

Zumba takes the resort by storm

Tired of the Jane Fonda-style aerobic classes, local women jump on board the new fitness train

By Kim Mitchell

It is realistic to have a smile on your face while working your heart and burning fat.

Even better, it's more than possible to have one dance that combines salsa, mambo, cha-cha and squats, lunges, arm, buns and stomach work

Zumba, a fusion of Latin dance steps and fitness moves, is a high-energy exercise with low-impact moves that is sweeping the exercise world, and landing right in Ocean City.



"It's designed to be fun," said Di Hill, co-owner of Pilates Works in West Ocean City.

When Hill and co-owner Shannon Reilly were considering what kind of aerobic exercise to add to their studio lineup, they didn't want to go the traditional route.

"For me, taking and teaching different exercises, it was always, 'Am I doing this correctly?' and 'Am I in the structure of the box?'" Hill said. "Zumba is more individual, it's looser."

Zumba allows each person to interpret the moves for themselves. There shouldn't be any worry or intimidation. People don't need a dance background or to be coordinated.

"It looks like we're all out dancing at a party," Hill said. "That's what I want to accomplish."

Fun and fitness in one

Zumba provides a great workout for the heart.

"The workout is designed in intervals where the heart rate changes from high to low as the songs change from fast to slow," she said.

Warm-up songs get you in the groove, then high intensity songs get the heart rate up.

After about 14 minutes of high intensity, Hill said her students will be tired, so the gears switch to gentler music. Then they build back up to high intensity after a few songs.

Hill said she incorporates classic fitness elements into the routines to target specific muscle groups. The hard-to-tone arms and shoulders even have their own dance.

She'll throw in a squat just after the mambo.

While the exercise isn't a muscle-building workout, Hill said it keeps the muscles fit.

The routines taught are fat burning, especially with the interval training.

"The body has to work harder to bring the heart rate back up," Hill said.

A new age of aerobics

After decades of Jane Fonda workouts, Hill said that aerobics had lost its appeal.

"It became antiquated and dated," she said.

While some instructors kept it current, most couldn't appeal to the masses.

People turned to the machines to get their cardio, but now they want off.

"They're ready for something current," Hill said.

Denise Campbell, an Ocean Pines resident, is a runner. But the constant pounding on the pavement is starting to wear on her.

She loves to workout, but wanted to incorporate something different, she said.

"When I was told about class, I jumped on board," she said. "It's a lot of fun. We laugh, get to be with other women and have a great time."

After her first class, Campbell was surprised by the workout.

"It kicked my fanny," she said. "My abs were sore the next day and I never did traditional ab work on the floor. We stayed standing the whole time."

Kimberly Flynn said the class was an awesome mix of Latin, tribal grooves and exercise.

"It was caliente!" she said. "I'd take it again, and probably will."

Pilates Works owners weren't sure how Zumba was going to be accepted in Ocean City. They decided to hold one class for the month of February. After about 30 minutes of radio play, they had to remove the advertisement.

"We got 30 to 40 calls in the time," Hill said. "When we got 18 on the first day, we decided that was enough."

While the February class may be full, be sure to call for the month of March.

Campbell knows Hill and Reilly, and knew they wouldn't incorporate a class that wasn't going to be successful.

"It wasn't hard to follow," she said. "I didn't get every single step, but it's my first time taking it. It was a learning experience. I can't wait to go back this Thursday and learn more."