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## People

### A Perfect Fit

BY REBECCA KENDALL

As you watch U of G fitness centre co-ordinator Lynne Skilton-Hayes lead cardio, spinning and boxing classes at the Athletics Centre, it's hard to imagine she wasn't always the picture of health she is today. But 15 years ago, two separate injuries left the then high school track-and-field athlete with a broken ankle and broken ribs and unable to exercise. She quickly gained 50 pounds, and the epileptic seizures that had been part of her life since age 15 became much more frequent.



Lynne Skilton-Hayes manages some 45 fitness staff . that the fitness centre's facilities, including the weight rooms, are kept in tip-top shape. Photo by Tony Sax Mercury

"The difference within six months was phenomenal," says Skilton-Hayes, who is now nationally and internationally accredited as a fitness professional. "I was rapid weight, and my epilepsy was out of control."

In an effort to regain control, she vowed to make exercise a part of her daily r a move that not only resulted in increased energy and weight loss, but also g professional direction, passion and the desire to see others meet their physical she says. In addition, it reduced the symptoms of epilepsy, which were often fatigue and stress.

"I'm at a point now where I take no medication for it at all," she says. "I've seen exercise can do for people. It can really improve your quality of life, and that's this industry so much."

Skilton-Hayes, who earned a B.Sc. from Guelph in 1994 and returned to campus fitness centre co-ordinator in 2005, has a history with the Department of Athletics dates back to her days as a student teaching fitness classes.

After graduation, she took her love of teaching fitness to a new level by starting a consulting business in Toronto. In 2002, she and her husband, Chris, moved to Guelph where she continued to work as a fitness manager and personal trainer and did segments on Global Television's morning show. During her years on the West Coast, she was invited back to U of G close to 20 times to provide training and certification for fitness instructors at the Athletics Centre.

Now here on a full-time basis, Skilton-Hayes trains, teaches classes and manages fitness staff and ensures that the fitness centre's facilities, including the weight rooms, are kept in tip-top shape. She also recommends facility improvements and upgrades, including this summer's installation of air conditioning in the cardio

In addition, she oversees U of G's personal fitness training program, a service that many members of the community may not realize is available, she says. The program serves on- and off-campus clients, who can choose to train individually with a trainer or in a group.

"Group classes are great because they make personal training affordable for many," she says. "Instead of paying \$80 per hour as an individual, you divide that rate among everyone participating in the session."

After registering to work with a personal trainer, clients receive a one-hour consultation session, as well as a postural assessment and a health screen. They also discuss and work with the trainer to set a plan for achieving their goals.

"It's really important for a trainer and a client to have a rapport and to really connect with one another," she says. "It's something I insist on."

Over the past year, Skilton-Hayes has introduced a number of new fitness class programs, including Gryphon Boot Camp, a six-week outdoor cardio and strength training regimen, and Women on Weights (WOW), a weight-training class designed exclusively for women. Both of these options are available this fall.

"There's both an educational component and a workout component to the WOW class," she says. "It's specifically for women who struggle with issues like strength training, nutrition and flexibility."

Offering this type of class encourages women of various levels of fitness and experience to set goals for themselves and feel comfortable in the weight room, she says.

"In most gym environments, there are a niche of people — in many cases women who don't feel confident training alongside younger or more knowledgeable people. Our program gives women the know-how they need to confidently step into that room and work out."

She has also launched a number of new workshops and classes, including those specifically for pregnant women and new mothers.

"As an industry, fitness professionals are more educated and knowledgeable about how to train people at different stages of life and with different physical conditions and injuries," she says. Skilton-Hayes, who also trains fitness professionals and was one of only five presenters at a national conference for Can-Fit Pro, the largest North American fitness conference, held in Toronto in August.

Another new class she's incorporated into Athletics Centre offerings features the use of a balance ball (an acronym for both sides up), a piece of equipment that has a flat Plexiglas surface on one side and a dome on the other. "It's like a half ball," she says, noting that the ball improves balance and coordination while working muscles in such a way that

complements their everyday function.

"I love educating people to the point where they feel empowered and commit lifestyle change that will benefit them for the rest of their life. I'm very passionate about what I do. I absolutely love it."

On Sept. 23, Skilton-Hayes will be on Johnston Green leading an aerobathon to raise money for Big Brothers Big Sisters and Breaststrokes, U of G's dragon boat team for cancer survivors.

Registration begins at 8 a.m., and the event runs from 9 to 11:30 a.m. Participants must raise a minimum of \$50 to participate. Incentive prizes include a mountain bike, a night at a local bed and breakfast, and a variety of sportswear and accessories.

For more information about fitness classes or the aerobathon, contact Skilton-Hayes at 52670 or send e-mail to [lskilton@uoguelph.ca](mailto:lskilton@uoguelph.ca).

U of G employees interested in registering for fitness memberships may now use a new online system available at [www.gryphons.ca](http://www.gryphons.ca). Beginning this semester, staff may also pay membership fees through payroll deduction. For more information, contact Linda Melnick at Ext. 52160 or [lmelnick@uoguelph.ca](mailto:lmelnick@uoguelph.ca).

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