

Lifestyles

Wednesday, December 26, 2007

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New Year's celebration set at Clearfield

The Amherst Recreation Department will present a New Year's celebration with crafts and activities from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday, Dec. 31 at the Clearfield Community Center, 730 Hopkins Road, Williamsville. All participants must have a valid Town of Amherst Recreation Department ID. For more information, call 631-7132.

FITNESS FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY



YMCA offers early start on healthy New Year's resolutions

by ELIZABETH TAUFA
Reporter

Getting in shape for the new year is no longer just a resolution for adults. At the YMCA Buffalo Niagara, fitness is available for the whole family.

The Growing Up Fit program provides exercise opportunities for children and their parents as well as nutrition education.

The two-part class, which lasts for 10 weeks, includes aerobic, stretching and strengthening activities with large fitness balls, and educational lectures by healthcare professionals, with topics including the food pyramid, reading labels, eating out and packing lunches.

"We've offered it for about two and a half years, and it's definitely our most popular program for families," said Kelly Standage, program development director for YMCA Buffalo Niagara. "There are about 200 enrollments a year, and it's nice because the whole family is involved in weight management, and there's the element of family support."

Also for youths and children, the YMCA offers youth sports, including basketball, soccer, floor hockey, roller hockey, baseball, lacrosse, football, dance, gymnastics, golf, karate, cheering, kung fu and dodgeball.

For adults of all ages, dance aerobics have become more prevalent and popular among the membership at the YMCA.

"There's a new aerobics called zumba, which is a Latin-inspired aerobics with music and dance steps," said Kathy Vallone, communications director for YMCA Buffalo Niagara. "It sculpts the body because it alternates fast and slow, and it's something everybody can do."

Zumba, which is only offered at the Northeast branch of the YMCA located at 4433 Main St, near Harlem Road, Amherst, is becoming a national trend as well and has been featured on "The Today Show."

"We've really had a good response to it," Vallone said.

"It makes aerobics more fun."

"I think that fun is the biggest reason," said Standage of zumba's popularity. "The music and the instructors are very motivating. The group exercise gives a sense of camaraderie, and it's a good way to stick to a fitness routine."

Standage also noted that group cycling and spinning classes are also popular because of a lack of choreography and because of its conduciveness to beginners.

And the YMCA doesn't leave out the senior population either.

"All of our full-fitness facilities have a pool," said Standage. "The aquatic exercises are great for seniors because they're easier on their joints."

"We're seeing more seniors who are not only interested in becoming physically fit because of doctor's orders, but because it's also a great way to be more social," Vallone added. "We've seen tremendous growth in the senior population."

A specialized program for seniors is the Silver Sneakers Program, which is sponsored by Independent Health.

The program is a variety of classes designed to increase muscular strength, range of movement, and activity for daily living skills.

"The exercises are designed for seniors to do exercises that improve balance and other issues that come with getting older," Standage said.

Seniors with Medicare and Encompass 65 through Independent Health are eligible for membership to the YMCA.

Starting Jan. 1, the YMCA will also begin a membership collaboration with Blue Cross Blue Shield

From Wednesday, Jan. 2 through Sunday, Jan. 13, all branches will be holding a "Try the Y" membership event. Members of the community are invited to tour the facilities, try the Wellness Center, participate in open swim, take a fitness class and take part in special events.

"For those who join during the trial period we'll waive the joining fee," Vallone said. "That's a potential savings of up to \$100."


The YMCA is also looking for ways to expand its programming according to the need or desires of the communities the different branches serve.

"We have our core set of programs but we're always looking to expand according to the demographic," Vallone said.

For more information on the YMCA Buffalo Niagara, contact the corporate office at 565-6000.

e-mail: etaufa@beenews.com





For more information on the YMCA in your area and its programs and classes, contact the closest branch:

Ken-Ton Family YMCA
535 Belmont Ave.
Kenmore
874-5051 (phone)
874-5054 (fax)

Northeast Family YMCA
4433 Main St. near Harlem Rd.
Amherst
839-2543 (phone)
839-2352 (fax)

Southtowns Family YMCA
1620 Southwestern Blvd.
West Seneca
674-9622 (phone)
674-9522 (fax)

Lancaster Family YMCA
5 W. Main St.
Lancaster
684-2395 (phone)
651-9745 (fax)

Delaware Family YMCA
2564 Delaware Ave.
Buffalo
875-1283 (phone)
845-0305 (fax)

Ellicott-Masten Family YMCA
585 William St.
Buffalo
845-5440 (phone)
845-5443 (fax)

