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SPOTLIGHT ON SENIORS

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Spring into fitness: Local business and residents get serious about senior fitness



Tribune/Debra Reid

Natalie Hilbert is the fitness director of Cascades of the Sierra's EverFit program, helping keep residents and community members active at all ages.

BY HAILEE VANCE

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Sparks resident Joe Beard, 64, will be heading to Stanford University this summer to compete in the National Senior Games in seven different track and field events.

Beard has always been an active person. Although he never played organized sports, in 2004 he decided to try his luck at the Nevada Senior Games in track and field. He placed in all of his 12 events that year and went to his first National Senior Games in Pittsburgh in 2005. Since then he has competed in two more Nevada Senior Games and has said the games moti-

vate him to stay active. His moderate change in exercise has helped him to go from 205 pounds to 185 pounds.

"Seniors need to rethink how they want to live," Beard said. "If they want to have a miserable end to their life then they can sit on their butt and decay."

Beard said it is important for seniors to stay in shape because it will improve their quality of life. He has seen this firsthand. His 85-year-old mother-in-law goes to the gym every day and walks on the treadmill and does light weights.

After she had several surgeries, including two knee replacements, Beard said she recovered quickly largely because of her level of fitness.

Natalie Hilbert, the fitness director for the new EverFit Club at Cascades of the Sierra retirement community, which is set to open in Spanish Springs later this spring or in early summer, echoes this sentiment.

"Fitness is pretty much the same at any age," Hilbert said. "Sometimes you have to help people see the benefits (in fitness) they don't see themselves. (We) are helping people have the best quality of life regardless of age."

Hilbert said there are many benefits to being active. For seniors, she said three things most helped by being active are bone density, muscle mass and balance. She said she thinks a club like EverFit will help seniors feel more confident going to the gym.

"(EverFit) will help (its members)

to feel more comfortable in their surroundings and they will know that we are there for them," Hilbert said.

The club, which will open this summer, will be accessible to the residents of the retirement community and Hilbert hopes, eventually to the public. Members of the club will be able to take part in classes ranging from strength training and Tai Chi to brain activities and dance classes. They will also have access to an indoor saline pool for lap swimming and other water classes.

In a normal gym, workout equipment can present a problem, but the EverFit Club's equipment will be easier to function. Hilbert said the equipment is operated by the use of buttons instead of the seniors having to pull out pins to change the weight.

The club will also be offering two groups to the public. The EverFit walking club and the EverFit pet club will allow seniors in the community to get out and be active with their peers. The social aspect of being active is something both Beard and Hilbert see as another benefit. Hilbert said that seniors will go to workout classes to socialize with their friends, which also acts as a motivator.

"If you have a partner to go to the gym with or a club you are a part of you are so much more likely to go to the gym," Beard said.

Beard and Hilbert agree that getting active and staying active should be a goal of all seniors.

At one senior games, Beard saw a



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The National Senior Games helped Sparks resident Joe Beard lose 20 pounds in his training process.

95-year-old man competing in the 1500- and 3000-meter races. Although the man wasn't very fast, he still finished the race.

"I hope he is still going like the energy bunny," Beard said.

Seniors who decide to become active, however, should follow some guidelines to prevent injury. Beard said the biggest thing to remember is to not do too much too fast.

"Things you used to do you can't do any more," Beard said. "So going out and saying when you were 16 you could run two miles without stopping so you can so it now is not right."

Hilbert suggested starting out simple by walking 30 minutes every day. She also suggested meeting with someone to get on a program. She said by doing those two things seniors can improve their bodies tremendously.

"I'm not saying to go to the gym and try to look like Arnold Schwarzenegger," Beard said. "I'm saying go three or four times a week to the gym, ride a bike, go for a walk, or join a club. Make being active a lifestyle."