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Wyandotte patients work out Owner is teacher of 'whole person'

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WYANDOTTE ? Julie Bernick stretches over a huge rubber ball near a wall with the phrase "Train Different" painted on it.

The 36-year-old Dearborn mom-to-be injured herself four years ago while dancing. She hurt a muscle group that runs from the leg to the rib area and made a complete recovery rehabilitating herself at Body Specs! Inc. on Biddle near the Trenton border.

Now that she is pregnant, she is working out at the facility owned by Edwin "Skip" Bunton to help make delivery as smooth as possible and to stay in good shape.

"He is a whole person teacher," Bernick said of Bunton. "He is not concerned with just your body, he asks about what's going on in your life too. You wish your doctors were like this."

Training different has been the 42-year-old Bunton's motto for the past two decades. He preaches aggressive workouts that do not always include lifting weights or using treadmills or other similar equipment.

Instead, the soft-spoken Bunton uses large and small balls, some weighing 18 pounds. Clients lift the balls, toss them and do other exercises to rehabilitate their bodies from injuries or to get into better shape.

Bunton, an Ypsilanti resident whose wife is a dietitian, initially was ridiculed for his views. But he has built a big following of athletes, people recovering from injuries and those looking to live a healthy lifestyle.

His facility averages 20 clients a day. All sessions are by appointment and feature one-on-one interaction. Bunton trains the client and helps him or her work toward goals set before workouts begin.

Bunton is not a fan of traditional rehabilitation techniques that stress not engaging in activities that caused an injury in the first place.

That would not be practical for athletes or people whose jobs involve repetitive movements, Bunton said.

"I knew my approach was different than my colleagues'," he said. "I was always asking if there was a better way; a more efficient way (to help patients)."

Wyandotte patients work out

John Papalas, a 50-year-old Riverview resident, loves Bunton's approach.

In 1987, Bunton helped Papalas recover from a back ailment. Over the years, Papalas said he hoped to reconnect and get in better shape under Bunton's care.

But that did not happen until January, when pain in Papalas' right shoulder was so bad he could not reach back and pull his wallet from his back pocket.

"It is hard to get motivated until you have an injury," Papalas said.

During a recent workout, Bunton had Papalas bounce a weighted ball while in a sitting position, then lie on his stomach while lifting his thighs from the ground and batting the ball back and forth using his hands.

Papalas ? an avid golfer and hockey player ? also donned an orange belt attached to a long cordlike rope that stretches a bit and hopped side-to-side. The cord provided resistance, an alternative to weight-lifting.

"Several family members went to him," said Papalas, whose shoulder is healed. "He is great."

Bunton said preventative measures like eating healthy and exercising can head off some of the injuries he helps treat. Simple changes in a person's lifestyles can make a big difference, he said.

"As a country, we like big stuff," he said. "We drive big cars and we eat big. It is not bad to have fast food but it is the quantity that is bad."

He would like to see people step away from the buffet lines and into workout gear and exercise.

"We do not need all that food," he said. "We eat too much."

Body Specs! Inc.

What: An injury rehabilitation and exercise facility

Where: 4076 Biddle in Wyandotte

Hours: By appointment only

Phone: (734) 260-3561

Web: www.bodyspecs.net

Owner Edward "Skip" Bunton works with client Julie Bernick at Body Specs! Inc. in Wyandotte so she can stay in good condition during her pregnancy and delivery. "You wish your doctors were like this," Bernick says. John Papalas, 50, of Riverview works with a ball as part of a program to rehabilitate his right shoulder. Julie Bernick, 36, of Dearborn works out at Body Specs! Inc. to stay in good condition during her pregnancy and delivery. Owner Edwin "Skip" Bunton, front, shows John Papalas several exercises designed to strengthen his muscles.