

Getting Fit: Personal trainers whip kids into shape

By Meredith Blake
Staff Writer, Greenwich Time

Jumping hurdles, doing box jumps, and walking up on a revolving ladder are just some of the exercises Aundrea Lagana does with her personal trainer.

"It's really fun," Aundrea said, "I like the machines. And the ladder is my favorite."

Since starting this past year, Aundrea, 8, has improved her flexibility and agility - making her a star in her jazz acrobatics class, said her mother Rye Brook resident Rosa Lagana. Getting children personal trainers and into the gym to improve their fitness and coordination is a growing trend in Greenwich and nationwide. Children ages 6 to 17 comprise 17 percent of the 6.3 million people who used personal trainers in 2006 and the numbers continue to rise each year, according to data from the Boston-based International Health, Racquet and Sportsclub Association.

Here in town parents pay up to \$100 a session to get their child a customized gym experience.

The fitness facility Peak Physique, located at 50 Holly Hill Lane, offers training for all ages, including children ages 8 and up.

"It helps them gain confidence and self-esteem and also become fit," said Dominic Novak, owner of Peak Physique.

Aundrea recently started jazz acrobatics and was lagging behind some her contemporaries in her ability to do flips and jumps. Her mother wanted to help her excel so she signed Aundrea up at Peak Physique.

She trains twice a week with Csaba Pechcsi for one hour each session.

"It's really helped her to improve her hand-eye coordination," said Lagana.

And with her acrobatics, she has also come a long way, Lagana said.

"She's caught up with her classmates. Even her teacher was impressed with her progress," she said.



Other Greenwich fitness centers also work with children, Novak said.

Parents whose children work with personal trainers say the expense is worthwhile because it helps promote healthy habits and is another way to get them doing sports and being active.

One mother came to Peak Physique hoping to get her overweight 11-year old into shape, Novak said.

"And that's what we did," he said, "By the time we were finished with him, he was ready to try out for the football team."

"It's for fitness and for fun," said Old Greenwich resident Robin LeBlanc, who recently signed up her two sons, Nico, 9 and Normand, 10, for summer sessions.

"We're very fortunate that we can afford it. It's worth every cent," said Tina Ciecimirski, whose son Evan, 17, trains at the gym.

Peak Physique has seen a significant increase in the number of parents signing their children up to work with trainers since opening in 1993, Novak said.

Novak thinks it's a combination of schools cutting back on physical education and children spending most of their time

on computers and iPods. There are a lot of techniques and equipment to help train children that can keep them interested and excited about working out, Novak said.

At Peak Physique, they have a variety of equipment and games, such as a climbing wall, a hand cycle and an obstacle course.

"We're constantly switching it up," Novak said, "They have a lot of fun with it."

The younger children particularly like working with Peak Physique's "Makoto Arena," which requires them to quickly tag illuminated targets on three standing towers. Each tower has 10 targets and any one of them could be the one to randomly activate. Children and adults must lunge for the illuminated target before the next one comes up.

"It's a full body workout," Novak said, "And kids really love it."

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