles for 20 different publications. He authored a book called *Financial Management* in 1986. He served as an editor/contributing writer for videotapes and books. He served as a faculty member at the *IHRSA* Institute since its inception and reincarnation. He has also served as a teacher/lecturer for
(See Rick Caro Page 15)

Rick Caro

1945 - 2025



What I Learned from Rick Caro

By: **Frank Guengerich**

The global health and fitness industry lost one of our most precious friends this month, **Rick Caro**. I've known Rick for decades, and he was a mentor, colleague, resource and friend. He was always willing to share his insights, share a smile and talk to anyone that approached him. Unpretentious, yet so highly skilled and intelligent. Rick will be badly missed.

He impacted our entire industry and thousands of people along the way. Icon status. For me, Rick was one of the very first people to make an impression on

me when I was very early in my career as a General Manager. I attended a session that he presented back when our trade association, *HFA*, was named *IRSA*. For those that aren't old enough, like me, to remember or even know this fact, our Association was initially called the *International Racquet Sports Association (IRSA)*, and Rick was one of the original Founders. In any event, Rick was talking to the group about financial management, and I had never heard such clear and concise explanation on how to approach your business.

These are the lessons I learned

from Rick:

Straight Talk: Rick was always a straight talker. Whether you liked what he had to say or not, he told you the truth, and you never felt he had an ulterior motive. Most of my interactions with Rick were about financial management of businesses I was an owner of or was involved with, and he was always a steady hand at providing me insight based on his experiences.

Planning: My first interaction with Rick when I was a new General Manager and (See *Lessons Learned Page 15*)



Frank Guengerich

Health, Wellness and Lifestyle Services and Fusion Fitness Announce Partnership

AMARILLO, TX - *Health, Wellness and Lifestyle Services (HWLS)* announces they have formed a partnership with *Fusion Fitness 24*. Fusion Fitness 24 has clubs located in Fruitland, Idaho; Payette, Idaho; and Ontario, Oregon. Fusion Fitness 24 is owned and operated by **Todd Stice** and the Stice family.

Fusion Fitness 24 is a high value, low-price club chain where the clubs are open 24 hours. The clubs feature strength and cardiovascular equipment, group classes, personal training and recovery. The Wellness

offerings feature a unique program called RESET360, which is a 60-minute protocol combining brain tap, sound therapy, cold plunge and infrared sauna. The goal for the brand is to continue to expand into small markets where there is a need for quality health clubs.

Frank Guengerich is the *President and CEO of HWLS*, a club ownership and management consulting firm. HWLS specializes in assisting clubs to maximize revenue and profitability, with a focus on

membership marketing and sales, fitness programming and wellness/medically supervised programs.

Mr. Stice is thrilled with the partnership. "We could not be more pleased than to have formed a partnership with Frank Guengerich and HWLS. Their approach to how they operate clubs is refreshing because they focus on balancing all aspects of the business, from customer service, facility cleanliness and maintenance, financial management, ancillary revenue growth and

over all membership sales and marketing," says Stice.

"We are very pleased to be working side by side with the Stice family and are excited for what the future holds for the Fusion Fitness 24 brand. We have a great strategic plan, and we are confident that the clubs and brand will thrive," according to Mr. Guengerich.

For more information about HWLS, visit www.hwlservices.com or email frank@hwlservices.com.



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"I highly recommend the HWLS team. They've provided us invaluable guidance regarding membership marketing and fitness programming."

- Mary Thomas | Owner and General Manager | Western Racquet & Fitness Club | Green Bay, WI



VISIT OUR SITE

...Rick Caro

continued from page 12

fourteen different organizations worldwide. He was named IRSA's Person of the Year in 1985 (He later received IHRSA's Lifetime Achievement Award in 2013 and was inducted into the HFA Hall of Fame's Inaugural class in 2025). Rick has a club business nickname which will probably stick with him forever... "Mr. Cost Control" and is the #1 expert on the subject in the club industry world. He also is called "Dr. Caro," "Coach" and "Uncle Rick" by some.

In addition to operating Management Vision, Caro serves on the IHRSA Advisory Council and is the Founder and Charman of the Board of Trustees of UBAC (Urban Business Assistance Corporation), a New York-based minority business development organization. He is an Electee to Who's Who in Tennis, he is a Club Council Board Member of ACE and he is on the Standards Committees for both IHRSA and the American College of Sports Medicine.

In closing, I want to tell an interesting story about Rick relative to a consulting job he had in Oregon. He had been retained in a court case to testify and argue on behalf of a club owner about a club tax assessment which was way out of line. During the court trial, Rick had the opportunity to educate the judge about the inaccuracy of the local assessor's work. In doing so, he impressed the judge, who then forced the assessor to reduce the annual tax bill by \$22,000! The local tax assessor thereafter spread the word to his local tax assessor peers in other counties in Oregon

to use great diligence and care in future tax assessments of athletic clubs in the area. This led to two county assessors contacting Rick directly, resulting in major savings in real estate taxes for two clubs (who did not even know Rick was involved). These assessors were reputed to have been warned by the original assessor that, "you don't want to let that guy from New York come out here."

Closing Comments from Norm Cates and Justin Cates

Norm Cates, Founder and Tribal Leader of



Rick Caro, Norm Cates and Justin Cates

Club Insider:

I have known Rick Caro for 50+ years, and in that time, he has made my life and the lives of countless others around him better. That includes so many in this great industry. Over the years, my son, Justin, and I, called him "Uncle" Rick. That's because, to us, he was that wise family member we all hope to have. And, he was the Industry's Best Friend. That began in the 1980s when he had the idea to merge the NTA with the NCCA to create IRSA, which eventually became IHRSA then HFA as we know it today. Throughout the history and evolution

of the Association, Rick was indispensable, and his annual Financial Panel was a must-attend event every year. In 1993, through the late Dr. Gerry Faust's Roundtable #1, Rick, Gerry and others around that table helped create *Club Insider*, which once again changed my life, and I hope, helped the industry. There will never be another like Rick. I wish his beloved, Sue, the best in this hard time.

MAY RICK CARO REST IN PEACE.



Justin Cates, Publisher of *Club Insider*:

As long as I can remember, Rick Caro has been in my life. That's why we always called him "Uncle." He's held me as a baby and shaken my hand as a man. He has been a confidant and mentor, both personally and professionally, helping guide me through the easiest of times and the hardest. All along the way, I knew I was not alone in receiving such kindness and attention for lack of a better word. That is just who Rick was. Somehow, he always found a way, made time and offered a word. The most incredible symbol of that to me was his birthday cards. He never missed one, and they always had a personal message, funny joke or word of advice to me. Uncle Rick, you will be missed, but rest easy knowing it is impossible for you to be forgotten because of the legacy you have left in all of us.

...Lessons Learned

continued from page 14

I was unclear about so many things when it came to running a business. He was the first to explain to me the difference between a budget and a forecast. He also showed me how to do projections. Now, I view these tasks as "business as usual," and candidly, I don't understand how a club owner/operator doesn't ensure these items are part of their everyday management. But, none of this would have happened for me if Rick didn't take the time and had the expertise to educate me.

Keep it Simple: Rick reminded me to keep it simple and not overcomplicate things. The world of finance is complicated enough, so I learned from him just to be rigorous and accurate but not complicated.

Don't Misrepresent: Rick was a fanatic about being truthful and not to misrepresent your financials. If you want to gain trust and be in business over the long haul, it is vital that you never misrepresent your data.

Commitment: If you say you'll do it, then do it! Be your word. Rick was a consummate professional, and he delivered on his

commitments. He was reliable, dependable and a steady influence.

Integrity: There is never a reason or excuse to lose sight of your moral compass or compromise your integrity.

Hot Tip: Be passionate, then it's not work.

Rick never stopped working. He didn't have to work; he chose to. This industry and the people in it was his passion, and he reminded me that, if you do what you love, it's not work, it's a labor of love. I'm blessed not to have to work either. I chose to, just like Rick, and I always will in this amazing business.

I learned so many things from Rick. As a matter of fact, I'm not sure I ever taught him anything. Sure, he was always interested in my businesses and would ask questions. He was so very curious as he wanted to be able to shine light on a subject.

Rick Caro will forever be missed. How amazing it is that we were able to induct him into the Hall of Fame as one of the original founders of IRSA, now HFA. There are some that are truly a trail blazer and Rick was one of them. Our "Superman"

of the health and fitness industry!

(Frank Guengerich is the President and Chief Executive Officer of Health, Wellness and Lifestyle Services - HWLS, a club ownership and management consulting firm. HWLS specializes in assisting clubs

to maximize revenue and profitability, with a focus on membership marketing and sales, fitness programming and wellness/medically supervised programs. For more information about HWLS, visit the website at www.hwlservices.com or email frank@hwlservices.com.)

Club Insider Seeks Contributing Authors

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Why is Teaching Soft Skills so... Hard?

By: **Jeffrey Pinkerton**

Our oldest son was 17 and had his first job interview. The night before, I helped him practice and prepare. We talked about what he was going to wear, some of the highlights of his resumé and the importance of making a great first impression. I reminded him of the things we had discussed in the past, often in the context of meeting new teachers or new coaches: make eye contact, smile, give a confident handshake, speak clearly and show enthusiasm. Then I said, "Just for fun, let's practice how you are going to walk in." It was, in fact, not fun.

Making a First Impression 30 Times

I assumed, since my son and I had talked about these life skills on numerous occasions, the first-impression must-haves would be a quick and simple part of our pre-interview practice. Not the case. It took 20 to 30 attempts just to get his entrance, hello and handshake to a passable level – some of the attempts taking only a few seconds. If he walked in with his eyes down or shoulders slumped, that was an immediate U-turn and restart. "No, thank you. We'll hire someone else. Try again."

To his credit, he was serious about getting this job. He had gotten a haircut earlier that day, had ironed his shirt and slacks, and while I am biased, already has

one of the most genuine, kindest smiles you've ever seen. I knew that if he made a great first impression, the questions and conversation would be easy. They'd be crazy not to hire him for their team.

And, after practicing a few dozen times, each time pushing his introversion to the side, he was brighter and bolder. Then, we rehearsed interview questions (his request to begin with), and – fast forward – he got the job.

Hard Wiring Soft Skills

Kroger, the grocery store that hired him the next day, would have training sessions to teach him how to do what they (See *Jeffrey Pinkerton Page 18*)



Jeffrey Pinkerton

Skincare as the Next Revenue Stream: What Gyms Can Learn From *Cosmoprof North America 2025*

By: **Nancy Trent**

Cosmoprof North America 2025 wasn't just a beauty show; it was a crystal ball into where wellness and skincare are headed next. For fitness facilities looking to expand retail offerings, the insights from this year's event highlight a major opportunity... Skincare is no longer a luxury add-on; it's becoming a core part of self-care, recovery and performance.

The show floor buzzed with everything from biotech-powered serums to culturally rooted rituals reimagined for today's wellness-minded consumer. While aisles were packed with beauty staples, the real story was in the products reshaping the conversation around skin health, recovery and active lifestyles.

"Products that addressed the concerns of people with sensitive skin were a large trend this year," noted **Liza Rapay**, Vice President of *Cosmoprof North America*. "We saw simple face masks enhanced with advanced ingredients, SPF's that double as anti-aging treatments and multifunctional devices merging beauty and wellness."

For gyms and studios, this translates into new possibilities:

■ **Sensitive Skin Solutions:** Post-sweat skin is often reactive. Stocking gentle, effective products tailored to this need makes sense for locker room retail.

■ **SPF + Performance:** Members who train outdoors will appreciate sunscreens that protect while delivering skincare benefits.

■ **Multifunctional Devices:** Think recovery meets beauty: devices that massage, de-puff, or boost circulation can sit alongside foam rollers and massage guns.

■ **Lip and Hydration Care:** Small, affordable add-ons that members can grab on the way out are an easy upsell.

Beauty is no longer siloed. It's part of recovery, performance, confidence and wellness, the very pillars gyms and studios are built on. Purpose-driven skincare is the new standard, and fitness businesses that tap into this movement will see not just retail sales but stronger member loyalty.

The Frequency Effect

Fitness recovery is no longer limited to stretching and ice baths; skin is joining the conversation. At this year's *Cosmoprof*, frequency-based beauty stole the spotlight, with LED therapy, ultrasound technology and microcurrent tools leading the charge. These technologies stimulate collagen, calm inflammation and boost product absorption, making them a natural fit for recovery lounges and locker room wellness menus.

QARTZ takes this idea further with crystal-infused skincare that merges frequency, energy and intention. Their vegan, cruelty-free formulas transform post-sweat clean-up into a mindful recovery ritual, aligning perfectly with the holistic mindset of today's fitness consumer.

MedDrop, a Hamburg-based life science company, showcased *DERMADROP*, its needle-free technology

that drives active ingredients deep into the skin. Originally designed for medical use, this system now delivers visible results for face, body and hair, mirroring the science-backed recovery tools already popular in fitness.

The New Nail Movement: From Statement to Strength

The nail category is shifting from decoration to durability, a trend that resonates with active people who put their hands and feet through extra wear and tear. Today's innovations balance bold looks with formulas that strengthen and protect nails.

Dr. Anti Fungus introduced stick-on nails infused with antifungal solutions, a game changer for athletes who spend hours in sneakers and sweat-prone environments. *Cuccio* highlighted nutrient-rich cuticle oils, perfect for hydrating and strengthening after tough workouts or frequent hand washing. *Twinkled T's Nail Honey* blends style with repair, keeping nails resilient through heavy lifting or yoga grips. *Inked by Dani* offered temporary, hand-drawn designs that bring self-expression without commitment, ideal for fitness enthusiasts who want flair without downtime.

Most Improved Products

Innovation at *Cosmoprof* wasn't always about what's new; it was about making the essentials better. For clubs, these "most improved" products represent quick wins: familiar categories with upgraded performance.



Nancy Trent

Epilaser introduced an at-home device with SPOT Technology for precise, permanent hair removal, an appealing option for fitness enthusiasts who prioritize smooth, low-maintenance skin. *Cool Freakin' Genius* delivered a playful take with *LAZY A.F. Dry Shampoo*, a fast fix for sweaty, post-class hair. *CoCoXOs'* whipped body butters blend hydration with clean ingredients, offering a luxe locker room upgrade. And *blendSMART's* rotating makeup brush promises professional results in minutes, mirroring the time-saving, performance-first mindset athletes already value.

Luxury Yoga-Based Naturals

Mind-body connection is at the heart of fitness, and this year's beauty (See *Nancy Trent Page 17*)

...Nancy Trent

continued from page 16

trends followed suit. Brands infused yoga-inspired rituals and botanicals into skincare, emphasizing balance, recovery and relaxation.

Ram Ram turned simple products like oils and scrubs into mindful, sensory rituals, perfect for extending yoga practice into skincare. *The Ayurveda Experience* spotlighted face oils and serums rooted in ancient wisdom, ideal for members who embrace holistic health. From Fiji, *Ram Ram* and *Loloma* celebrated natural traditions, offering pure botanicals like *Nama* seaweed and organic coconut oil for deep hydration and skin recovery after training. These brands reinforce the growing crossover between spiritual wellness and physical fitness.

Brands With Mantras

Purpose-driven products resonate with today's health-conscious consumer. Brands at *Cosmoprof* aren't just selling formulas, they're selling philosophies that align with the wellness-first fitness community.

Champione blends ancient resins with modern bioactives for high-frequency skincare that supports both performance and emotional wellbeing. *KOA+ROY's* waterless, zero-waste body care cubes echo the sustainability commitments of eco-minded clubs. *LifeTherapy's* lotions and fragrances are tied to moods like "Grounded" and "Energized," syncing perfectly with pre- or

post-workout rituals. *Nama Fiji's* seaweed-based hydration and *Loloma Fiji's* pure coconut oil link performance recovery with natural simplicity.

Start Them Young

Teen members are growing in number, and skincare for young athletes is finally catching up. *evre.*, a New Zealand brand, is setting the standard with natural, endocrine-safe formulas designed for developing skin. By pairing clean products with a commitment to youth mental health, *evre.* bridges the gap between wellness and self-care for the next generation of fitness consumers.

New Power Ingredients

Just as supplements evolve with science, so does skincare. *Kiyomi Skin* showcased the power of 5-ALA, an amino acid that energizes and rejuvenates skin at the cellular level. Already popular in Japan, this *J-Beauty* innovation promises hydration, collagen support and anti-aging benefits, mirroring the performance-driven mindset that drives fitness enthusiasts to seek the latest in nutrition and recovery science.

• • •

Beauty is moving in the same direction as fitness... more intelligent, more intentional and more inclusive than ever before. The trends on display weren't just about glowing skin or glossy nails; they were about recovery, resilience and routines that

support a healthier lifestyle. For clubs, the takeaway is simple: beauty and fitness are no longer separate lanes. Together, they're shaping a holistic approach to wellness where members don't just train harder; they recover smarter, look better and feel stronger inside and out.

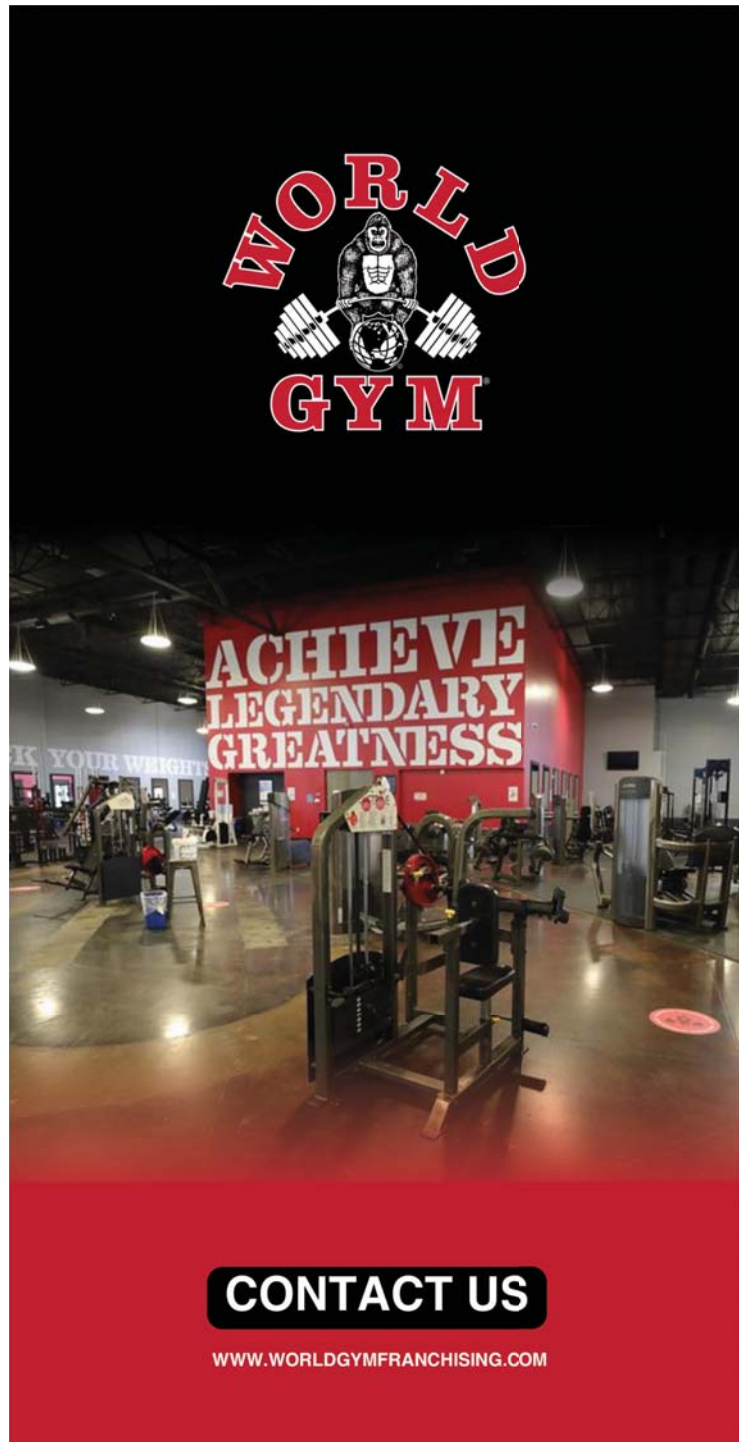
(*Nancy Trent* is a writer and speaker, a lifelong wellness activist, a globe-trotting trend watcher and the Founder and President of *Trent & Company*, a leading wellness PR firm. *Trent & Company*, which launched many health and beauty

brands, grew out of Nancy's personal and passionate commitment to helping people live longer and healthier lives. A former journalist for *New York 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. Learn more at www.trentandcompany.com or contact Nancy at nancy@trentandcompany.com.)

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...Jeffrey Pinkerton

continued from page 17

wanted him to do, the “hard skills.” But, they hired likeable, trainable, hardworking people, who would be great to work with and who would be a great representation of the company.

That’s why we spent our time working on soft skills – making a great first impression, how to be a great conversationalist, how to ask great questions, and how to be yourself – the best, most professional, most presentable, most hireable version of yourself.

Practicing Being Personable

Now, let’s talk about your team. Sure, you can teach the hard skills, like processes, technical skills and systems. But, how well trained and prepared is your team in soft skills like communicating, caring and making a great first impression?

If you’re unsure, have a friend call your club and ask a few questions. Or, even better, have someone secret shop your club by walking in the door. You can even message me, and I’ll call your facility and ask some questions about programs

and pricing. **Warning:** I am definitely going to ask them if they’ve ever tried a group fitness workout at your facility.

It can be hard to teach soft skills for a few reasons. The first is that, to apply them, you have to be willing to step out of your comfort zone and face stressful situations. Even rehearse them. Because handling a customer complaint can make you want to hide behind the desk. Overcoming sales objections can trigger a true fight or flight response. And, standing on a stage in front of 20 people to teach a group exercise class can mean sweaty hands and an increased heart rate... before the workout even begins!

But, being unprepared for those situations is even more stressful.

The second reason, as my son learned, is that it takes practice to be personable. I’m happy to report that my son’s time stocking shelves at Kroger brought him out of his introverted shell and helped him shine as the friendly face and warm smile to brighten people’s day. He gained confidence and eventually sought out conversations with customers, even going out of his way to talk to our adult friends and neighbors.

Training for Hard and Soft Skills

In MOSSA’s instructor trainings, we – of course – teach the technical side of delivering a group fitness workout, hard skills like knowing programming and correctly executing the movements.

But, we also dig deep into connecting, being personable, helping people feel welcome, helping new people get started well and helping people feel as successful as possible as soon as possible.

Because we know how important it is for instructors – and any employee at your facility – to simply care. You want them to be serious about the job, however part-time, to care about the company they represent, about the mission you together are trying to accomplish, and about being the best version of themselves for the benefit of other people.

As for my son, **Wilton**, you won’t see him at Kroger any longer; since then, he’s received some of the world’s best training, absolutely pushed himself out of his comfort zone, and now walks into a room with eye contact, smiles and has a strong and confident handshake (or salute, if applicable). Was it our conversation all those years ago? I am sure it helped. But,

more than likely, it was the eight weeks of Navy Bootcamp and his 6+ years of traveling the globe... all starting when a Navy recruiter sparked up a conversation with Wilton (or maybe Wilton struck up a conversation with him) on the aisles at Kroger.



Know people who would be great at teaching group fitness but need to build confidence and skill? MOSSA instructor trainings aren’t Navy Bootcamps, but they do equip trainees with hard and soft skills practice and feedback so they can deliver great experiences at your facility. If you’ll find the likeable, trainable, hardworking people (look everywhere!), we can inspire, train and mentor them.

See the **MOSSA Ad** on the **Page #19**.

(Jeffrey Pinkerton is the Business Development Manager for MOSSA. Jeffrey can be reached by phone at **770-989-4737** or email at jeffreypinkerton@mossa.net.)

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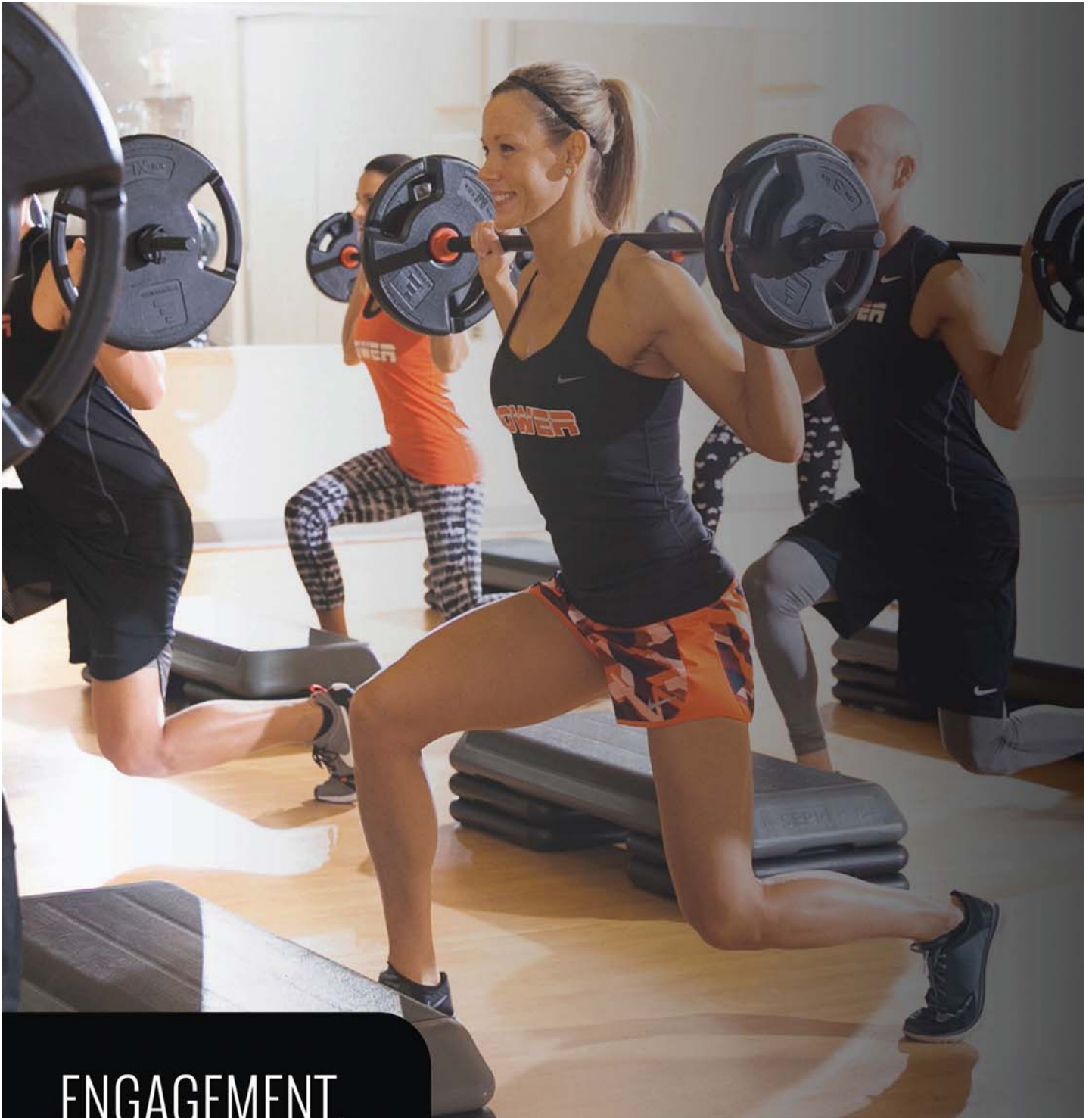
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