

Best of 2007: Local Fitness Center

that is maintained by some can be forsaken for junk food, fast food and other foods with little to no nutritional value by others who believe that an extra hour or day at the gym can cancel it out. In light of the present factors and choices, what is the best course of action? The Body Firm feels that they have the answer you may be looking for.

The Vision

The Body Firm believes that a diet specialized to each individual's nutritional needs, in conjunction with a personalized exercise program, may be the most direct and balanced answer to all of the above. Doug Thompson, founder and owner of the Ahwatukee-based fitness center, has spent the past 12 years searching for the best answer to this complex question. After starting out as a physical therapist, he quickly became interested in the training aspect of physical therapy. Not long afterwards, he decided to fully immerse himself in his passion: fitness training. He began working and logging experience in bigger fitness centers in Ahwatukee, gathering material and feedback from his clients. His research efforts are what set The Body Firm apart from the commercial fitness centers. "Over the 12 years [of observation and experience], I developed this concept of semi-private and private personal training. [It essentially gives people the] opportunity to have a personal trainer at a discounted rate."

A Long-Time Dream Fulfilled

The problems and limitations that commercial gyms may have for clients—convenient appointment times, trainer to client ratios, trainer requirements, a lack of knowledge in proper exercise techniques and use of equipment, an imper-



sonal atmosphere and monthly or yearly membership commitments—are just a few reasons why many people stop just before crossing the threshold of a commercial gym. However, The Body Firm has dreamed up a solution for gym-phobics in the form of their uniquely formatted, 45-minute semi-private and private sessions. The Body Firm's semi-private sessions are just that: a qualified trainer meets with a small group of clients who benefit from the more personalized and social atmosphere. The trainer is able to field questions, comments and concerns throughout the session at a moment's notice. The closer setting of the small groups are for your benefit: friendly trainers, the "jump start" program link that everyone shares and different motivations will serve to ease everyone into more comfortable mood and prompt easy conversation. More often than not, new clients have come in and, by the end of their first few sessions, made a new workout buddy.

At The Body Firm, an introductory fitness consultation is offered free of charge for first-time clients. You can check out the facility, chat with the trainers and just generally see what The Body Firm has to offer. If what they have and promote interests you, it's time for you to join their "jump start" program, which entails three mandatory private (one-on-one) sessions before moving on to a personalized diet and exercise routine. Doug requires that each of his trainers have at least one cer-

The Body Firm strives to offer the best in personal training without the cost.

Doug Thompson, owner of The Body Firm, trains a client.

Working out at the gym seems to be a very popular activity these days. A physically fit body has become a mainstream concern, fueled by the media's obsession over weight and physical attractiveness. However, what was one of the original motivations of going to the gym? Maintaining one's health has become second priority for many people who do frequent the gym. A proper diet is also being promoted across the nation but how many are paying attention? As common as it is to see water bottles and sports drinks at the gym, there are just as many who feel carbonated and caffeinated drinks can be as energy sustaining as the former while exercising. A balanced diet of meat, vegetables, fruit and other nutritional foods



Trainer Sandy Johnson works with a client.

tification from an accredited association and all trainers participate in regular “on-going” training sessions. One of the trainers is a nutritionist and will have you keep a dietary journal for a few days before coming in for a nutritional evaluation, followed by diet suggestions and a personalized fitness program. The mandatory “jump start” program is a prequel to what you will be doing and how you progress later on. Some may wonder why the program is necessary, but Doug is adamant. “If they’re not eating the right things, then they probably aren’t going to see the results that they want.”

However, you wonder what other conditions come with semi-private sessions other than social interaction, right? Not to worry, says Doug. “Everyone’s doing their own workout, not like group training where everyone is doing the same thing.” The personalized program that each client is presented with after the “jump start” program is still in place whether you choose to continue with semi-private or private sessions. Private sessions are usually held with Doug or Sandy Johnson, a trainer that has been in the fitness industry for more than 30 years and has worked in Ahwatukee for about five years. Doug strongly encourages his clients to opt for the semi-private sessions because they allow for more interaction with other trainers (trainers rotate amongst the semi-private session time slots) and patrons. Sandy is happy to declare that The Body Firm is one “big happy family,” not only because of the fun atmosphere but also due to the fact that trainers and clients of-

fer encouragement and support amongst themselves. It's hard to find such motivation and continued support in larger gyms, where you are often on your own. Doug concludes, "People like having a private facility to go to. I think that's becoming more popular; people don't seem to like going to bigger gyms for whatever reason." If The Body Firm's clients were to give testimonials, it sounds like the reasons could be any of the aforementioned perks above.

Exercising is emphasized to improve the quality of your life.

The First Steps towards the Finish Line

Now that you're acquainted with what The Body Firm has to offer, where do you begin? If you decide to continue working with The Body Firm after completing the "jump start" program, you will soon become a regular at their Web site. The Web site, after a year of conceptualizing, development, and fine tuning, is one of the main links to The Body Firm. After paying for your first official sessions and getting registered online, you will be able to choose from over 325 session time slots per week, check out daily health tips and extra information outside of your workout time (or opt to receive them via e-mail) and you are instantly connected to a vast network of doctors, physical therapists and massage therapists for your every concern. You can sign up for sessions at a moment's notice, so long as there is an opening, and e-mail confirmations will reassure even the most forgetful. Their online system gives you the most in flexibility: Scheduling, accounting and billing can all be taken care of from wherever you have an Internet connection.

Doug and his staff at The Body Firm have created a comfortable and fun environment where exercising is emphasized to improve the quality of your life rather than your appearance (although that is a perk). Doug also created ProFormula Nutrition, a line of all-natural supplements that further enhance the results you are already receiving from working with The Body Firm's programs. The friendly and knowledgeable trainers and personalized programs will have you wondering why you ever considered going anywhere else. □