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Fitness

Spiral, stretch and strengthen all in one movement

By Monica Hoekstra

While watching the Summer Olympic athletes this summer, I was reminded of how hard they have worked to make their movements appear incredible and, at the same time, effortless. All athletes in all disciplines show various displays of “art of movement” but the gymnasts and the swimmers exemplify it most.



Monica Hoekstra

Michael Phelps, the most decorated Olympic athlete in the history of the games, is a perfect example. He has attained his greatness by being a natural at what he does, showing a strength and suppleness that is beautiful to watch. And that is the essence of the **Art of Smart Movement**: effortless, graceful, rhythmic, precise and controlled movement occurring in tandem and with meaning and purpose. Watching humans move in this manner is pleasing to the eye and creates good energy.

Smart movement, or intelligent exercise, is learning your limits: when to speed up, when to slow down, but, more importantly, when to stop and rest. The question is: How do I achieve this?

We are pre-conditioned to think that the more we torture ourselves, the better shape we will be in. The “no pain, no gain” mindset really is silly when you think about it. This attitude defeats the purpose, which is to be able to move freely and without pain. A colleague of mine said something I will never forget: “If you go to a nice restaurant and enjoy the atmosphere and ambiance but the food made you sick, would you go back?” Of course not. Yet we continue to go back to the gym for more torture and pain and then we like to brag that we couldn’t walk upstairs for the next two days! Perhaps we need to recast this phrase: “no pain, all gain!”

There is, of course, a distinction between mild discomfort and pain while working out. Pain is never ideal. Your

body is smart and it uses pain to get your attention when you are perhaps doing too much or doing something wrong. It’s telling you to slow down or even to stop.

When your muscles are shaking or in pain, your deep support muscles (local stabilizers) are telling your bigger, mover muscles (global mobilizers) that they can’t support them much longer. Once they shut off, the mover muscles have to act as stabilizer muscles as well, which causes imbalance, overload and typically a lack of control. Put another way, it results in bad form and bad form equals bad movement.

This is where the “art” aspect of the “smart” movement comes into play. Let’s stop the insanity and make quality of movement (i.e. good form) the rule rather than the quantity of movements.

Here are some other catch phrases that don’t fit in with the regimen of smart movement:

Feel the Burn. Why? It hurts and it does not produce results. It produces inflammation, which makes us feel tired and cranky.

Work through the pain. Why? Something is going to give soon and it most likely won’t be good.

The more the better. Why? Twenty minutes of mindful movement is better than two hours of mindless exercise.

At the end of the day, it doesn’t matter what you do. What matters is that you enjoy what you do, find purpose in it and give thought to how you move and how to perfect it – whether it’s walking your dog or going for the gold. The key is to master the art of movement. ■

Monica Hoekstra is the founder and creator of CORE BARRE, a system that promotes the ART of SMART MOVEMENT. Core Barre is taught at Absolute Pilates in Charlotte and in many other locations around the country. For more information visit www.corebarre.com.

Urban Ministry Center

240 volunteers join together at homeless center

Country singer Trace Adkins hefted a giant pair of scissors and clipped the official ribbon during the ceremony that marked the newly renovated **Urban Ministry Center** on July 24. The four-time Grammy nominee celebrated at the support center for the homeless with the 90 volunteers who had spent the morning painting, gardening and renovating buildings.

The project, which took place between July 21 and July 24, was set into motion when the UMC became one of three community centers nationwide to receive \$50,000 and supplies based on an American vote. Charlotte was the first stop for **Drops of Good: The Maxwell House Community Project’s** supply truck. To fund the work, Maxwell House partnered with Rebuilding Together of the Carolinas, a nonprofit known for its charity repairs.

An interfaith organization, the UMC works to eliminate homelessness while maintaining a day center for its 7,000 “neighbors,” or homeless constituents. The renovations, with the manpower of 240 volunteers, included an interior makeover of the century-old train depot that serves as the center’s location for its Community Works program. The program is designed to give the neighbors a break from their homelessness through such activities as art, gardening, soccer and choir.

“We are very grateful,” said UMC Executive Director Dale Mullennix of the renovations. During the ribbon-cutting ceremony, he turned to Adkins and said the singer highlighted what it meant to be a volunteer in the community.

Adkins’ newest album is titled “Proud To Be Here.” In this setting, he said, “I think ‘pride’ is probably the wrong word. But I think we should all get some kind of satisfaction, gratification, for trying to do what we can to help other folks out that are in need. I don’t think any of us should really take pride in that because I really wish that we didn’t have to do it.” ■

get involved

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Written by Katie Toussaint. Photos by PPT Photography. More photos at www.societycharlotte.com



Mecklenburg Community Church student volunteers



Alex Noakes and Olivia Hartley



Trace Adkins



Dale Mullennix, Trish Fries and Amy Gough



Nancy Brasse and Joseph Proite



Dawn Rozich and Vanessa Smith