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FOCUS ON FITNESS: Fitness center caters to women

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Kelly Farris sounds like a trainer. Bubbling with enthusiasm, Farris has been in the fitness industry 24 years. Twelve years ago, she opened Ladies Workout Express in Snellville, and the gym is prospering, catering to women of all ages. The gym has 17 aerobics instructors and four personal trainers, including two men.

I spoke with Farris about her business and what keeps her so motivated. She loves what she's doing: helping others live healthier lives.

"My god, that to me is powerful," she said. "We're changing people's lives for the better."

Q: What made you want to open a gym exclusively for women?

A: I went 15 years ago to a Ladies Workout Express and I loved it. It was such a relaxed atmosphere. You didn't have to worry how you looked; the equipment was sized for women; the trainers were women. I said, "You know, this is the direction I would like to go, helping other women."

Q: What are some of the programs that you have?

A: Community service for senior citizens. Anyone over 60 can attend for \$1 apiece. We call it Women on Weights, WOW. It's designed for prevention of osteoporosis, balance improvement.

Q: Keeping people dedicated is always a challenge. How do you keep members coming back?

A: Members get one visit with a personal trainer, monthly accountability with a certified personal trainer. We have aerobics, yoga, hip-hop — a large variety of instructors — so you never really have an opportunity to get bored. We don't do what we call copycat or robot aerobics. Everybody that teaches is a certified person so you get a different workout every time. It keeps people excited because you never get the same workout and you're

constantly getting results.

Q: What advantages do you offer over another gym geared toward women?

A: We're full-service. We offer everything from hip-hop to pilates to salsa to fusion fitness to weight training. We're full-service — minus the men.

Q: What are some of the more common concerns you see?

A: You'd probably think it would be weight issues, but it's not. Women are concerned about their health. People with high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol, they walk in here, "I need some help." They've neglected themselves so long taking care of young children. I hear every excuse under the sun. You've got to eat less and move more. That's all there is to it. Make a lifestyle change.

Q: You can do only three exercises. What are they?

A: Push-ups are a great upper body exercise. They actively work chest, back, biceps and triceps and isometrically work the abdomen and core.

The next one would be walking lunges. You wouldn't start with lunges but it's a great exercise because they hit quads, hamstrings, hip flexors, glutes, your calves.

Third would be cardiovascular walking, interval walking; walking hard and fast for one minute and then walking at a normal pace for three, or running and then walking for a minute.

Q: What keeps you in the business, your biggest reward?

A: I had a senior citizen come up to me (last week) and say, "I just want you to know I lost 25 pounds and I owe it all to you." I said "No, not me, you owe it to exercise. You were motivated to come in this door two times a week."

Being professional and knowing what you are talking about, helping people change lives for the better. My god, that to me is powerful.

Ladies Workout Express is at 1987 Scenic Highway, Suite 11. For more information, call the gym at 770-985-6070.

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