

Norm Cates'

# CLUB INSIDER

CELEBRATING 29 YEARS OF TRUST

## Martin Johns and The Raintree/ALIVE Team Live and Operate Via an “Intentional Culture”



(L to R) Jonathan Edwards, Chad Bryant, Michelle Bean, Nick Anziano, Nina Askew, Rachael Burke, Martin Johns and Jenslee Blume

**NOVEMBER 2022**

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# CLUB INSIDER

CELEBRATING 29 YEARS OF TRUST

## Martin Johns and The Raintree/ALIVE Team Live and Operate Via an "Intentional Culture"

By: Norm Cates

Martin Johns and his partner, Dave Veldman, built *The Raintree Athletic Club* and *ALIVE by Raintree*, two clubs in Fort Collins, Colorado that are not just remarkable in terms of their offerings and operations, but amazingly, these two clubs are located across the street from each other! This amazing story about these two clubs will very likely capture your attention right from the start, and my bet is you won't put it down until you've finished reading ALL of it! Let me add... I wouldn't at all be surprised were you to find yourself going back and reading it a second time, maybe even third, because this story is that interesting!

Let me start off by extending

sincere THANKS, APPRECIATION and KUDOS to the following key staff members at Martin and Dave's clubs who've been there day-in and day-out for years. For sure, I want to emphasize Martin's words about his special **Team Members**, so I'm quoting Martin verbatim here, 'The following are **ALL KEY Staff Members!**' The names, titles and tenures of each of these key people are **Chad Bryant**, *Fitness Director*, 4 years; **Michelle Bean**, *Operations Director*, 13 years; **Nick Anziano**, *Facilities Director*, 10 years; **Rachael Burke**, *Childcare Manager*, 5 years; **Nina Askew**, *Membership Manager*, 5 years; **Jenslee Blume**, *Marketing Manager*, 6 years and **Laury Dennis**, *Group Fitness Manager*, 13 years.

With that stated, let's delve into

the very special story of Martin Johns, a 53-year-old, two-club owner and operator who is a *former Olympian* that represented New Zealand in the *Atlanta 1996 U.S. Olympic Games*. Between his story and his philosophy, you will see what differentiates these two wonderful Fort Collins, Colorado clubs. We hope this story, full of great information, will help you advance the *State of the Art* in your clubs. **SO... ENJOY!**

An Interview With Martin Johns, Owner and General Manager of The Raintree Athletic Club and ALIVE

**Club Insider (C.I.)** - Martin, where were you born, and where did you grow up?  
**Martin Johns (MJ)** - I was born in  
(See *Martin Johns* Page 10)



Martin Johns

## IHRSA Board Approves Sweeping Changes

**BOSTON, MA** - In a recent meeting, the *IHRSA Board of Directors* approved several new proposals that will change the organizational structure. First and foremost, the group, led by *Board Chair, Chris Craytor*, voted to add three new seats to the Board.

The new seats will represent one member each from the *National Health & Fitness Alliance Advisory Council*, the *Global Health & Fitness Alliance (GHFA) Advisory Council* and the *Industry Partner Advisory Council (IPAC)*. The representatives from these three groups will serve two-year terms but will not hold officer positions.

"I realized on the day I arrived at IHRSA that these were three critical voices that deserved more recognition and a vote," says *IHRSA President & CEO, Liz Clark*. "They will bring even more purpose and clarity to our strategic vision."

Currently, **Gale Landers**, *Founder & CEO of Fitness Formula Clubs*, is *Chair of the National Health & Fitness Alliance*; **Andrea Bell**, *Co-Founder & Director of Inspire Brands Asia*, is *Chair of the GHFA*; and **Bill Davis**, *CEO of ABC Fitness Solutions*, is *Chair of the IPAC*.

The new IHRSA Board seats won't necessarily be occupied by each group's Chair; that will be determined

by the groups, then voted on by the IHRSA Board.

Additionally, the IHRSA Board approved changes to specific bylaws and created two new committees: *Membership* and *Events*.

"These proposals demonstrate our determination to broaden and strengthen our global partnerships and to ensure that advocacy always has a voice at the highest levels," adds Liz.

Under Liz's leadership, these changes represent the continuing transformation of IHRSA, with the intention of positioning the organization as a more  
(See *IHRSA* Page 6)



October 2021 Edition of Club Insider

## Inside the Insider: Edition #347

- Exercise IS Medicine - **By:** Mike Alpert
- How to Stop Selling Yourself Short in Your Fitness Business - **By:** Donna Krech
- How to Keep Members Engaged All Year - **By:** Ellen de Werd
- Franchising: Plan Your Pre-Nup! - **By:** Sara Kooperman, JD
- Fit, But Broken. Are You Muscle and Movement Strong? - **By:** Cathy Spencer Browning
- Thomas Myslinski, Sr., Former Star Athlete Passes Away (A 60-Year Friend of Norm Cates)
- North Castle Partners Extends CR Fitness Partnership with First Continuation Fund, Led by TPG
- Fitness Premier 24/7 Clubs' EOS and Culture Index Tools Keep the Franchise Network Aligned
- And, of Course, *Norm's Notes*

## Norm's Notes

■Hello Everybody! This is your **Club Insider Founder and Tribal Leader Since 1993** checking in! To start off this month's **Norm's Notes**, I want to mention that **JUSTIN CATES**, my *Son and Partner in Club Insider*, and I, are both very proud to be able to say to you all that **this is our 347th monthly edition!** Moreover, with great pride in our minds and hearts, as we proudly deliver this *special November 2022 Edition of Club Insider* to all of you, our highly esteemed readers, we're simultaneously celebrating in our minds and hearts the amazing fact that this edition **completes our 29th year of publishing!** With next month's *December 2022 Edition*, **we'll begin our 30th year of publishing Club Insider!**

Truth be told, I believe this monthly work on *Club Insider* has been divinely guided by God. Beyond these words that I've just written here in bold type, I really don't know how else to express how grateful and how very thankful we are to you all for regularly reading and supporting *Club Insider* each time you pick it up. **THANKS Y'ALL!**

■Is AMERICA a GREAT COUNTRY, or WHAT? Hmm... hmm... hmm. GOD

### BLESS AMERICA!

■Today, I'm going to use part of my **Norm's Notes** to you to tell you about the sad passing of the one and only, **TOM MYSLINSKI, SR.** Many years ago, in **1962 and 1963**, Tom was a high school classmate and football teammate of mine at **Rome Free Academy High School (RFA)** in Rome, New York. Tom was one year ahead of me at RFA. Sadly, I learned that **Tom passed away on September 27th at age 77 after a tough, seven-year battle with cancer.** I'm writing this Norm's Note about Tom today because, in fact, **TOM MYSLINSKI, SR., was a truly GREAT AMERICAN!** On **Page #8**, we've published Tom's Obituary, and when you read it, which I hope you will, **you'll know WHY I describe Tom Myslinski here as truly a "Great AMERICAN!"**

May **TOM MYSLINSKI, SR., my long-time good friend and high school football teammate, REST IN ETERNAL PEACE!**

■I'm very pleased to report to you all that we've produced another remarkable Cover Story this month! It features the story of a young man named **MARTIN JOHNS.** Martin is a former *1996 Olympic Team*

*Member* representing New Zealand, his native country, where he was born in 1969. Martin shared his amazing story about his two clubs, *Raintree Athletic Club* and *ALIVE by Raintree*, in Fort Collins, Colorado with us. Right off the bat, here's a **"Tip of My Black Hat" to Martin for the great career he's carved out in our industry.** Moreover, **KUDOS to Martin** for the remarkable manner in which he's conducted his life since he became an American citizen after marrying his lovely wife **NIKOLE.** The story of Martin Johns, a bright young fellow, now age 53, is quite remarkable, to say the least. Don't miss reading it starting on **Page #3.** I promise you'll enjoy it and learn a lot!

■Folks... the following are words I've carefully chosen, **from ME to YOU**, with pride in my heart and my mind. I want to **ask you to join me in feeling in your hearts and your minds, THE TRUE BLESSING and JOY we should all be sharing together every day**, the great blessing of being participants in this **GREAT industry.**

**This is a very special industry that's actually making our world a better place for millions and millions of people around the globe every day!** For that wonderful achievement, **you great folks in**



Norm Cates

**clubs everywhere should be extremely proud and very happy because you all truly deserve that great feeling of pride and joy because you earn it every day!!!**

■**SPEAKING OF PRIDE, LIZ CLARK, IHRSA's ESTEEMED President and CEO,** should be very proud of her efforts and accomplishments at **IHRSA** since she's been leading the **Association.** On *(See Norm's Notes Page 7)*

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**PRINTING and MAILING SERVICES** - Walton Press

**Club Insider**  
P.O. Box 137314  
Clermont, FL 34713-7314  
[www.clubinsideronline.com](http://www.clubinsideronline.com)

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# Exercise IS Medicine

By: Mike Alpert

The November Edition of *Club Insider* comes as we approach Thanksgiving and the beginning of the Holiday Season. With that comes lots of delicious food and parties and time to let ourselves go a little bit with our food and drink intake. And, that's okay, but what seems to be happening is a disturbing trend of letting ourselves go all year round.

Two months ago, I watched an interesting segment on HBO's *Real Time with Bill Maher* where he talked about this and the obesity pandemic. I am not a fan of Bill Maher, and although his talking points are sure to be taken by people who struggle with their weight as offensive, I thought his points were so spot on that I want to write them in this article. So, keep in mind that these are mostly in his words, written by me below.

In essence, Bill Maher is speaking about how our society has changed from that of being fit and healthy to letting ourselves go by overindulging in food all year round. In an effort to not offend anyone, we have gone from fat acceptance to fat celebration. Healthy at any weight has become an unchallenged lie that people tell themselves, and far too many believe it. We see it in advertising where companies like Nike, *Sports Illustrated* and *Victoria Secret*, which are specifically about fitness, are nevertheless promoting people who are not

into fitness. You see it in their advertising by using people who are grossly overweight in an effort to drive up sales. And, yet, people like Adele fight shame campaigns for losing weight.

*ConscienHealth* is quoted as saying, "the media and public health needs to stop catastrophizing obesity." But, we should be because it is a full-blown catastrophe. And, if you don't believe this, certainly COVID proved it: Obese people were 113% more likely to be hospitalized; 74% more likely to be admitted to the I.C.U. and 48% more likely to die. Further, an obese person is more likely to develop Type 2 Diabetes, which is the number one chronic disease to treat in the United States, coming in at a cost of \$327 billion per year.

Yet, *USA Today* wrote: "Science hasn't yet figured out how to solve obesity. We don't know how to blunt the rise in obesity because we don't know precisely what the factors are that are causing it." Really, they must not pay any attention to what the New York Times says when they write, "poor diet is the leading cause of mortality in the United States."

Now, I don't personally read the *New York Times*, and I am not a fan of theirs, but when they write about our armed forces and our ability to attract more recruits, it makes me wonder how prepared we are to defend ourselves. They seem to imply that far too many are too fat to serve:

"ages 17 - 24 are either too obese to qualify or they have underlying health issues."

There is even a card that a person can give their physician or nurse that says: "please don't weigh me unless it's (really) medically necessary. If you really need my weight, please tell me why so that I can give you my informed consent." It seems like that would be similar to going to your dentist and asking them not to look at your teeth.

At some point, acceptance becomes enabling, and we cannot continue down this path in order to simply not offend someone. Letting ourselves go... we can do better than that. The statistics are clear: we have a pandemic, and it is not COVID. It is Obesity.

It is extremely challenging attempting to attract an obese person to a health club. Think about it. Their perception of a health club or gym is a place where fit, good-looking people go to exercise and socialize. They are not exercisers and are not comfortable in our environment. And, we haven't even designed workout shoes or clothing that they are comfortable working out in. I can never figure out why a company like Nike doesn't design workout clothes and shoes that people with severe weight problems would be comfortable in. There are certainly more obese people than there are those who participate in 10Ks.

So, what are we, as an industry, going to do about this? How can we reach



Mike Alpert

the people who struggle with their weight to the point where it is so unhealthy and is affecting their quality of life (and driving up the cost of healthcare)? Our clubs need to be inclusive and our marketing efforts need to be focused on getting this across to the public at large. It will be a challenge, but we, as an industry, are up for it. Let's make sure that all populations know that: **EXERCISE IS MEDICINE!**

(Mike Alpert is the COO of Smart Health Clubs. He can be contacted at [mike@smarthealthclubs.com](mailto:mike@smarthealthclubs.com) or 951 - 205 - 1136.)

## ...IHRSA

continued from page 3

effective global advocate for fitness, wellness and health services.

### The Impact of IHRSA Board Service

Serving on the IHRSA Board of Directors is a fulfilling role that helps the health and fitness industry worldwide thrive and grow. Former and current Board Members agree that there's no better platform to guide the industry than joining the IHRSA Board.

"I can say without question that applying to serve on the board has been one of the best decisions I have made in my career," says IHRSA Board Chair, **Chris Craytor**, CEO of *acac Fitness & Wellness Centers* and CEO of *Well Health*. "As a

member of the IHRSA Board, you will have the opportunity to personally influence the growth, promotion and protection of our industry."

Contributing to the global health and fitness industry as a member of the IHRSA Board of Directors has had a similar impact on **Alan Leach**, Board *ex-officio* and CEO of *West Wood Clubs in Ireland*.

Currently, a record number of Board applications are under review to fill seats for the 2023 - 2027 term. Each year, two to four Board positions are filled as existing Board Members complete their terms of service to ensure that new Board Members and seasoned members can provide a breadth of experience, ideas and direction to help health clubs and fitness facilities of all types, sizes and specialties.

IHRSA is grateful for each applicant and looks forward to working alongside

industry veterans who are committed to providing guidance, strategic direction and insight that has a lasting global impact.

Liz notes that the record number of applications, "is a reflection of a newfound interest from so many in our community who want to join, shape and continue to lead this organization into the future. We thank you for your interest in playing a larger role in IHRSA. We're building something special here, and we're glad you're with us."

Sorting through the applications has proved to be an arduous process. With so many qualified, engaged and passionate applicants, and only a few seats up for grabs, the IHRSA Board of Directors nominations committee has their work cut out... in the best way possible.

"One of the things that have impressed me the most in my first year as CEO of IHRSA has been learning just



how much incredible talent there is in this industry," says Liz. "We're rich with brilliant entrepreneurs and passionate professionals who treat our industry as much more than a career; it's a lifelong mission."

The IHRSA Board hopes to vote on nominees for the three seats at the end of the month. IHRSA will release more information in the coming weeks.

Join IHRSA Today at [ihrsa.org/membership](https://ihrsa.org/membership)

## ...Norm's Notes

continued from page 4

September 27th, Liz commended the current Administration's *National Strategy and Conference on Hunger, Nutrition and Health*. Liz made the following statement praising the Administration's first step in that effort, "As a life-long athlete and believer in the power of physical activity, I am glad to see that the Administration is starting a national conversation on hunger, nutrition and health that includes a focus on the importance of physical activity. Being physically active is one of the most important lifestyle behaviors we can engage in to maintain physical and mental health, and too many Americans find it difficult to include physical activity in their daily life. As leaders from across the country stand up today to end hunger and increase healthy eating and physical activity by 2030, our industry continues our commitment to making the world a healthier place through advocacy and access to fitness for everyone. It is well established that exercise is its own form of medicine, and along with nutrition and other priorities, must be part of any conversation that seeks to make meaningful changes. We commend this first step and look forward to continuing the conversation with the administration, impactful stakeholders and members of both parties in Congress about the critical role the fitness industry can play in improving Americans' physical and mental health."

### ■Here's more NEWS out of IHRSA:

■The IHRSA Board of Directors has added three seats. The new seats will represent one member each from the *National Health & Fitness Alliance Advisory Council*, the *Global Health & Fitness Alliance Advisory Council*, and the *Industry Partner Advisory Committee*. Liz Clark commented about these very important initiatives: "I realized on the day I arrived at IHRSA that these were three critical voices that deserved more recognition and a vote. They will bring even more purpose and clarity to our strategic vision." See the **Press Release on Page #3**.

■JEFFREY SOLSBY, *Capitol Hill and Association Veteran*, has joined IHRSA as *Senior Vice President of Communications*. **Welcome aboard to JEFFREY!** Solsby brings experience as a veteran staff member on Capitol Hill and in prominent trade associations. Most recently, he was *Senior Advisor to Rep. DARRELL ISSA (R-CA)*, whom he also served in a similar role in 2011-2012 during the Congressman's tenure as *Chairman of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform*. Liz Clark commented: "Expanding the IHRSA team helps us move closer towards achieving the goals set by our Board to enter a new era of engagement, outreach and industry activism. Our industry

is comprised of community-oriented businesses with millions of employees and customers in every corner of the country. This work helps enhance the mental and physical wellbeing of the public and alleviate pressure on the healthcare system, and this success arms us with a powerful and compelling message to engage with the public, media and elected officials." Expansion is part of IHRSA *President and CEO, Liz Clark's* strategy to **refocus and rebuild** the Association. Board Members recruited Liz to join the group a year ago to help refocus its advocacy and outreach mission, modernize operations and member engagement, while continuing to maximize value and opportunity via its popular and widely attended Annual International Convention & Trade Show.

■The *Fitness Technology Summit* and *DXFactor* presented IHRSA and the *National Health & Fitness Alliance* a **check for \$125,000!** The generous donation will support ongoing U.S. advocacy efforts, including a pivotal push for passage of the **PHIT (Personal Health Investment Today) Act**. **AL NOSHIRVANI**, *IHRSA Board Member and Founder of The Fitness Technology Summit*, urges, "Let's not get caught flat-footed again! **Support IHRSA and the important work that our Association is doing at the State and Federal level!**" The Fitness Technology Summit took place October 10 - 12 in Atlanta, and reportedly, was the most successful event in its history.

■Again this year, **IN-SHAPE** is working to **raise \$100K for cancer research**. The **8th Annual In-Shape Fights Cancer** campaign kicked off on **October 1st**. Funds raised will go to local chapters of the *American Cancer Society* and to *St. Jude Children's Research Hospital*. **KRIS MULKEY**, *CMO of In-Shape Health Clubs*, commented: "Our campaign is an opportunity to connect to our community and to **say THANK YOU to our members in a meaningful way** by supporting a cause that impacts us all. Our team rallies together every year to engage our members and inspire them to donate and get involved. All month long, the energy from the team and our members when you walk into our clubs is palpable. It's contagious and really is the best of In-Shape; passion, drive and kindness."

■**New York Sports Clubs (NYSC)** and its family of brands, one of the largest privately held fitness operators in the U.S., announced the acquisition of **FHITTING ROOM**, a leading NYC-based boutique fitness brand. Founded in 2013, Fitting Room is known for its HIIT and strength training programming, which combines the energy and community of a group workout experience with the skill-building and attention of a personal training session.

As part of the acquisition, *Fitting Room Founder, KARI SAITOWITZ*, a prominent marketing executive and brand

strategist who has held leadership roles at *Pepsi* and *American Express*, was named *Chief Marketing & Creative Officer* for NYSC. *Fitting Room President, TRISTAN SAW*, a former *Equinox* executive and digital transformation expert, will now serve as *NYSC Chief Strategy & Systems Officer*. Fitting Room's NYC flagship studios will continue to operate as standalone locations with plans to expand the brand into select NYSC locations. In addition, NYSC will unveil more than 20 upgraded clubs by the end of this year, with plans to improve all locations in the portfolio with renovated studios, new programming,

and elevated services that deliver on the company's mission to improve lives through fitness.

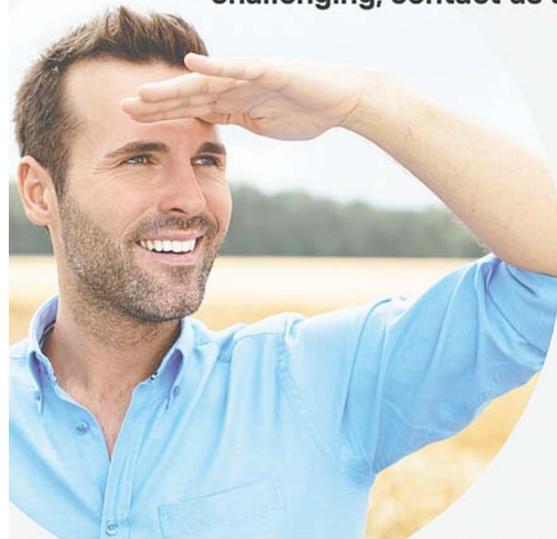
■**GlobalFit**, a wellness technology company that began changing lives in 1992 through physical activity, announced it is rebranding to **HUSK** for the company's **30th Anniversary. Congratulations on 30 years! And, good luck with the rebrand.**

■**JUSTIN and I want to say Thanks for reading Club Insider, and we wish you and your family a Happy Thanksgiving!**

(See *Norm's Notes* Page 8)

## A promising future is ahead in employment for the Fitness Industry!

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## ...Norm's Notes

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

(*Norm Cates, Jr. is the Founder and Tribal Leader Since 1993 of Club Insider, completing its 29th year of monthly publication.*)

## Thomas Myslinski, Sr., Former Star Athlete Passes Away (A 60-Year Friend of Norm Cates)

Thomas Myslinski, Sr., passed away on September 27, 2022, at Erie County Medical Center, in Buffalo, New York after valiantly dueling with cancer for almost seven years. He was 77.

Born in Rome, New York, Tom was the son of **Joseph Paul** and **Regina Gromelski Myslinski**. He shared his childhood with his sister, **Susan**, both sets of grandparents (Myslinskis and Gromelskis), and many, many aunts, uncles and cousins in their predominately Polish neighborhood just south of the Polish Home. Christmas and Easter were highlights for them all as they celebrated the birth and death of our Lord.

**Tom and Debbie (nee Castle)** shared 54 years of married life and were high school sweethearts. They have two sons, **Thomas Joseph, Jr.** and **Timothy Michael Myslinski**. Tom, Jr. married **Roman Amy Delahun**, and they have three children, **Thomas III, Emily** and **Michael**. Tim married **Rebecca Lafor**nara, a Buffalonian, and they have three children, **Natalie, Brady** and **Hayden**. All six called Tom "**Grandpa Coach**," and all proudly have the same last name, **Myslinski**.

Tom is survived by his sister, **Susan (Ray) Tarkowski**, and their two children **Alison (Jim) Underdown**, and **Andrew (Maggie Welch) Tarkowski**; his brother-in-law, **Don Castle (Melissa)**; four grandnephews, **Justin and Aidan Underdown, Jackson Tarkowski** and **Andrew Castle**; two grandnieces, **Maureen Castle Hollowell (Jeff)**, and **Sophia Tarkowski**; an aunt, **Desiree Cataldo Gromelski**; and many special cousins.

After being a stellar three-sport athlete and graduating from *Rome Free Academy, Class of 1963*, Tom continued his education at *Bordentown Military Institute*, in Bordentown, New Jersey, where he participated in three sports. After graduating from prep school, he received a football scholarship to the *University of Maryland*, where he also participated in wrestling. He graduated with a degree in Physical Education and Recreation and met many friends with whom he kept in touch and visited throughout his lifetime, **Chris Dill, Art Brzowski, Tony Santy** and **Ed Gunderman**, to name a few.

While at Maryland, Tom played offensive tackle from 1964 to 1967, lettering his final three years. He also wrestled at Maryland, winning the *Atlantic Coast Conference* heavyweight championship his junior year. In 1968, he was drafted by the *New York Jets* of the *American Football League*. He was sent down to the *Bridgeport Jets*, in Bridgeport, Connecticut and was going to be recalled by the Jets for their *Super Bowl* game; however, he suffered a torn bicep in a Bridgeport game



the day before being recalled. He returned to Rome to his wife and soon to be born first child.

At that time, **Charlie Dain** was the *Athletic Director of Rome City Schools* and hired Tom as a *Physical Education Teacher and Coach*. He started teaching Physical Education in the elementary schools, while coaching at the freshman level at Staley. He moved up to JV football as his long tenure at Strough began. In 1981, he became the line coach at RFA. **Tom Hoke** was the head coach, and **Don Bruce** and **Bob Ryan** were assistants. They were the "*fearsome foursome*," working together for 26 years. **Ray Tarkowski** handled the Press Box, **Coach Niemi** handled the equipment, **Kelly McAlee** handled the injuries, **Artie Newman** handled the footballs and **Jeanette Dominic** handled the 50/50 raffle. They were a family that extended to the entire community of Rome.

In addition to football, Tom coached Indoor Track, Wrestling with **Coach Jim Rafferty**, and Spring Track and Field with **Coach Paul Gigliotti**. For 30 years, these great men, all of them, impacted the amazing natural talents of many high school students, including their own children.

In 1984, **Tom and Irene O'Shea** were inducted into the Rome Sports Hall of Fame. Some years later, Tom was humbled by having the *RFA Weight Room* named for him, a moment he treasured until passing. Thank you RFA weight men and **Coach Ted Swavelly**. During the summers, Tom worked at RFA, through the *Rome Recreation Department* headed by **Bill Fleet**, coaching weightlifting and conditioning, which he felt was so important in the maturation of young athletes. In his spare time, Tom was an avid fly fisherman and outdoorsman.

Grandpa Coach believed one was never too young to participate in healthy activities that developed and instilled confidence, pride, courage and a hard work ethic. He believed in a quote by Derek Jeter, "*There may be people who have more talent than you, but there's no excuse for anyone to work harder than you.*" Not only was Grandpa Coach the epitome of hard work, but he taught all to live that way.

A *Mass of Christian Burial* was celebrated on Monday, October 17, 2022 at *St. Paul's Church* in Rome, New York.

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## ...Martin Johns

continued from page 3

Wellington, New Zealand, in 1969. I grew up in Wellington and did my elementary, middle and high school studies there. Just before my 18th birthday, I came to the United States to pursue an athletic scholarship at *Adams State College* in Alamosa, Colorado. I grew up very sporty and very athletic. I played the 'British Sports,' Cricket and Rugby, which was my passion, and until this day, I still get up in the early hours of the Northern Hemisphere mornings to watch live Rugby matches from back home in New Zealand as well as South Africa and Australia. So, that was my passion.

Growing up, I did show some running prowess, so that's what I came to the United States to do... to get an education while furthering my running career. I set a goal in high school to represent my country in the *Olympic Games*. In the late '80s and early 90s in New Zealand, I felt the best opportunity I had was to come to America to learn about the collegiate system. It amounted to a semi-professional setup where you go to school in the mornings; get your education; and then access world-class facilities, training, coaching and competition in the afternoons and on the weekends. I was very fortunate in 1988 to come over to the United States and reached my ultimate goal... that of being an Olympian, something I am proud to say I was able to do! I represented New Zealand in the 1995 *World Championships* and then in the 1996 *Olympic Games* in Atlanta, Georgia, competing in the 1,500 Meters. I ran post-collegiately after the Olympic Games, and I retired in 1997 at the tender young age of 29. I never really had a job at that point, so my goal was to get a job. And, that's how I got into the health and fitness club industry.

**C.I.** - Are you married? If yes, please share

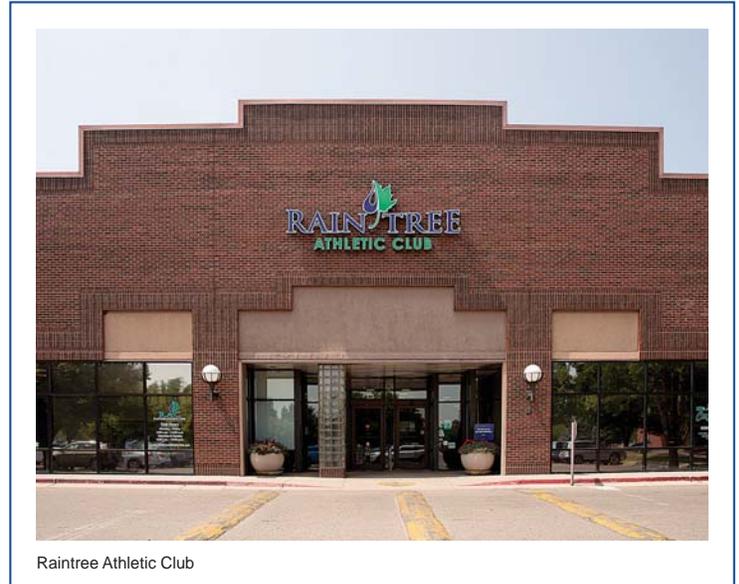
the name of your wife, and if you have them, the names of your children.

**MJ** - Yes. I met my wife, **Nikole**, in college in Alamosa, Colorado. She is from Iowa, and her family still lives there. She was also a runner... 5K, 10K, and a two-time *Olympic Trials* qualifier. We met in college, and she was accepted to Grad School at *Colorado State University (CSU)* in Fort Collins, Colorado. That's how we ended up here. Once she had graduated with her *Masters in Occupational Therapy*, we decided to have children. We now have four children: **Ella**, 17, who is a senior in high school; **Delaney**, 15, and then, we have boy-girl twins: **William** and **Brooke**, who will be 13 this month. They're all very athletic, like their Mom and Dad, so we're very fortunate.

**C.I.** - As you mentioned, following your retirement from competitive sports, how did you become involved in the health and fitness club industry?

**MJ** - Once I retired from competitive sports, I needed a real job. With my sporting background, I was very much into sports and fitness, so I went ahead and got my Personal Training Certificate and started as a Personal Trainer. I ended up getting hired at **Cliff Buchholz'** *Miramont Lifestyle Fitness Club*. One of the things I learned early in my Personal Trainer career was that, although I enjoyed the personal training part, I just didn't understand why people didn't want to work hard to reach their goals. I did struggle with that. I was a successful Personal Trainer and quickly became a full-time Personal Trainer.

I realized that I didn't want to do that as a career, at least from the Personal Trainer standpoint. It was very mentally challenging for me to be a full-time Personal Trainer where I was doing upwards of 60 to 70 sessions a week! So, I went up to Cliff's office one day, knocked on the door, introduced myself and told him that, one day, I would like to be sitting in the seat he



Raintree Athletic Club

was sitting in... either as a *General Manager* or an *Owner* of a health club in our industry. I also told Cliff I was at a point where I could go back to school and get my MBA, or if he would afford me the opportunity, I could learn from him. Thankfully, a lot of where I am today is because of Cliff affording me that opportunity.

While working for Cliff, I was able to run pretty much every department at Miramont during my ten years there. I started moving from the Personal Training Department to the *Manager of Sales*. Later, I was an *Interim Facilities Manager* then an *Aquatics Manager*... I really did it all! And, that was fortuitous for me because it allowed me to understand how a club operates. When I left Miramont to be where I am today, I left as the *Sales and Marketing Director* for *Miramont Lifestyle and Fitness*, and we were operating three clubs at the time. We had just opened our third club in August of 2008.

**C.I.** - That's terrific, Martin! Cliff is a great man! And, for sure, you were a very lucky young man to have been able to work with him and his organization doing so much during those ten years because I'm sure that experience was like GOLD for you! That good run definitely got you ready for what you're doing now!

**MJ** - Yes! It was good. It was really good!

**Publisher's Note:** After reading this Cover Story on Martin Johns, be sure to check out the *February 2008 Club Insider* Cover Story on **Cliff Buchholz**

and *Miramont Lifestyle Fitness*. Go to [www.clubinsideronline.com/archives](http://www.clubinsideronline.com/archives).

### The Raintree Athletic Club

**C.I.** - Martin, when and how did *The Raintree Athletic Club* come to be?

**MJ** - As I mentioned, I'd been at Miramont for ten years and had done almost everything. We had opened the third location, so I felt I was at the ceiling. Cliff had his two sons-in-law operating the clubs at the top level, which was great, but I was looking for a growth opportunity. As we all recall, 2008 was an economically challenging time within the United States and globally. So, my wife and I thought we would head back down to New Zealand and give it a shot down there. There was not much holding us here in Fort Collins. About that time, an old client of mine who was a real estate owner here in town by the name of **Dave Veldman** approached me. He and his partner had a shopping center that Raintree now sits in, and it had a health club called *The Pulse*. This building had been a health club for almost 25 years, and what we know from the 2008 recession is it did sort out a lot of good operators from poor operators. The club was mismanaged, so Dave inherited a very run-down, defunct health club. So, as a real estate person and not a manager of people, he approached me and said, 'Hey, would you like to run this club for me?' I said, 'Well yeah! Absolutely! But, Dave, I don't have the money it'll take!' Dave said, 'Well, don't you worry about that. You let me' (See *Martin Johns* Page 12)



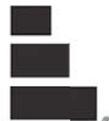
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## ...Martin Johns

continued from page 10

take care of that.'

**C.I.** - (laughing) I bet that was music to your ears, right!?

**MJ** - Right! So, Dave continues, 'You can build your equity by managing this place,' and he brought me in as a partner right from the get-go! That was in 2009. So, instead of us returning to New Zealand, I went across town to run, operate and become part owner of *The Raintree Athletic Club*. We did a big \$2 million remodel back in 2009 because it needed it. The club is 52,000 square feet and is a full-service health club. We essentially re-started it from the ground up. We didn't have many members when we took over, about 800 only. Then, pre-pandemic, at the height of our membership base, we had over 4,000 memberships, which converted to a total of about 9,000 members!

### Raintree Amenities Include:

- Locker Rooms;
- Pool;
- Hot Tub, Sauna, Steam Room;
- Basketball Court, Volleyball, Pickleball and Racquetball;
- Childcare;
- Cafe and Bar and Patio;
- Study/Work Space;
- In-club Virtual Classes;
- Pilates Studio;
- Two Group Fitness Studios;
- Yoga Studio;
- Cycling Studio;
- Peloton Bikes;
- Cardio Area;
- Free Weights;
- Selectorized Weights;
- Massage;
- Recovery Lounge;
- Theragun;
- Hyperice Compression Therapy;

- Small Group Training Studio;
- Functional Training;
- Personal Trainers;
- Indoor Track;
- Wellness Coach;
- Physical Therapy;
- Quiet Workout Area;
- Indoor Bicycle Parking (rack);
- Stretching Area;
- Climbing Wall;
- Family Locker Room.

[raintreeathleticclub.com](http://raintreeathleticclub.com)

So, Raintree became successful. As I said, one of the advantages was we took over what was a run-down facility, and it took quite a few years for the name change to have an impact because people still called it *The Pulse* for several more years. We have since overcome that, and our brand is now very well-known and strong locally, which is awesome!

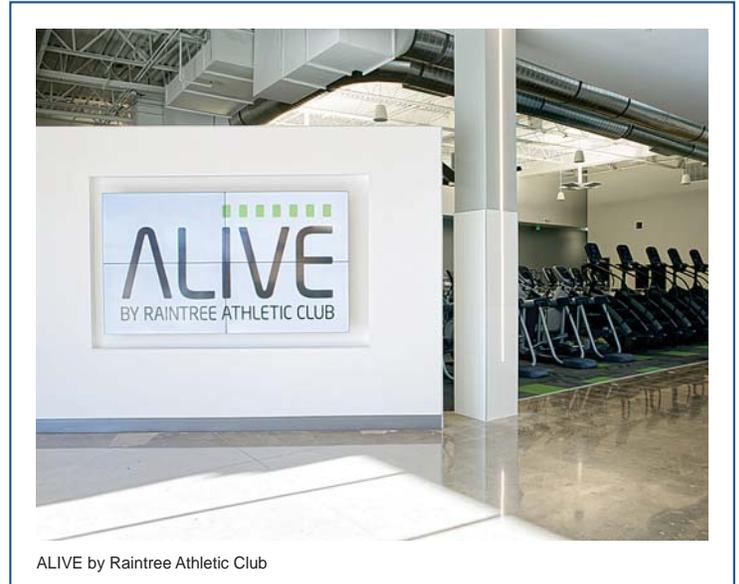
### ALIVE by Raintree

**C.I.** - When and how did the second location come about?

**MJ** - It came about because of the numbers I shared earlier. We had over 4,000 memberships and more than 9,000 members, so we had gotten to the tipping point of whether or not we could provide the level of legendary experience that we wanted to provide our members with a club that was heavily used, which was great, without having a negative impact on our membership. So, there was an old *Rite Aid Pharmacy* that was right across the road from my Raintree office. When that became available in 2017, my partner Dave and I snapped it up.

**C.I.** - So, Martin, you're literally saying, 'across the street?'

**MJ** - I could see it from my office! People were saying to us: 'What are you doing!?' Well, it's at a different price point. It's



ALIVE by Raintree Athletic Club

called **ALIVE** and is 23,000 square feet. And, it's very 'tech heavy' modern, boutique-style because our market was the college crowd... the millennials. Alive can be operated very efficiently and cost-effectively, and anyone who has operated a full-service health club understands that it's an animal... it's a beast.

### ALIVE Amenities Include:

- Cardio Area;
- Group Fitness Studio;
- Free Weights;
- Power Platforms / Olympic Lifting Area;
- Functional Training Studio;
- Peloton Bikes;
- Locker Rooms;
- Theragun Percussive;
- In-club Virtual Classes;
- Cafe/Bar and Patio;
- Turf Area;
- Selectorized Equipment.

[alivebyraintree.com](http://alivebyraintree.com)

### The Membership

**C.I.** - Please describe your membership options/levels.

**MJ** - Raintree, which is not open 24 hours a day, has average dues of just over **\$90 a month** and different membership options. The ALIVE model, which is 24 hours, is **\$40 a month** and single memberships only --there are no couples or family memberships-- so everyone pays the same. This has been successful for us

and alleviated some of our pressure on Raintree. So, it's a different price point, different amenities, understanding that we didn't want to cannibalize ourselves at Raintree, but at the same time, being able to offer that different price point and offering.

However, we do have a membership with access to both facilities, and we've had some of our members take advantage of it. We call that our **Premier Membership**. The cost of a single membership at Raintree is **\$75 per month**, and for an **extra \$25 a month**, a member can add access to ALIVE, which also gives them access to our Recovery Lounge, unlimited guest privileges and 50% off our childcare rate.

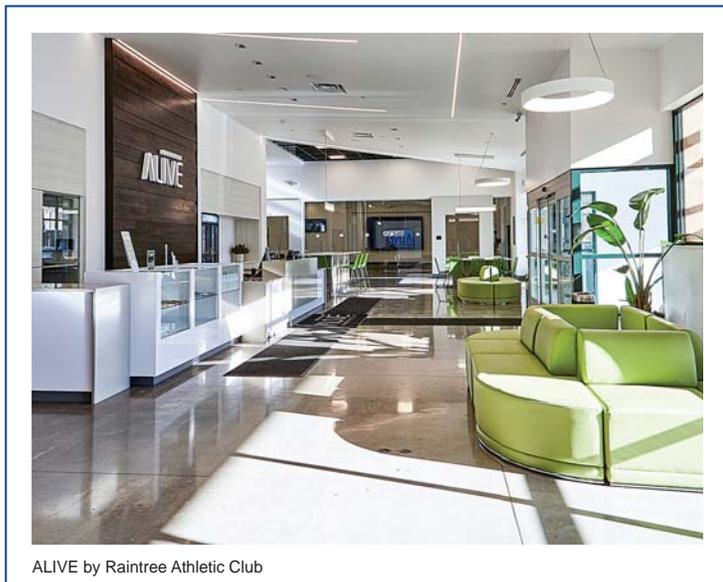
**C.I.** - Martin, when you had 9,000 members, what were your pre-pandemic daily check-in numbers from opening to closing?

**MJ** - Pre-pandemic, we were getting close to 2,000 check-ins a day. Right now, we're at about 1,200 per day.

**C.I.** - What are your other post-pandemic numbers looking like?

**MJ** - At Raintree, we now have **2,900 memberships** with just over **5,000 total members**. We were at 2,580 memberships in January, so being at 2,900 now shows growth, albeit slower than we would like. But, we are heading in the right direction. At ALIVE, we have **1,400 memberships** (singles only).

(See *Martin Johns* Page 14)



ALIVE by Raintree Athletic Club





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## North Castle Partners Extends CR Fitness Partnership with First Continuation Fund, Led by TPG

**GREENWICH, CT** - North Castle Partners, a leading private equity firm that has focused on consumer businesses that promote *Healthy, Active and Sustainable Living* for more than 20 years, announces the closing of a single-asset continuation fund transaction dedicated to *CR Fitness*, a leading *Crunch Fitness* franchisee. This transaction continues North Castle's ownership of the company and reaffirms its commitment to supporting CR Fitness' long-term growth strategy. The new continuation fund acquired CR Fitness from North Castle Partners VII, LP ("NCP VII") and other existing investors.

The transaction was led by TPG GP Solutions, TPG's dedicated U.S. and European GP-led secondaries strategy. The transaction was also supported by a consortium of institutional investors that included *Montana Capital Partners* as a co-lead investor, and North Castle Partners' reinvesting LPs and GPs, among others. The new North Castle Partners managed fund includes additional capital to support CR Fitness' organic growth initiatives and expansion strategy. Terms of the investment were not disclosed.

"We are pleased to present NCP VII's limited partners with this opportunity, North Castle's first continuation vehicle," said **Jon Canarick**, *Managing Partner of North Castle Partners*. "We believe this transaction provided our limited partners with the maximum optionality to make the best choice for their investment objectives, whether that be to generate an attractive return today or access a compelling investment opportunity. We are delighted to have the support of TPG GP Solutions as the lead investor and look forward to partnering with them, Montana Capital Partners, our other new and existing investors and our management team as we continue this journey."

"We are excited to partner with North Castle to invest in CR Fitness, led by a talented management team, to continue to execute an ambitious growth plan," said **Michael Woolhouse**, *Co-Managing Partner of TPG GP Solutions*. "Our investment speaks to TPG's network and long history of investment in the health and wellness space, including TPG Growth's current investment in Crunch Fitness."

Headquartered in Brandon,

Florida, CR Fitness has rapidly expanded its Crunch gym footprint across the U.S. The company has 45 locations located across Florida, Georgia, North Carolina and Texas. CR Fitness has more than doubled its footprint and tripled its revenue since North Castle invested in 2019.

"Three years ago, when we set out on this journey, we chose North Castle as our partner because we believed they had the knowledge and expertise to deliver real value to our business, and they have exceeded our teams' expectations," said **Vince Julien**, *Founder and Senior Chairman of CR Fitness*. "We are ecstatic to have the opportunity to continue on with them as our partners and are confident that we can achieve our goal of doubling our club count over the next few years."

**David Weston**, *Partner at North Castle Partners* added, "CR Fitness' exceptional performance over the past several years is a testament to the strength of its management team and the company they have built. CR Fitness is an example of the power of North Castle's approach, which is to partner with best-in-class management teams to unlock the



full potential of companies in the Healthy, Active and Sustainable Living sector. We are thrilled to continue our partnership with Vince and the team to support their next level of success."

CR Fitness was supported in this secondary transaction by *Sixpoint Partners* (financial advisor), *Ropes & Gray LLP* (legal counsel) and *Valuation Research* (fairness opinion). The new investors were supported by *Debevoise & Plimpton LLP* (legal counsel).

## ...Martin Johns

continued from page 13

**C.I.** - How many full- and part-time employees do you have?

**MJ** - Pre-pandemic, we had close to 200 team members at Raintree. Now, post-pandemic, we have 130 team members at Raintree, and at ALIVE, I have a team of around 15 who operate that facility.

### The Partnership and Development

**C.I.** - Please tell us more about your partnership with **Dave Veldman** and how ownership is structured.

**MJ** - Dave is working on his 'second attempt at retirement.' He failed the first time miserably. And, the way our ownership structure works is it's a true partnership. I operate the clubs. He's there to listen to me if I've got questions or need a 'sounding board.' But, Dave understands that I know the industry locally and nationally. Because of that understanding and trust in me, he lets me do what I do best. This, in my opinion, is an excellent experience in this kind of partnership because there's a lot of trust built up on both sides.

**C.I.** - If you know, how much did Raintree originally cost to build? How about ALIVE when you took on that project?

**MJ** - As I mentioned, Raintree was a health club before, but we put a **\$2 million remodel** into it back in 2009. And we've consistently reinvested in the club as appropriate. I've never been one who just spends money for the sake of spending it; it needs to be intentional. So, over the years, we have upgraded equipment, upgraded lighting, installed new flooring, refinished locker rooms and those types of things as you would expect. As it relates to ALIVE, it was about a **\$3.5 million build**, including purchasing the building. It is very modern... very "boutique," so to speak. We learned a lot and continue to learn a lot from how

Raintree was built. So, for example, we do not have a drywall corner in ALIVE... everything is hard-surfaced, polished concrete floors, other than in the cardio area. It's built for low maintenance, which it needs to be when talking about a \$40-per-month club versus a \$90-per-month club across the street.

**C.I.** - Please tell us about key evolutionary additions, remodels, etc., over the years.

**MJ** - As far as key additions, we've certainly tried to, and I think we have been successful at not only staying up with fads and things like that but also being a leader, especially in the local market. So, we were the first in town to have a *Recovery Lounge*. We were the first in town to have a *Small Group Training Studio*. We're lucky to be the only club in town with a *purposeful Yoga Studio*. It's not what would be considered Gym Yoga or Gym Pilates. It's an *actual special studio only for Yoga and Pilates*. So, I feel like we've certainly stayed up with current trends. Further, locally, we have been at the front end going out into the community doing a lot of events. For example, *Boot Camp and Brews* at local breweries. Fort Collins is known nationally as one of the brew capitals of America. So, we are truly community-centric, and by community-centric, I don't just mean the Raintree member community but also the Fort Collins and Northern Colorado community.

### Key Market Differentiators, Competition and COVID

**C.I.** - That's excellent. What do you consider your key market differentiators?

**MJ** - I guess a real market differentiator is that we are *local*. We're locally owned and operated. We're the only locally owned and operated full-service health club and gym in our area. And, we have a lot of competition in town with franchises and organizations like that.

**C.I.** - What is the total number of local competitors?

**MJ** - If you consider all things, including boutiques, through to Crossfit gyms, **there are over 50 options here in this town!**

**C.I.** - That's incredible, Martin! That's 50 locations serving a population of 160,000 and growing to 180,000 when *Colorado State University* students are in town. WOW! So, how do you compete with that myriad of clubs around you?

**MJ** - Fort Collins is a very active community. Our penetration would be higher than the national average as it relates to the industry because we live in a very fit town in a very fit state. It's a *good* thing. So, I applaud the smaller clubs and gyms that come into town because I feel it gives more people more options to exercise. That's really why I'm doing what I am doing. I'm in this industry to make people well! And, if there are more options, there are more options to make people well! And, quite honestly, it makes all of us better! There's no resting on your laurels around here, that's for sure!

**C.I.** - Please take us through the COVID-19 era at your club. Initial response, re-opening and now. How did you deal with your bank, landlord and investors during and after COVID?

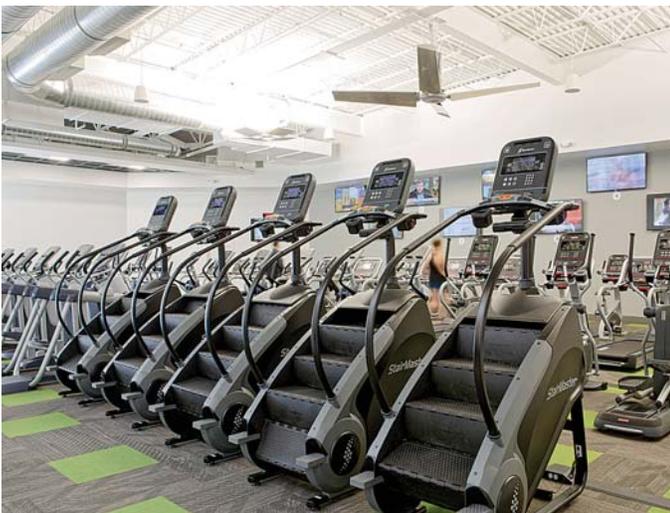
**MJ** - These have been crazy times! I belong to a *REX Roundtable*, which is just phenomenal. I think they didn't just save my clubs, but in some ways, they saved my SANITY throughout COVID! Being able to talk openly, transparently and honestly with other club operators was *HUGE!* I choose not to take this stuff to my wife; I try to keep that separate. *SO, IT WAS HARD!* We had people on the Roundtable from California all the way to Florida, and it was just so interesting how the states dealt with the pandemic. I don't think the guys from Florida even shut down, whereas it was brutal for the guys from California, Oregon and Washington. I would say Colorado

was somewhere in the middle of that. We did have to shut down, but we also got to reopen sooner than those other States. So, our initial response was probably similar to other industries.

Common sense prevailed. For example, we first took our exercise equipment and spaced it eight feet apart on the basketball court. Also, we focused on sanitization. That was a big thing. So, between the spacing of equipment and the sanitization systems, which we became more efficient with, it was all about figuring out how to deal with it daily. Our biggest issue here was masks. *The mask mandate was very challenging*. The first time not so much because everybody said, 'Yes, let's do this.' But then, when the masks went away and the State brought them back, it was super challenging! And, of course, it became very political. I had many conversations with people daily about wearing and not wearing masks. That was very much the worse part of the pandemic for me. Other than, of course, the financial hit we all suffered through. We were all very, very happy when the mask mandate was made optional by the State.

We are our own landlords, so we dealt with ourselves just fine. And, you know what, many of our vendors were also very understanding. Many industry vendors are our vendors, so they knew what we were going through. Likewise, we knew what they were going through, too. My philosophy in business is that things have to be a win-win situation for both parties, because anytime a party feels they're being taken advantage of, it's just *not sustainable*. So, when I was talking to some of our fitness industry vendors and asking for financial help, I approached it from the standpoint that they need to stay in business, too! It's certainly not all about me! So, I feel we got stronger from going through all of that. As a general statement, 'We all got stronger together really well!'

(See *Martin Johns* Page 15)



Cardio Floor at Raintree/Alive



Small Group Training at Raintree/Alive

## ...Martin Johns

continued from page 14

**C.I.** - Martin, how long were you shut down the first time, and then, how long the second time?

**MJ** - The first time, we were completely shut down for six weeks. That was halfway through March and all of April, 2020. It was about flattening the curve. I thought this would allow me to do some painting and other maintenance in the first two weeks. But, by the time it lasted six weeks, as it did, it got hard! Norm, after being in our industry as a club owner/operator, you understand that we are a cash-flow business. We have a lot of fixed expenses, regardless of whether you have one member or if you have 10,000 members. It was challenging. And, when we opened up, we didn't open up anywhere near where we were pre-pandemic.

So, although we were open, whether it be the mask mandates, fear-mongering, or whatever, it didn't really matter. The bottom line was that we would be operating at a capacity of only somewhere **20 - 30% of the revenue** of what we were doing pre-pandemic! And, that happened *overnight!* One of the things that struck me early on was a lot of people were saying that, as a small business, you should have reserves for expenses of at least six months. You know... money set aside. Well, that's all well and good, but when you deal with a situation where your income goes from **'somewhere' to zero, no one plans for that!** Anyway, it was tough. **BUT, WE MADE IT!** We were luckier than some!

**C.I.** - What are your expectations in numbers for 2022 - 23?

**MJ** - As I alluded to before, we are heading in the right direction, but it's slower than we would like. There's some positivity in our numbers. Living in Colorado this time of the year and going into the winter, we need to be on our game. We are seeing people come back who've not been back

at our clubs since COVID, so again, that's energizing for us.

### The Future and Key Advice

**C.I.** - What is on the horizon over the next 3 - 5 years? What will make you more unique going forward?

**MJ** - Norm, I just LOVE what I do! Until about a couple of years ago, my biggest challenge was finding a *balance* between work and family life. Because I love doing what I do so much, I could be here 18 hours a day with no problem. But, that's not fair to my family; ultimately, it is not even fair to me. Over the next 3 to 5 years, my hope and goal is to continue supporting my team and our members, growing both the business and personally. One of the things that I have thought about as an exit strategy is the *Employee-Owned Stock Ownership Model* so that I can leave the legacy in the hands of the team. We have an organizational tree, not a chart. And, our purpose and operating values are at the base of that. The reason WHY, Norm, is because that's our foundation.

**Our Purpose:** To inspire growth and impact lives.

**Operating Values:** It's NOT about me. It's not about the current team. *It's about positively inspiring growth and impacting lives!*

**C.I.** - Martin, what key lessons and advice would you offer those who are reading this?

**MJ** - After starting as a Personal Trainer in this industry long ago, I've learned that *I've been fortunate to find what I love to do.* As I mentioned before, we have a **PURPOSE.** We have a set of **OPERATING VALUES.** And we have some effective communication tools that we use to run our company. We have what we call an **'INTENTIONAL CULTURE.'** Everything we do here is *INTENTIONAL,* whether a simple meeting or complex programming. So, nothing is done without knowing what the intention for doing so is. We really work



RAINTREE ATHLETIC CLUB



BY RAIN TREE ATHLETIC CLUB

hard to try to make everything successful, and this supports that goal.

It starts with our hiring. Our hiring system is very intentional. Our cover letter states that getting a job at Raintree is hard. It's not because we think we are better than anybody else; it's not about that. But, what we understand is we *know* who we're looking for. We won't be the right company for everyone, and that's okay. Similarly, with members, we're not the right place for all members. That's why I said earlier, 'I like it when new, innovative companies come into town and provide something that Jane will do that Jane will not do here.' *I did not get into this industry to get rich!* I did not get into this industry to own multiple homes and drive fancy cars. That's not to come across as being all altruistic; I still like nice things. *I want to provide nice things for my family, but I will not do that to the detriment of my team or the club membership.*

My **WORTH** and the **JOY** I get every day waking up is seeing my team members' faces and our members' faces as they come in and do something that most people don't like to do: **EXERCISE!** Our role is to provide an environment where we lower as many of those barriers as possible for an individual not to exercise, not to take care of themselves emotionally, mentally, physically, spiritually, financially, whatever it may be. And, that's when I can go home every day... I spend time with my beautiful wife and amazing kids and say, 'You know what? It's been a good day!' We positively impact many people's lives, and I don't know of many industries that can do what we do at the level that we do it. I really don't. *We can change people's lives!*

*We can make people happier!* What other industry do you know of in this world that can impact and improve people's lives, like the fitness industry?



Thank you to **Martin Johns** for sharing his excellent story and inspiring philosophy, one that truly differentiates *Raintree Athletic Club* and *ALIVE* by Raintree! And, **Justin and I want to THANK ALL OF YOU for reading Club Insider!** Additionally, we want to congratulate you all for applying the knowledge you've gained from reading *Club Insider* over the past 30 years to *improve and magnify the real and true excellence of your own divinely guided work that you all do at your clubs...* the special work you do every day of your lives to make your members healthier and happier all around the world! **GOOD ON ALL OF YOU!** And, please don't miss my **special Norm's Note** to you all on **Page #4!**

*(Norm Cates, Jr. is a 48-year veteran of the health, racquet and sportsclub industry. He is the Founder and Tribal Leader Since 1993 of Club Insider, completing its 29th 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. He can be reached by phone at 770-635-7578 or email at Norm@clubinsideronline.com.)*



Fitness on the Lawn Raintree/Alive



Weight Floor at Raintree/Alive

# How to Stop Selling Yourself Short in Your Fitness Business

By: **Donna Krech**

Over the years, I've spoken with thousands of fitness professionals. What I've found is that one of the biggest reasons professionals in the industry get stuck and struggle to gain traction is because they are selling themselves short.

Admittedly, when I first got into the fitness industry 40 years ago, I was just trying to put food on the table for my family. It was March of 1982 when I started working as a *Weight Loss Counselor*. But, even with my limited knowledge at the time, I remember thinking that people were being set up to fail.

I thought, "We aren't wired to just diet. Dieting isn't good for the mind. It keeps you focused on food. It focuses on taking things away. Cutting things back. Mentally, that's just NOT good for you. Even the phrase 'weight loss' is depletion oriented. Let's face it, dieting alone is *not* a lifestyle that people can maintain for the long haul."

So, one month after my start in the industry, I also became a *Fitness Instructor* for \$3.50 per hour. I thought, "Fitness is oriented in the right way. It focuses on *addition*, such as adding reps, sets, increasing frequency and so on."

As I worked with my clients on

their nutrition and fitness, I added mindset to the mix. It was a piece of the equation I strongly believed in. I figured out that THIS was my strength and how I was different, so I leaned into that. Back then, incorporating all three of these was revolutionary. It led to more success than I could have ever imagined for myself. From that humble start, the *business* of health, fitness and wellness became my obsession and led me to found 35 companies in the industry. Since then, I've helped more than 2.1 million health, fitness and wellness clients achieve weight loss and wellness results while generating over \$1.9 Billion for the businesses that serve those clients.

If you are struggling to gain traction, not earning as much as you'd like or feel a bit stuck, it could very well be that you are working with too diverse a clientele. When you do this, you don't play to your strengths and expertise, which makes it impossible to excel. Three signs you are limiting yourself by going too wide are:

**You aren't pulling in the dedicated clients you need to succeed.** Because you are trying to do it all, you get lost in the ever-growing crowd.

**You find yourself working with people**

**you don't enjoy.** When you take on anyone and everyone, you end up working with clients who aren't aligned with the work you are truly passionate about. Start paying attention to when you truly feel excited and when you feel drained. For example, do you feel pumped when helping clients who love to feel the burn, or do you dread working with those clients? Do you feel more energized when helping a client that hates working out lose extra weight, or do you wish you could work with someone that likes being pushed harder?

**You are earning average income.** When you haven't defined your niche and who you are really for, you'll spend more money on marketing while simultaneously finding you can't charge as much.

As a *Fitness Professional*, you may think you fall within the fitness niche. But, I've found that many fitness professionals fall into a more specialized subniche within the fitness category. Knowing where your focus is inside the fitness niche is a good start. This will help you attract the right clients by creating relevant messaging that converts your ideal prospect to a paying client. And, because you are working with clients who are right for you and resonate with your messaging, you'll get better results for them. Once you start getting better results, you'll be labeled an expert. Once you are labeled an expert, your clients will trust you more, and therefore, will more easily spend more money with you. Plus, you'll start receiving more referrals.

### Which Type of Fitness Professional Are You?

Fitness Professionals by nature want to push their clients. However, I've found that there are two main types of Fitness Professional personalities.

**The Challenge Pro** - This type of Fitness Professional wants to push clients to be their best. They want to push them to get stronger. They want to push somebody to their limits. They enjoy working with clients that like to take things to the extreme. "Feel the burn", "Push through the pain", "Look for the edge and push past it" are phrases that resonate with this type of pro. If you identify with this personality, you would do well to niche in categories such as working with bodybuilders, weight training or extreme athletes, for example. Market yourself to those subcultures, for example, "The fitness pro that gets body builders in top shape for competitions."

**The Health Coach** - A second personality I've identified within the Fitness Professional community is one who has a bigger vision



Donna Krech

for their clients. These professionals know they can push clients physically, but they prefer to meet their clients where they are and invite clients to come alongside them. They've come to realize that, when they do this, so much more is possible. These professionals are motivated by helping clients improve their health and setting them up to live healthier lives and live longer. If you identify with this personality and find yourself focusing on helping clients get well, be healthy and living a long life, then I have news for you... *You are actually a Health Coach!* While this may come as a shock to you, that is the exact definition of a Health Coach. The good news is this a great niche, which also has subcultures. For example, Health Coaches for new moms or health coaches for seniors. In this case, you would do well to start marketing yourself as a Health Coach.

Knowing where to focus your energy is important. Once you've identified the type of fitness professional you are, whether that's a Challenge Pro or a Health Coach, lean into it, focus on your strengths and CRUSH that category. When you do, you'll be in alignment with your target audience. Suddenly, you'll feel excited about the results you're getting for your clients. You'll earn a higher income than the average fitness professional. You'll get a good reputation for helping clients achieve measurable results. And, you'll receive more and better referrals from clients and other professionals in the health, fitness and wellness industry.

If you've discovered you are really more of a Health Coach and want help crushing that category, I've written a letter to you. Check it out at [www.TotalLifeBetaLaunch.com](http://www.TotalLifeBetaLaunch.com). And, see the **Ad** on the **Opposite Page**.

*(Donna Krech's systems have helped 5.1 million health, fitness and wellness clients achieve weight loss and wellness results.)*

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# Are You Worried that the Economy is Going to HURT YOUR BUSINESS?

## Some thoughts from Donna Krech

Founder/CEO, Total Life Nutritionals & WOW Wellness



### Industry Veterans Guide on How to Make Your Business Not Only Recession Proof - But DEPRESSION PROOF!

Wellness industry stats prove that 60 to 83% of your members... at this very moment... are spending money elsewhere on supplements because you don't offer them.

Not only is offering supplements a way to recoup money being spent elsewhere, (like a MINIMUM of \$100,000.00 to you!) it's also a smart move during a down economy.

According to NutritionInsight, "The supplements segment has historically been found to be recession proof."

And, according to a plethora of historical data collected, even during the *Great Depression*, consumers bought products to keep them healthy or restore their health.

All today's data says the same thing. Your clients are spending most of their dollars with someone else.

That's right. After working with thousands of Health and Wellness Professionals we discovered something shocking...

More than half of their clients were spending all their dollars on Weight Loss, Nutrition, and Wellness supplements, with one of their competitors. In fact, between 60% to 83% were spending money somewhere else.

The reason? We found that many clients were spending their money with other health and wellness competitors, simply because their coach did not OFFER them!

Think about this in your own business. If you only have 200 clients in your data base, between 60% to 83% of them are giving someone else, on average, \$167 per month.

Over the course of the year that means \$2000 per client is going into someone else's pocket instead of yours.

At 60%, that means 120 of your clients are buying product from someone else, which means you're losing \$20,040 every month or \$240,000 per year. (120 X \$2000 = \$240,000) Even if you only got half of those customers to buy from you instead of the competition, you're looking at \$120,000 that drops into your bank account this year.

If 83% are buying from someone else, you're losing \$33,200 every month or \$332,000 over the course of one year that is NOT going into your pocket, but someone else's instead.

Again, even if you cut that number in half, and gain back 41.5% of that, you could add \$166,000 to your income.

### Would \$120,000 or \$166,000 make a difference to your business?

That money is there for you to take, you just need to see if you qualify for the TOTAL LIFE BETA LAUNCH program we've put together for you.

Imagine for just a moment... that you had an easy-to-implement marketing campaign that cost you ZERO dollars AND that each

prospect, not customer, but prospect were paying you \$549 EACH for you to market to them...

Imagine that you had physician grade quality, custom blended supplements with the highest potency and absorption available anywhere, with a markup between 70% and 120%...

...And that you, and you alone had exclusive rights to sell these supplements within a 50-mile radius...

This is what you get with the TOTAL LIFE BETA LAUNCH program!

Imagine that you had a guaranteed way to get your clients walking through your door and paying you, monthly...

...A way to retain your clients twice as long as average... (Statistics say the average client stays with a health coach for one year, our system keeps clients two years and longer.)

...Plus, you had a plug & play system that offers ADDITIONAL, PREDICTABLE monthly residual income...

...AND Imagine that you were guaranteed to make a profit within your first 30 days...

*Wouldn't that be nice?*

The amazing news is that is not only possible, it's proven! In fact, I reveal the complete, proven, repeatable system in a FREE Guide that you can download in under 30 seconds, just by visiting our site. There's no cost or obligation, and the guide is 100% free. Plus, if you qualify, we'll also enroll you in our brand-new TOTAL LIFE BETA LAUNCH program, where we'll walk you through the complete system, step-by-step to make absolute sure you're set up for success with our system. (within the first 30 days!)

**Do you have 30 seconds to download the guide that could actually save your business and protect you from recession? Visit our site now!**



Get your FREE guide at: [TotalLifeBetaLaunch.com](http://TotalLifeBetaLaunch.com)



# How to Keep Members Engaged All Year

By: **Ellen de Werd**

According to IHRSA data, pre-pandemic, the national average for member retention hovered around 70%. That means almost 30% slip through the cracks. They didn't want to. They didn't intend to. So, why did they? On the day of their enrollment, they had high hopes of successfully achieving goals in our facilities. We, as owners, operators and managers shared their desire. What went wrong?

A small portion of attrition can be attributed to things like people moving and falling ill. Most, however, quit for failure to form a habit. They stopped coming. They became discouraged. They felt like they were throwing money away. They quit. Had they been engaged, this classic story ends very differently. The member wins. The club wins.

Engagement is our most powerful weapon. This article examines how thoughtful programming enhances engagement. What if, instead of flying by the seat of our pants, we deliberately created an annual calendar of events designed to make us "sticky"?

Here is an annual engagement calendar that I designed for our club. I broke it down by quarter and month and provided event ideas along with benefits and what's needed for success.

## Q1

### JANUARY

**Event:** GroupX New Year's BASH.

**What:** New Year's Day GroupX Bash. Medley of 2 or 3 formats and instructors.

**Benefits:** Exposes members to a new format or instructor. Provides fun and camaraderie and offers a great opportunity to feature new schedule offerings.

**Event:** DAC-IVERSARY Challenge (Your Club Name-iversary).

**What:** The DAC (Downtown Athletic Club) anniversary. Example: On our 35th year anniversary we did a five-day challenge with 7 exercises each day, 5 reps of each. This signified our "#35:"

1. Pushups x5;
2. Rows x5;
3. Bicep Curls x5;
4. Tricep Kickbacks x5;
5. Shoulder Overhead Press x5;
6. Squats x5;
7. Sit Ups x5.

As many rounds as desired. Trainers and GroupX Instructors film tutorial videos for Facebook group posts. Members post photos or videos each day.

**Benefits:** Encourages them to join the Facebook group and make online connections. Teaches history of the club. Introduces them to the Trainers and Instructors.

### FEBRUARY

**Event:** Format Contest.

**What:** Contest to see who takes the most types of classes. Members receive bonus points for trying something new.

**Benefits:** Often members are not aware of how much they enjoy a particular format until they try it. This event provides incentive to try something new, meet new people and establish more connections and friendships.

**Event:** Valentine's Day.

**What:** Wear pink or red to class on Valentine's Day.

**Benefits:** Simple, fun, free. These small efforts turn a workout into an "experience."

### MARCH

**Event:** MEPS Madness MyZone.

**What:** This type of event elicits friendly competition through gamification and wearable tech.

**Benefits:** Enhances social connection through the app. Strongly encourages adherence to exercise.

**Event:** Instructor Contest.

**What:** Contest to see who takes the most classes from the most instructors. Members receive bonus points for trying a class from an Instructor they've never had before.

**Benefits:** This challenge encourages members to try new Instructors. This event gives members incentive to try a different instructor with whom they might connect, meet new people and establish more connections and friendships.

**Event:** St. Patrick's Day.

**What:** Wear green to class.

**Benefits:** See Valentine's Day.

## Q2

### APRIL

**Event:** Meet the Trainers.



Ellen de Werd

**What:** Panel Interview (ZOOM or in-person) that gives members an opportunity to really get to know the Trainers. An "MC" asks them questions like:

1. Where are you from?
2. Why did you get into this field?
3. What is your favorite cheat meal?
4. What is your specialty or area of expertise?

**Benefits:** Gives Trainers an opportunity to showcase talent, and establish rapport, in a way that a bio on a website can't do.

**Event:** Wear White.

**What:** Blacklight GroupX Class.

**Benefits:** Simple, fun, \$20 - \$40 investment into blacklights. Small efforts create lifetime memories and make great photos for social media.

## MAY

**Event:** MyZone Mini Three-Day Challenge.

**What:** This type of event elicits friendly competition through gamification and wearable tech. It is like the MEPS Madness in March but has more of a "sprint" feel.

**Benefits:** Enhances social connection through the app.

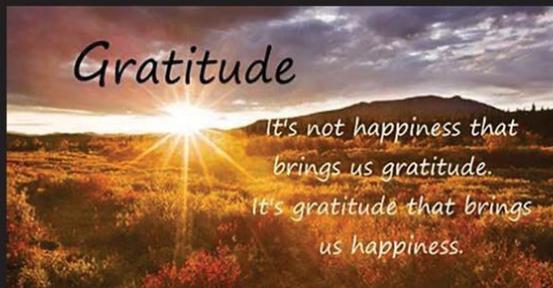
**Event:** Mother's Day Mimosas (Bend and Blend, Vinyasa and Vino, etc.) - **Note:** Check local ordinances about needing a license to provide alcohol.

**What:** Pairing a Yoga class with a complimentary beverage. For Mothers' Day moms and daughters can come as free quests.

**Benefits:** Creates an "experience."  
(See *Ellen de Werd* Page 19)



At Polic Consultants Group (PCG), we are committed to Increasing Sales, Ancillary Income and Profits for Health & Fitness Clubs worldwide!



We are so thankful to Norm, Justin, Club Insider and all our PCG clients. Happy Thanksgiving to you and your families!

**(630) 410 - 1120**

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**...Ellen de Werd**

continued from page 18

**Q3**

**JUNE**

**Event:** Hikes.

**What:** Outdoor hikes led by any GroupX Instructor or Personal Trainer.

**Benefits:** Outdoorsy members disengage when the sun comes out. However, if we provide outdoor programming in the summer, we stay connected beyond the four walls of our brick and mortar.

**JULY**

**Event:** Yoga in the Park.

**What:** Yoga classes in the park.

**Benefits:** See June.

*Permits are inexpensive and easy to obtain.*

**AUGUST**

**Event:** Outdoor Bootcamp.

**What:** Bodyweight HIIT style classes at a local park.

**Benefits:** See July.

**Q4**

**SEPTEMBER**

**Event:** Social Media Bingo.

**What:** Customize templates for Social Media Bingo are available at **Canva.com**. Members screenshot the Bingo board which might include activities like:

- Meet with a Trainer;
- Bring a Guest;
- Try a class you've never tried;
- Try an instructor for the first time;
- Take a selfie in the club and post it;
- Take a Yoga class;
- Take a Cycle class;
- Take a Lift class;
- Take a Water class;
- Go out of your way to meet a new member;
- Try Small Group Training;
- Take a rest day.

Members share their Bingo screenshot in Instagram stories with a GIF check mark over whatever they just completed, and when they achieve BINGO, they notify the club by tagging the club's account.

**Benefits:** Very fun for the younger



generation. This is free advertising! Every time they share their BINGO board all of their friends see it!

**Event:** Fall GroupX Soiree.

**What:** Medley of two or three formats and instructors.

**Benefits:** Exposes members to new formats and instructors. Fun and camaraderie. Opportunity to create hype around new Fall schedule offerings when moms are establishing new routines and kids are back to school.

**OCTOBER**

**Event:** Spooktacular MyZone Challenge.

**What:** Elicits friendly competition through gamification and wearable tech. Like the March MEPS Madness event.

**Benefits:** Enhances social connection through the app. Promotes exercise adherence.

**Event:** Pilates for Pink.

**What:** Donation based fundraiser in honor of Breast cancer awareness. Encourage members to wear pink to a Pilates class on a certain date.

**Benefits:** Charitable events mix well with endorphins.

**NOVEMBER**

**Event:** Tuesday Turkeyburn, Toys for Tots, Cycle Class for a Cause.

**What:** Bring a Toy! Bring a guest! Fundraiser is held after Thanksgiving on Giving Tuesday.

**Benefits:** Members and staff feel good from the inside out!

**DECEMBER**

**Event:** Meet the Small Group Training Coaches.

**What:** Panel Interview (ZOOM or in-person) that gives members an opportunity to really get to know the Small Group Coaches. An "MC" asks them questions like:

1. What is something unusual about you that most people don't know?
2. Why do you love fitness?
3. How did you get into the field?
4. What is the difference between small group training, personal training, and group exercise in your own words?

**Benefits:** Gives Coaches an opportunity to showcase their personalities and coaching style.



This schedule takes into con-

sideration the highs of the New Year, the natural declination after 90 days of membership, and even the "dog days of summer". It is meant to be a template that has room for organic development. It can be customized to reflect club amenities, needs and programs.

I hope you find this annual engagement calendar helpful. I know our incredible and eager new members want to stick. Let's give 'em some glue.

*(Ellen de Werd is a 21-year fitness industry veteran. She is the Founder of WARRIOR Rhythm and WARRIOR Strength. Prior to the launch of the WARRIOR Instructor Academy, Ellen garnered national attention as a presenter and educator for Beachbody. In 2021, her WARRIOR formats spread internationally to nine countries. Ellen is the Fitness Director at the Downtown Athletic Club and a Lululemon Ambassador in Eugene. Learn more at [www.warriorinstructors.com](http://www.warriorinstructors.com).)*

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# Franchising: *Plan Your Pre-Nup!*

By: **Sara Kooperman, JD**

Fitness chain *Fit Body Boot Camp Inc.*, a provider of indoor boot camp classes, is suing one of its former franchise owners, **Miranda Lynn Downey**. Downey was accused of “blatantly and egregiously” violating her franchise agreements by stealing customers, operating a competing business (calling it “Fit Nation”) and failing to pay franchise fees.

The lawsuit claims that Downey violated her agreement and changed the name of the fitness center from *Fit Body to Fit Nation*, creating a competitive business. The claim also states that Downey is, “diverting members of the formerly franchised businesses to the competing businesses,” and infringing on the trademark, because her social media continues to have images of her former business. Downey has also been accused of non-payment of franchise fees.

According to the lawsuit, the “operation of substantially similar businesses at the same locations is likely to cause consumer confusion.” Further, it will prohibit future franchisees from operating or owning a business in the area.

The lawsuit alleges that Downey had not paid fees and continued to do business after *Fit Body* terminated the agreement due to non-payment of funds. According to the franchise contract, franchisees must pay a \$697 royalty fee, a \$500 marketing fee and a \$300 software fee each month (almost \$1,500 per month). Further, franchisees must not own or operate a competing business within 25 miles of a *Fit Body Boot Camp* location for a year after a franchise agreement is terminated.

The suit claims that Downey continued operation, which, “has caused and will continue to cause *Fit Body Boot Camp* irreparable injury, including consumers being deceived by the defendant as a result of her operation of fitness centers under the same or substantially similar name as *Fit Body Boot Camp* businesses at the

same locations.”

The lawsuit is **Fit Body Boot Camp Inc. v. Downey, Case Number 2:22-cv-02402, in the U.S. District Court** for the District of Kansas. And, it raises serious questions about how to approach a franchise agreement, especially during financially trying times we find ourselves:

**Brand Name and Support:** Do people choose to launch a franchise because of a brand name? Do they choose a franchise because of the camaraderie and support of other like-minded individuals? Are the discounts franchisees receiving on machines worth the financial investment? Does the advice on rent, management, hiring, firing, programming and financial management cover these fees? What about the value of marketing, branding, customer service and club design support? All of this is key to a new owner. But, for an experienced owner, is this useful? Do they need all this guidance over time, or is it just difficult to leave once you are used to the help? Is it worth the added expense of a franchise once you KNOW how to run a club and have built supplier relationships?

**Customer Brand Name Loyalty:** From the customer perspective, do clients join franchises because of the name or the location? In congested areas, maybe a brand name makes a difference. Still, in a rural area, where there is not as much competition, an independent may survive, IF and only IF the business is successfully run. After you have *built your reputation* and perfected your systems, do you need the franchise?

**Owner Experience and Relationships:** It may come down to owner experience and not about a franchise’s financial and system support. Looking at the cost of goods; I know that, as a past vendor, we sometimes (or should I say often) provide a lot of the same discounts to independents as we do to chains or brands. Of course, we can’t offer the same values to independents as to

large chains, like a 24 Hour Fitness facility, but a good businessperson can negotiate a great deal if they push in the right way. So, the franchise discounts are not that huge, but they help with negotiating, marketing and systems, and support (if used correctly) can be substantial. Additionally, we cannot ignore the value of “emotional support” a franchise provides. The friendship and openness to share issues and accept advice from a similar vendor in a non-competing area are extremely valuable. Franchisees become comrades and friends and often feel like family. These sources of support and inspiration are invaluable.

**Using Your Support:** Licensing a franchise is like buying anything: Are you using it correctly? If your franchise supplies discounts on programming, equipment and CRM support, are you using it/ applying it correctly? Are you placing your programming at the right time of day with the right instructor? Are you purchasing the correct equipment for your members and putting this equipment in the proper position in the club? What about marketing? Are you using franchise marketing effectively in the suitable locations at the right time or not at all? What is or is not working? What supplements to this branding have been supporting and helping to grow other franchisees?

**What About Non-Competes?** If your facility struggles financially due to the pandemic, how do you get out of your agreement without violating your non-compete clause? Usually, the franchise agreements provide you with a radius around your facility, which precludes other franchisors from opening. Can you go beyond your radius and open another non-franchise facility? You must check your contract. These agreements are solid. Can you buy your way out of the non-compete? Can you prepay for a few years and get an addendum to your agreement that lets you out? Will this affect your vendor relations?



Sara Kooperman, JD

**Planning Your Departure:** How do you plan your escape? Do you ask your vendors about a future relationship, or will your vendor return and tattle on you to the franchise? Can you pretend to be opening another facility in the area outside of your negotiated area? Is this moral? Can you go to a competing vendor in the same space and see if they can meet or beat your current vendor’s price? How much time, effort and money will it cost to find, begin and perfect a new vendor relationship? And, just how many new relationships will you need? Will you miss the support, or will joining a mastermind group assist you in finding and keeping quality assistance?

■ ■ ■

My advice when signing a franchise agreement (like a prenuptial agreement) is to *plan for departure!* Before you sign any contract:

1. Think long and hard about these issues and pre-negotiate your way out.
2. Have an exit strategy.
3. Examine expansion opportunities so as not to limit your growth.

**PLAN!**

(Sara Kooperman, JD, CEO of SCW Fitness Education and WATERinMOTION, is a visionary leader that has transformed the fitness education community. A successful business owner and advisor, she is a keynote speaker, published author, podcast presenter and sought-after industry trailblazer. She serves on the Gold’s Gym Think Tank, was on the Women in Fitness Association Board of Directors and is a proud inductee into the National Fitness Hall of Fame. Sara currently serves on IHRSA’s Headlight Committees for Facility Standards and has left an indelible mark on the fitness industry. Learn more about SCW at [www.scwfit.com](http://www.scwfit.com).)

## Club Insider Seeks Contributing Authors

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(770) 635 - 7578 or [Norm@clubinsideronline.com](mailto:Norm@clubinsideronline.com)

# Fit, But Broken.

## Are You Muscle and Movement Strong?

By: **Cathy Spencer Browning**

Ten years ago, I thought my career in the fitness industry was over. Debilitating injuries had sent me straight to the proverbial bench, then straight to... first, a couple of misdiagnoses, then some "pushing through the pain" and then... straight to the operating room for two surgeries on each hip, a total of four operations in 12 months. It was a harrowing time.

As we all know, hindsight is 20-20. I can see clearly how I ended up where I ended up. I was a sprinter from ages eight to sixteen. I also ran cross-country with some mediocre success, and then, I happily galloped into the fitness industry, teaching classes. I competed in *Aerobic Competitions* (yup, that was a thing) while simultaneously dabbling in triathlons and

a marathon. And, spoiler alert, almost 100% of my movement lived in the sagittal plane... AKA forward, backward and on the spot. The repetition, the lack of movement variability and the lack of full body tensile strength left me in a place that is all too common in the industry: very fit, but very broken!

Now, this isn't all a sob story; I am thankful for what that period taught me. The learnings were life-changing, and these injuries set me off on a different trajectory in the industry. I became passionate about figuring out what went so wrong, which serendipitously led me to the *Institute of Motion* ([instituteofmotion.com](http://instituteofmotion.com)).

Through the Institute of Motion's training and phenomenal people like **Derrick Price** and **Michol Dalcourt**, I learned that I wasn't 3D strong or movement strong. I was strong in a straight

line, meaning, my joints were overused, worn out and unable to withstand constant repetition in primarily one plane of motion. To be "unbreakable" (stealing Michol's phrase), our bodies need to be exposed to a wide variety of mechanical loads in a wide variety of different positions. Because we know that our soft tissues (ligaments, tendons and fascia) strengthen and build along lines of demand, the body then develops a type of physical scaffolding that is at once strong and resilient, yet pliable and flexible. This creates a "play" in our bodies, akin to buildings that are earthquake-proof. Buildings are not made to be earthquake-proof by being stiff and sturdy; they are earthquake-proof because they can move and be moved without breaking.

Case in point, we all know a strong brawny dude who can push much



Cathy Spencer Browning

more than his body weight doing a bench (See **Cathy Spencer Browning** Page 22)

# Fitness Premier 24/7 Clubs' Entrepreneur Operating Systems and Culture Index Tool Keep the Franchise Network Aligned

**MANHATTAN, IL** - Company culture and a great fit among people is a critical aspect of *Fitness Premier 24/7 Clubs'* franchise model, and the brand has never been shy about that. With 18 units and continued growth in the works, Fitness Premier has implemented *Entrepreneur Operating Systems (EOS)* and a new culture index hiring tool to enhance the company's growth on all levels.

"We've been using the EOS at the corporate office level for many years now. We found it very helpful to keep our goals and vision for the company, annual goals or quarterly objectives, organized and tie all of that back to what each team member is doing on a daily basis," explained **Jason Markowicz**, CEO of *Fitness Premier 24/7 Clubs*. "It helps the team stay calibrated and continue to work well as a team. We made a conscious decision this year to begin rolling the technology out to each location, helping the franchisees and managers run their businesses in an effective, systemized way."

Fitness Premier franchisees participate in ongoing education and leadership development. The EOS allows leaders to gather information from these meetings, use the systems to plug and play, as well as place even more focus on the more enjoyable aspects of the business.

"Being an operator for nearly a decade, one of the biggest challenges I've experienced is choosing which priorities to put first. It always starts with priorities, but at the end of the day, sometimes stuff gets

missed because all of the other aspects of the business get in the way," said **Michael Orwig**, Regional Director of Training and Development and Multi-Unit Franchisee with *Fitness Premier*. "That's what the EOS system really focuses on... What the big picture goal is, and ultimately, the plan to get there as fast and easily as possible."

With EOS, execution becomes far more attainable, allowing leaders to make more out of less; prioritize their days, weeks and months based on pointed goals; and leverage the team with more productive tasks.

The Fitness Premier corporate team will soon be rolling out a six-week training program that will get all franchisees and managers acquainted with the systems. Each Wednesday, leaders will attend a three-hour, in-person training at the corporate office that will break down each aspect of the EOS, part by part. After that six weeks, franchisees and managers will return to their locations with the systems and begin implementing them with the staff at each location.

"We do an annual summit at the end of the year. There, each location will have the opportunity to stand up and present their business plan, vision and traction organizer," added **Samantha Gorman**, Corporate Employee and Multi-Unit Franchisee with *Fitness Premier*. "They'll have a chance to show the entire company what they've implemented so far, as well as their goals for the future. We don't want this to be something that we

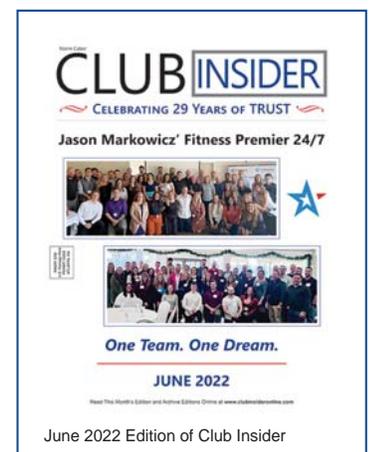
share the tools for and the systems aren't implemented. Following up in December will be good for accountability and create an exciting environment for everyone to look to the future."

Gorman added that the EOS will serve as a tool to support the entire team in manifesting the substantial growth they're all looking for. In addition to the EOS, a culture index will be used as a sister tool during the hiring process and on an ongoing basis to evaluate employee satisfaction.

"With the culture index, a prospective employee will complete the survey, and it will tell the hiring team whether their natural traits fit the specific role. On the back end, that helps us to hire people who are the right fit and create longevity inside the role," Gorman said.

While the EOS helps the business run well, Markowicz says the culture index addresses one of the most critical aspects of building a business... *putting the right people in the right seats*.

"It's a nice tool for franchisees and managers to use on a quarterly basis with their team to understand how their teams feel about the role. Even once they're hired into a position, taking the survey can help us to calibrate anything that is unbalanced," he said. "We'll have a discussion about some of the things that come up in the



survey... Are they overwhelmed? Do they need support? Were there disconnects? We can work through those things in real-time."

"Both of these processes are being implemented to help us accomplish our growth goals," Orwig said. "It does start with people. We need to hire the right people, train them well and evaluate our people, which is what CI and EOS will allow us to do. I'm super excited to roll this out with Samantha and finish out the year with a strong game plan as we head into 2023."

## ...Cathy Spencer Browning

continued from page 21

press. This is a very linear movement, up and down in 2D. His physical scaffolding is being built along the lines of stress, a straight line pushing up. But, when strong brawny dude hits the pickleball court for a casual game with friends, he is suddenly required to be 3D strong (movement strong). Pickleball (or golf, softball or so many sports like it) has a massive rotational component, plus explosive and nimble lateral movements from head to toe. So, when he goes after the ball, he is asking his physical scaffolding to tolerate fast motion, combined with rotation. It's the earthquake that his building wasn't built for.

Bottom line, our body adapts to the way it is used. Exposure to 3D movement makes us 3D strong, and failure to expose ourselves to 3D movement... well, you can smell what I'm cooking.

Don't get me wrong; time in the weight training room has many inherent benefits as we become muscle strong. Likewise, walking, running, swimming and biking (basically straight line stuff) can be fantastic and lifelong ways to build cardio and muscular strength. I'm not here to talk you out of them. However, we have

to bust out of the straight line, and even though it breaks old fashioned "rules," take a weight, or load, along for the journey. When we combine an external load with 3D movements that mimic real-life lifting, carrying, pushing, swinging, rotating, shoving, pulling, shifting and shoveling patterns, we are doing what the Institute of Motion coined as *Loaded Movement Training*. We employ this type of exercise to become movement strong. And, when we are movement strong, our bodies are more capable, more resilient and "unbreakable."

All of this to say that, when I look at the industry and its common service offerings, I fear that they are still stuck in a straight line, doing the same disservice to members that was done to me all those years ago (Although I take full responsibility). If we're going to help people live happier, healthier, longer lives, they have to get out of two dimensions and into one of the most important types of strength: *Being Movement Strong*.

Ultimately, what I experienced, and what I know so many have experienced, is a complete lack of movement strength, a key ingredient in the larger "Movement Health," which is the ability to move and live well in a body that is free of "common" (they shouldn't be!) aches, pains and restrictions.

Digesting this phrase, Movement Health, is easy. If you lack it, you end up like me, heading straight for serious injury: I had dysfunctional movement patterns, I was in pain, I was uncomfortable and my active lifestyle was becoming limited. If you train for movement strength, and become movement healthy, you'll enjoy the opposite: feeling good in your body, being pain-free and enjoying capable and confident movement, whether you're picking up a kid from the ground or picking up a pickleball paddle.

Our customers might not articulate, "How can I get 3D strong?" or "How can I get movement strong?" because they don't know what they don't know. They might even think it's "wrong" because their strength training knowledge lives in the era of my Aerobic Competitions. But, that doesn't mean they don't need it; everyone wants to feel strong, capable, pain-free, resilient... even injury-proof!

And, here's the great news: Movement Health and Fitness should not be mutually exclusive; they should be mutually inclusive. We can (and should be) concerned about fitness AND Movement Health at the same time, and we must assess and be scrupulous about our service offerings to put loaded movement training

front and center (And, back and forth and up and down and rotating all around).

What are we all doing to help customers gain movement strength or 3D strength? To push them out of straight lines? By adding loaded moment training options to our schedules and our sessions, taking people from 2D to 3D, we'll help them avoid heading straight for a physical disaster. Because we all deserve a body that is going to perform in athletic ventures, give us the freedom to explore, allow us to play with kids and grandkids and take on an "earthquake" without crumbling.

*Movement strength is so important to us at MOSSA that we have two programs, 3D30 and MOVE30, that are 100% dedicated to being movement strong, and the idea of being "muscle and movement strong" is part of the DNA of all MOSSA programs. We even recently introduced a loaded movement recovery, Move & Mobilize, on our streaming platform, MOSSA On Demand.*

*(Cathy Spencer Browning is the VP of Training & Programming for MOSSA. Cathy can be reached by phone at 770-989-4700 or email at [cathy@mossa.net](mailto:cathy@mossa.net).)*

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