

This page has been printed from the following URL:

<http://www.seacoastonline.com/2005news/rock/07222005/business/54149.htm>

12-4-2006

She trains people for fitness, life

By Nancy Shuffleton
rockinghamnews@seacoastonline.com

[Complete Business Index](#)

PLAISTOW - Vanessa Underwood of Underwood's Training for Sports and Fitness is passionate, knowledgeable and vocal about fitness and healthy lifestyles. She is a lively motivational force and a dramatic example of how an active, healthy lifestyle can change and enhance lives.

A survivor of two kidney transplants and cancer, this 50-year-old wife and mother is not the stereotypical personal trainer; she admits she "definitely took the nontraditional journey to fitness." She has an eclectic resume that includes multiple careers - social worker, victim and witness advocate, paralegal, pharmaceutical representative, motivational speaker at patient and medical conferences and health and fitness writer and editor.



And then there are some 25 years in the personal training business, her participation in Lance Armstrong's Tour of Hope, an assortment of medals in track and field, swimming and racquetball from 1994, 1996 and 1998 U. S. Transplant Games, her volunteer work with the National Kidney Foundation and awards and national media attention recognizing her inspiring story.

She has an alphabet soup of credentials - CSCS, ACSM, AFAA, CPR – that indicate national certifications with specialties in weight training, strength and conditioning, senior fitness, nutrition and first aid. Exercising is her passion, and she does a lot – swimming, running, weight-lifting, snow skiing, water-skiing, sailing and biking.

Today her fitness and training business offers something for "all levels, all ages, male and female." She offers one-on-one and group training, all designed to meet clients' individual goals. She offers partner programs, such as two athletic team members or mother-daughter programs and specialty programs for "large people," seniors, cancer patients, families or youth.

"My passion is making people feel successful. I've always been a supporter of the

underdog."

She is empathetic because, at one point after her second transplant, she weighed 200 pounds and lost it "one step at a time" through diet and exercise.

Underwood believes in "functional training," meaning working the body as it is used every day. Clients may work on weight training, plyometrics, speed, agility, balance, flexibility, core stabilization, metabolic training, and overall conditioning.

Underwood's business also works with high school and college athletes and coaches, AAU teams, soccer leagues and coaches, softball teams, and, last weekend, strength and conditioning with the University of Connecticut cheerleaders.

Underwood's business is also focusing on "kid fitness."

"The prevalence of juvenile obesity is on the rise in many developed and undeveloped countries. It has reached epidemic proportions ... Kids who are overweight are feeling like outsiders, and I have a passion for all kids feeling equal and good about themselves. I feel quite strongly about how exercise plays a key role in many aspects of lifeOrganized sports are such that kids play year round and the biggest myth parents have is that 'they play three sports so they are fit.' Wrong! This is the cause of so many athletes getting injured. They are not strengthening ligaments, tendons etcetera to support all the sports they are performing or the year-round activities with no break in between. That's why my training helps them to improve overall, especially reducing the risk of injury in addition to making them better athletes."

At this point, Underwood is a one-woman business, although her daughters "step in for me." Older daughter Caroline, 23, is an EMT and plans to become a physician's assistant. Katherine will be a sophomore at the University of Connecticut where she will study Latin America and journalism. Underwood said that exercising is "a lifestyle for them that they grew up with."

She has relationships, via referrals and as mutual resources, with physical therapists, physicians, nutritionists, and other medical professionals.

Underwood will soon leave her long-held position as part-time victim witness advocate at the Plaistow Police Department, but says, "Simply put, I believe there is a definite connection to all three roles. Whether I am a social worker, victim's advocate or personal trainer, my goal is to help my clients feel a sense of self-worth, accomplishment and empowerment. I want to provide a foundation of education and knowledge, to have a sincere commitment to my clients and believe in them, to build a trusting relationship, to support and encourage them. These are the tools people need to change their lives and be successful at it. Knowledge is power. Education is critical, whether you are trying to get out of an abusive relationship, get on a healthy track, or simply need a support system. Empowering people to take control of their lives in a positive way has always been my goal no matter what hat I am wearing."

One of her goals is to train clients to the point where they can continue on their own at home, in a gym or while traveling. She maintains that "the best exercise is the one you will do."

She offers information packets, including prices and payment plans, and says her rates are reasonable.

"Change starts in the head. You have to start believing in yourself. I teach my kids that you can do anything you put your mind toI feel like I've been given the responsibility to share my success, what I was doing, so they (clients) can do better and live a quality life... . Some people have the innate ability to connect with people, turning obstacles into stepping stones. I love what I do."

This page has been printed from the following URL:

<http://www.seacoastonline.com/2005news/rock/07222005/business/54149.htm>

Copyright 1999 - 2004 [Seacoast Newspapers](#), a division of [Ottaway Newspapers Inc.](#), all rights reserved.