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The Inaugural HFA Show and Hall of Fame Class

The HFA Show 2025 Draws Nearly 10,000 Attendees

The *Health & Fitness Association (HFA)* has closed out *The HFA Show 2025*, its renamed and reimagined global conference and trade show, welcoming nearly 10,000 attendees, 363 exhibitors, 50 sponsors and 215 speakers from around the world for three days at the Mandalay Bay Resort in Las Vegas.

The night before the show's opening, almost 200 people gathered to celebrate the induction of six trailblazers who have revolutionized the health and fitness industry into the *inaugural class of the HFA Hall of Fame*. The event raised \$33,000 for the *HFA Foundation*, a 501(c)3 public charity that works to support health

through exercise.

The first day of the show featured a full slate of education sessions and a *Zenoti*-sponsored keynote by marketing strategist and AI expert, **Shama Hyder**, *Founder and CEO of Zen Media*. The *Women's Leadership Summit*, sponsored by *Daxko*, drew a standing-room crowd. And, the annual Kick-Off Party, sponsored by *Hapana* with music provided by *BMI*, closed the day.

The trade show floor opened on day two with 363 exhibitors and new offerings such as a *Pickleball Pavilion*, plus an experience stage for demonstrations and classes. The second-day keynote, sponsored by *Matrix Fitness*, featured industry icon **Chuck Runyon**, *Co-Chair of the Purpose Brands Board of Directors*

and *Co-Founder of Anytime Fitness*, in a fireside chat with *HFA President and CEO, Liz Clark*. Prior to the keynote, HFA honored **Greta Wagner**, *Executive Director and Executive Vice President of Chelsea Piers Connecticut*, with the *Woman Leader Award in honor of Julie Main* and gave **Toshikazu Saito**, *CEO and President of Renaissance Inc.*, with the *Global Leader Award in honor of John Holsinger*.

The final day brought celebrities to the event with former *MLB* star, **Alex Rodriguez**, delivering the keynote and participating in an exclusive meet-and-greet and Q&A, all of which were sponsored by *ABC Fitness*. Actor **Mark Wahlberg** made a surprise appearance on the trade show floor, visiting booths and testing equipment with *EoS Fitness*, as they partner on a new



club, *Municipal Gym*. HFA bestowed its *Jim Worthington Advocate of the Year Award* on *Erik Lindseth*, *Senior Vice President and General Counsel of Life Time Inc.*

(See *HFA Show 2025* Page 10)

Lloyd "Red" Lerille Passes Away

By: Norm Cates

The one and only, **LLOYD "RED" LERILLE**, passed away on March 14th in his hometown of Lafayette, Louisiana.

The amazing man, who was a past "Mr. America" contest winner many years ago, was a multi-talented individual... In addition to winning Mr. America, and 63 years ago, opening "REDS," a nearly 200,000 square-foot mega fitness club, Red was also the owner and pilot of several antique airplanes.

Red's son, Mark, commented on his Dad: "In addition to being known as a bodybuilder and fitness legend, he was also a man with compassion and sincerity, and he gave everything he could. Dad said he always, 'showed up to work on time and ready to work!'



The Late Red Lerille

(See *Red Lerille* Page 8)

Crunch Fitness Announces Major Franchise Expansion into India

NEW YORK, N.Y. - *Crunch Fitness*, a globally-recognized high-value, multi-amenity gym franchise, announces the signing of a Master Franchise Agreement for India, a development which will bring a minimum of 75 *Crunch Fitness* brick-and-mortar gyms to the country in the coming years.

The new development marks the brand's continued international expansion into South Asia alongside *Crunch+*, the company's extensive fitness offering, which has been available online for years to Indian consumers.

The Indian development will be led by **Nikhil Kakkar**, former COO of *Gold's Gym India*, and business partner **Dr. Umesh Kansal, M.D.**, CEO of several well-established companies in the fitness industry, financial services and global



apparel business.

"This is an exciting time of expansion for *Crunch*, and with the Indian fitness market rapidly growing, we saw this as a natural next step in our international rollout," said **John Kersh**, *Managing Director of International Development for Crunch Fitness*. "We believe Nikhil and Umesh will be outstanding partners for the

(See *Crunch* Page 8)

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■ And, of Course, *Norm's Notes*

Norm's Notes

■Hello Everybody! This is your Club Insider Founder and Tribal Leader Since 1993 checking in with our 375th monthly edition of this 32+ year running club business publication I refer to as: A Labor of Love! I'm very thankful that you've tuned in again for this iteration of Norm's Notes, as I proceed on my keyboard with my longtime habit of "Telling-It-Like-It-Is!" I'm really happy that you're reading this edition, and I want to THANK YOU ALL for sticking with us every month! As usual, we have a bunch of health and fitness club business news, so please read on!

■Is AMERICA a GREAT COUNTRY, or WHAT?!? Hmm... hmm... hmm! And, as usual, let me start these Norm's Notes with my normal monthly salutation to you all: GOD BLESS AMERICA and GOD BLESS YOU, YOUR FAMILY and YOUR BUSINESS!!!

■As I type this, it's with a very, very sad heart that I make this announcement. The sad news is that the one and only, RED LERILLE, the legendary 63-year owner and operator of Red's in Lafayette, Louisiana, passed away on March 14th, according to a conversation I had with his Son, MARK.

Red's club has been in business for 63 years after he was *Mr. America*. I visited Red's club once in preparation for a Club Insider Cover Story and I was awestruck while visiting the almost 200,000 square-foot mega-club in the city of Lafayette, Louisiana. To say that Red's club is **TRULY WORLD CLASS** would be an understatement. The awesomeness of Red's club rivalled the awesomeness of the wonderful human being, Red himself! Red was laid to rest on March 22, following funeral services at *St. Mary's Mother of the Church*. **May the one and only RED LERILLE REST IN PEACE!**

■Happy 99th Birthday to Elaine "LaLa" LaLanne!

■Folks, should you be reading these Norm's Notes after a trip to Las Vegas for the *Health Fitness Association (formerly IHRSA)* Convention and Trade Show, I sure hope you had as great of a time as I did! The Convention and Trade Show was, in my opinion, very well done and successful in many ways. Therefore, I want to **TIP MY BLACK COWBOY HAT to MS. LIZ CLARK and her entire HFA Team** for another job well done! And, be sure to check out the

Cover Story beginning on **Page #3!**

First, let me mention here that I was very happy to see our *Industry's Best Friend*, the one and only, **RICK CARO**, honored as a member of the *Inaugural Class of the HFA Hall of Fame!* **Congratulations UNCLE RICK!** Others receiving this special honor that day were: **JOHN MCCARTHY, DR. KENNETH COOPER**, and the now late, but still alive then, **RED LERILLE, the late AUGIE NIETO and the late JULIE MAIN**.

The first day of the HFA Trade Show was pretty well attended. However, "Telling it like it is" now, the attendance on the second day needed to be better. Moreover, I believe the slow second day attendance was because the HFA had also scheduled competing speakers during ALL HOURS of the Trade Show, a bad habit the Association has had for years! Thus, many attendees **MADE THE CHOICE TO ATTEND THE COMPETING SEMINARS INSTEAD OF GOING TO THE TRADE SHOW!** Clearly, in my opinion, and the opinion of others I spoke to, there were some folks who went to the speeches and seminars instead of attending the Trade Show during those same hours. **THIS NOT GOOD!** So that everybody is clear about



Norm Cates

what I'm saying here in this **Norm's Note** is I want to indicate to HFA leadership, and their Seminar scheduling and Trade Show decision makers and event planner team: **future HFA Conventions and Trade Shows should NOT schedule seminars from Noon onward during the Trade Show!** What that means is that these fine exhibitors (many great companies who spend enormous sums of money to rent

(See **Norm's Notes** Page 7)

About Club Insider

CELEBRATING 30+ YEARS OF TRUST

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Thanks and Appreciation

At Club Insider, we are excited to be in our **32nd Year** of this home-based health and fitness club trade publication! The thought that this publication was **founded to serve an industry I truly love**, and so that **I could become a Mister Mom for my son, Justin**, is still **intriguing and amazing** to us. So, I wish to extend my most sincere **Thanks and Appreciation** to everyone who has made this amazing 30+ year run possible.

Very sincere **Thanks and Appreciation** go to **Rick Caro**, the late **Dr. Gerry Faust** and the **Faust Executive Roundtable #1** for helping me decide in 1993 what my home-based business would be. **Thanks and Appreciation** to my long-time friends, **Ron Hudspeth** and **Cathy Miller**, formerly of **Atlanta's Hudspeth Report** for the tremendous assistance they provided. **Thanks and Appreciation** to all of the folks at **Walton Press** in Monroe, Georgia. They did an absolutely excellent job for us all these years and printed every one of our monthly printed editions! And, of course, **Thanks and Appreciation** to the **United States Postal Service** for sending those editions to our readers!

Now, as we have gone all digital, **Thanks and Appreciation** to all of our **READERS**. Sincere **Thanks and Appreciation** to our **Club Insider Advertisers**, past and present, for their kind and dedicated support of this publication. **Thanks and Appreciation** to all of our **Club Insider Contributing Authors**, past and present. **Thanks and Appreciation** to the **Health & Fitness Association** for all it does for all of us. And, sincere **Thanks and Appreciation** to my son, **Justin**, our **Publisher**, who is a truly great business partner. You name it and Justin does it each and every month!

Last, but surely not least, this writer who refused to fear failure when many told him he didn't have a chance of surviving the publishing business for even a year did survive. And, he would like to give his sincere **Thanks and Appreciation** to the power that made that survival happen: **God**.

Very sincerely, with love in my heart for you all,

Norm Cates, Jr.



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"Insider Speaks"

One Club Owner's Opinion - HFA's Surveys Need More Scrutiny To Be of Value

By: Steve Vucovich

HFA's study suggesting that a tax subsidized 10% reduction in membership price could have meaningful health and economic impacts is bogus. And, there are two other surveys not worth the reading effort. As a club owner/operator for 39 years, I would like to share some common sense as well as some basic math regarding a survey touting a 14% increase in membership joins with a 10% reduction in dues subsidized with tax dollars. The common sense questions are:

- Do you think that lowering the dues of a \$10/month gym to \$9/month gym is going to jump the sales of memberships 14%?
- Do you think that lowering a \$39/month gym to a \$35/month is going to jump membership sales 14%?
- Do you think a boutique lowering their dues from \$150/month to \$135/month is going to make their sales jump 14%?

The answer from experience is... **NO.** The fact is, if a prospective member's budget is so tight that a \$1 discount on a \$10/month gym or a \$15 discount on a \$150/month club is the difference in joining, club owners know, by experience, that they will either cancel shortly or they will go bad debt. Either result, it won't move the health and fitness continuum needle.

Now, let's look at the basic math. Say that, somehow, a 10% tax subsidized membership will increase joins 14%. Of those 14%, only 20% to 30% are going to use the gym on some sort of regular basis. Additionally, based upon the assumed lower income of these subsidized members, only a very small percentage will be able to purchase healthy food options, and none would be able to hire a trainer or dietician. So, a maximum gain of 14 subsidized members out of every 100 regular memberships sold, would allow for the very low probability of less than one person becoming fit (14 members x the 25% who actually use the club, x 25% of those who exercise with the correct duration, intensity and frequency, x the 5% who will make the necessary changes in their diets).

While this sample survey of 1,000 individuals out of hundreds of millions, supposedly predicts a possible 14% increase in joins with the tag-along of a healthier population, and subsequent positive economic impacts, real life history proves otherwise.

The other two surveys, offering no value to club operators, were in CBI (August 2024, Page 15 and the CBI/HFA January/February 2025, Page 26).

Regarding the first survey, "Most U.S. Members Cancel Due to the Cost of a Membership," data collected showed that 41% cancel because of cost. Then, the study went on to list "additional" reasons for cancellation:

- 25% personal reasons;
- 23% time;
- 19% moved;
- 19% could become fit on their own;
- 14% experience they had;
- 10% better options;
- 9% gym closed... (Did you really cancel because your gym shut their doors!?)
- 8% hours of operation;
- 5% friend;
- 5% disappointing results.

My first issue is with the way this survey was worded. It seems that the percentages could total 178%. So, I am going to make the assumption that those surveyed were asked to pick multiple reasons for cancelling.

The second issue is that these percentages have pretty much tracked the same over the years and most likely will not change significantly in the future without a metamorphosis in consumer behavior. More on the conclusions after covering the next survey.

The second survey, "The HFA Crunches the Numbers on New Year's Resolutions" included these gemstones:

- 60% of adults planned on setting resolutions and health, fitness or exercise was the most popular focus... (as it has been the last 39 years of my club ownership.)
- 96 million and 44% of adults planned to prioritize fitness and nutrition, respectively.
- Of those above, 88% thought that access to a fitness facility was important.
- 58% planned to maintain their existing membership.
- The challenges mentioned that would negatively impact the success of these resolutions were: motivation, time constraints and cost of membership.

WOW! After reading both surveys, it was hard to contain my excitement over the knowledge obtained and how I could

use this to grow my business. The only legitimate reasons people quit are: poor health or injury, relocation, bad experience, or catastrophic (temporary or permanent) loss of income.

The rest of the "reasons" are really excuses. If the excuse was really the cost, did the person go to a less expensive cell phone plan? Did they refrain from going out to eat one less time per month? Did they drop one of their TV subscriptions? Did they stop doing their nails or lashes? Did they go to a cheaper gym?

The "time excuse" is almost laughable nowadays. How many hours a day does the average person spend on their phone or watching TV? Take away a quarter of that time and a person can easily find a few hours a week to exercise. I know lots of single Moms and Dads who work full time jobs, still manage to be great parents and find time to "work on themselves."

In reality, people "quit" their memberships because of lack of use, and that creates a spiral effect:

Lack of Use = Lack of Results;
Lack of Results = Lack of Value;
Lack of Value = Cancellation, even if they are at a \$10/month Gym.

I've never had a member who used the club 3 - 4 times a week, lost 40 pounds, dropped their A-1C from 7.0 to 5.5, positively changed their mental outlook and say, "Steve, I'm quitting my membership."

The answer to the "Why" question is already obvious to us club owners. The lack of use conundrum is the real elephant in the room. From the online joiners who never come in once, to the member who will not take their free personal trainer sessions, intro Pilates classes, intro tennis/pickleball lessons and the myriads of group fitness classes, it's these members who fail in droves, even with dedicated follow up from club service personnel.

Only 5 - 7% of most club's total membership purchase personal training, and yet, that is the real key to get members in an exercise habit. By starting them off with substantial exercise knowledge/motivation, it gives them a chance to succeed. Personal training is just lessons. Let's see the success rate of a beginner/novice skier if I take them to the top of the bowl at Jackson Hole's Teton Village and say: "See you at the bottom. I know you are really going to enjoy this skiing experience!" It's the same with exercise when members have no lessons.

Members should invest in



Steve Vucovich

themselves. *If a tax subsidy is to be given to members, it should be for one-on-one personal training or small group, not membership dues.* It should be for at least 24 - 36 sessions to build habits and get results instead of just the standard 2 - 3 intro training sessions, designed to sell more personal training.

But, how can our industry afford to pay for this training? That is another conundrum. No qualified trainer will work for a \$1/hour, and on the flip side, a club cannot afford to pay full wages to a trainer and lose a full month's worth of dues for each hour of training.

I know the HFA has hired **Mr. Anton Severin** as its Vice President of Research. Upon reading a partial bio, it seems his experience comes as a researcher for the gaming industry. Not to knock his ability to use regression analysis to determine statistical validity relating to gaming questions and human behavior, nor **Liz Clark**'s previous career, but the facts are: 100% of people love to win money, play games and eat ice cream. Many people on food stamps still buy lottery tickets, candy bars and video games. Unfortunately, only 5% of the adult population "loves" to workout.

In summation, this club owner's opinion is for HFA to take a long hard look into pursuing meaningful surveys and how they would be relevant to the bottom line of our clubs. Leave the tired same-old, same-old with the now defunct IHRSA. HFA has a Board of Directors with vast amounts of experience in club operations. Please use them and others in the field to direct meaningful survey topics.

(Steve Vucovich is the Managing Partner of Club Apple in Idaho Falls, Idaho. He can be reached at Steve@theclubapple.com.)

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...Norm's Notes

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exhibit space, transport their exhibits and prepare for the show, set them up on the trade show floor, pay for staff transportation, hotels and meals for employees to come and work at the show, etc.) end up seeing less prospective customers. SO... when HFA Leadership schedules multiple speakers during the HFA Trade Show hours, it's really NOT FAIR to the companies who're exhibiting at the HFA Trade Show!

Via this writing, I am asking HFA Leaders and the "Powers that be" to please somehow work on this problem. It is not too much to ask considering how much money these companies are spending to exhibit at the show. Are the speakers spending that much? I don't think so. And, if speakers are paying to be there, that's a completely different problem!

Folks, if you agree with me, let HFA Leadership know! If you disagree, let me know. My phone number is (770) 635 - 7578, and my email address is Norm@clubinsideronline.com. With your permission, C.I. is happy to publish your comments, regardless of your stance. But, I will say that I have been at this for years, and I am not going to give up now, because this is just plain **WRONG. STAY TUNED!!!**

Folks, I met a nice fellow named **JEFF NEUBURG** at the HFA Trade Show, and he has a very interesting opportunity for one of you lucky *C.I. Readers* out there. Jeff has the following opportunity for somebody out there. Get this! **FOR FREE**, for a qualified operator, there is a fully equipped gym in Cambridge, Maryland! Check out **Jeff's Ad** on **Page #21**. Jeff's company name is **Capital Business Brokers**, and he can be reached by phone at (703) 623 - 5575 or email at jfn39@yahoo.com.

Speaking of the HFA, their monthly publication, *Club Business International*



Bruce Carter and Norm Cates at HFA Show 2025 in Las Vegas

(CBI), has been rebranded to *Health & Fitness Business*. One of the health and fitness industry's premier magazines is looking to differentiate itself further from other industry media by delving deep into the stories behind the trends and headlines. The refreshed publication, which launched with the March Edition, brings a bold new look and a reimagined approach to its content.

For 37 years, CBI served as a trusted source of industry news for HFA members and the global fitness community. The way people consume news has changed, and this rebrand is designed

to meet the industry's need for further conversation and a deeper understanding of trending industry topics.

JIM SCHMALTZ, *HFB Editor-In-Chief*, commented: "Health & Fitness Business isn't just a name change; it's a complete reimagining of how our content serves the industry. Our members have many sources where they can access news. What they often don't get is depth. To put it simply, it's easy to get the 'what' and 'when' of a news story; it's not as easy to get the 'WHY.' We want to complement the immediacy of digital news with an analytical exploration of issues affecting the health and fitness industry."

In addition to the new name, HFB will have the following new features:

■ A visually dynamic design featuring bold graphics and imagery while maintaining readability.

■ A shift to topic-focused editions --10 issues per year-- diving deep into crucial industry conversations, such as money, mental wellness, technology and global trends.

■ An increased global perspective, with every issue incorporating submissions from international viewpoints.

(See **Norm's Notes** Page 8)



...Norm's Notes

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■ A focus on member benefits, reporting on the strategy behind HFA's advocacy, education and research efforts, and increasing awareness of member resources and exclusive offers.

■ Most importantly, HFB will be a platform for the industry's voices.

"We want this magazine to reflect our members and their experiences," added Schmaltz. "We'll feature stories from members who have found success and want to share their experiences and advice, helping to connect, promote and grow the industry around the world."

HFB remains a benefit for all opted-in HFA members, who receive both print and digital editions.

■ This is from the dedicated folks at Augie's Quest:

"For 20 years, Augies' Quest has carried forward the late Augie Nieto's relentless fight to end Amyotrophic Lateral

Sclerosis (ALS). Augie devoted his life to two goals:

Goal #1: Creating positive change in the world, first as a pioneer in the fitness industry; and,

Goal #2: Serving as a relentless force in the **FIGHT AGAINST ALS**. Augie's vision, determination and unwavering belief in a **CURE for ALS** have fueled **nearly \$200 million** in research and brought the world closer than ever to a Cure for ALS!

But, Augie's legacy isn't just about the past; it's about the future. Augie's mantra was: **MAKE EVERY DAY COUNT**. And, it continues to inspire so many to carry his mission forward.

Join Augie's Quest for an exciting year ahead, filled with impactful events, new initiatives and opportunities to continue Augie's mission. Together, honor the past, celebrate the present and work toward a future **WITHOUT ALS**.

With gratitude, Team Augie's Quest."

■ It was really GREAT seeing two of my long-

time industry friends at the HFA Convention in Las Vegas. They are **DOUG MILLER**, who now lives and works in England, and **RAYBOB GORDON**, who now lives in Utah. **Doug and RayBob, I really enjoyed seeing you guys and spending time with Y'all in Las Vegas!**

■ **HFA Urges the entire fitness industry to get involved in Advocacy Efforts!**

■ Saudi Arabia's making unprecedented, booming investments in sports, as reportedly, they're investing **\$2.7 billion** into sports facilities over the next five years as part of its transformative **Vision 2030** initiative amid the region's rapid urban development driving demand for cutting-edge, customized solutions in sports infrastructure and leisure facilities. **Stay Tuned!!!**

■ **JUSTIN and I want to THANK YOU for reading Club Insider! We appreciate you being with us. And, in particular, WE VERY SINCERELY APPRECIATE ANY and ALL SUPPORT OF OUR ESTEEMED Club Insider ADVERTISERS! PLEASE DO BUSINESS WITH THEM and WHEN**

YOU DO, PLEASE TELL 'EM Club Insider SENT YOU! THANK YOU ALL!

■ **God bless our troops, airmen and sailors worldwide and keep them safe. Thank you, Congratulations and Welcome Home to all of our troops who have served around the world. God bless America's Policemen and women and Firemen and women; keep them safe. Finally, God bless you, your family, your club(s) and your members. God Bless America! Laus Deo!**

(Norm Cates, Jr. is a 50+ year veteran of the health, racquet and sportsclub industry. He is the Founder and Tribal Leader Since 1993 of Club Insider, now in its 32nd year of monthly publication. In 1981, he was IHRSA's First President, and a Co-Founder of the Association with Rick Caro and five others. In 2001, he was honored by IHRSA with its DALE DIBBLE Distinguished Service Award, one of its highest honors. And, in 2017, he was honored with Club Industry's Lifetime Achievement Award. You can reach Norm by phone at 770-635-7578 or email at Norm@clubinsideronline.com.)

...Red Lerille

continued from page 3

Mark added, "The employees, the members...they're like family. They've been here since 1963. Red's still has members and workers who've come and gone over those 63 years.

Buddy Lebas, a long-time 63-year employee at Red's also reflected on Red. "Red and I kind of started with a small gym trying to help people in Lafayette with their fitness. Our major goal throughout the years has been to add life to people's years and years to their life. His impact on the community, obviously, is immense. He loved the people in the community. And, he was dedicated to their health and wellbeing and we're going to carry on that legacy for him. Our relationships were as friends, rather than an employees. It's been a long and enjoyable relationship. I'm very sad that it's ending."

Mark added, "Giving back to the community was important to Red. He always said when he got off the Texas

Airline in 1959, he landed in a piece of heaven in Lafayette, Louisiana where he's made his home, even though he's originally from New Orleans."

Among many of Red's business endeavors included membership in *Faust Roundtable #1*, along with **Rick Caro**, the late **Curt and Jane Beusman**, **Dick Trant**, and this Author, **Norm Cates**, just to name a few. It was there that Red taught the group his motto that he's employed for what's 63 years now. That motto was, **"Show up on time... Ready to work!"**

Red was laid to rest on March 22, following funeral services at St. Mary's Mother of the Church. **May the one and only RED LERILLE REST IN PEACE!**

Comments From Rick Caro

Red passed away at his home on Friday, March 14th. What a horrific blow to our industry.

He was truly an icon to the Lafayette, Louisiana community and to our health club industry.

He worked out daily at 4:30 AM with his loyal workout partner. He preached the values of exercise every day of his life. He even gave the Commencement Speech to the *University of Louisiana - Lafayette* and was accorded an Honorary Doctorate degree.

He loved his local community. When oil crises hit there (and did so several times), people were evicted from their homes and had trouble finding new jobs. But, he insisted that exercise was more critical than ever. So, he offered free memberships to the unemployed oil industry workers to take care of themselves. When they got re-employed, they all gratefully started paying again. When employees needed personal loans, he served as a no-interest bank to them. No surprise, he was loved in his community.

Typically, he would be the one in the club who would greet you when you walked in. He had no real office. If anything, he sat at a table in the club's pro shop.

He was part of the first Roundtable group in our industry. A man of few words,

so everyone listened. He committed himself to making an improvement to his club (i.e. capital investment) every month. It could be a few pieces of new equipment or a major expansion to the building. He did buy a former cemetery for his outdoor tennis courts at the time.

When a club technically known as Red Lerille's Health & Racquet Club gets shortened to "Red's," you know he and his club are fabrics of the community.

He does family well. The 3rd generation is now working at the club. He has four very independent children and a wife of 63 years.

I received a call from his wife, Emma, only a few hours after he passed away on Friday. Already, there were over 4,000 text messages and emails received. The TV Station was already creating a feature on him.

What a legacy. With a sad heart and lots of love that he engendered in others, I miss him already. He is truly one of a kind.

...Crunch

continued from page 3

brand's expanded presence in India, and we are excited for Crunch Fitness to play an influential role in India's fitness franchise development."

The expansion follows a milestone year for Crunch Fitness, when the company celebrated its 35th anniversary; launched Crunch 3.0, an innovative new gym design; hit the three-million-member mark; and increased its franchise footprint to 500 gyms worldwide. India joins the ongoing

list of international markets for Crunch with its presence already in Australia, Canada, Costa Rica, Portugal and Spain.

"We look forward to bringing the Crunch experience to India, marking a significant milestone in our global expansion," said **Jim Rowley**, *Chief Executive Officer of Crunch Fitness*. "India is a vibrant and dynamic market with a growing passion for fitness, and we are excited to introduce our first physical location with our unique blend of world-class amenities, innovative classes and inclusive community to this incredible country. This

expansion reflects our commitment to making fitness accessible, engaging, and fun for everyone, no matter where they are in the world."

"We are elated to take a bold new step in our international franchising with the introduction of the brick-and-mortar Crunch experience to India," said **Chequan Lewis**, *President of Crunch Fitness*. "As one of the fastest-growing fitness markets in the world, India has a rising demand for quality fitness solutions, and we are thrilled to launch our 'No Judgments' clubs in the country."

Throughout 2025, Crunch will continue to target expansion countries that have positive economic and franchising conditions, as well as significant growth opportunities. As a result of the brand's efforts, Crunch Fitness was ranked #1 in the fitness category for the second year in a row and #32 overall in the annual *Entrepreneur Franchise 500*, the world's first and most comprehensive franchise ranking.



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The first-ever *HFA Pickleball Tournament* crowned **Isaiah Taylor** from *True Force Technologies* and **Tyler Wren**, *REV Owner*, as champions.

International forums ran all three days, convening global stakeholders for key discussions on industry growth and collaboration. This year's event also featured a *Global Advocacy Summit*, addressing how to engage policymakers in various countries to see fitness as essential.

"What stood out this year wasn't just the scale of the event, it was the shift in conversations," Clark said. "With the event's theme, 'Navigating a New Era of Global Wellness,' we saw operators, suppliers and international leaders focused on redefining what's possible. From AI and wellness integration to global policy and inclusion, the industry is clearly future-focused, and The HFA Show is where those next chapters are taking shape."

The HFA thanks this year's exhibitors and sponsors for their support. The HFA Show 2026 will take place March 16-18, 2026, in San Diego. Registration opens in September.

HFA Hall of Fame Launched to Honor Industry Legends

On March 11, 2025, the HFA honored its first class of six trailblazers who have revolutionized the health and fitness industry. The Association's inaugural Hall of Fame ceremony was held as a precursor to The HFA Show 2025. It raised \$33,000 for the HFA Foundation, a 501(c)3 public charity that works to support health through exercise. The 2025 HFA Hall of Fame Inductees were:

Rick Caro: The Indispensable Architect of the Modern Health Club Industry

By: Patricia Amend

Founder, financial expert, trusted advisor, mentor, noted author, long-time friend... these are just some of the ways industry professionals describe **Rick Caro**.

His legacy is built not just through the institutions and businesses he founded or supported but also through the thousands he has befriended, advised and lifted up. All who know him agree that he's an irreplaceable catalyst who's been a major influence in the global fitness industry for more than 50 years.

"Rick is the mastermind. The architect. The most powerful individual in the industry, bar none," says **Annbeth Eschbach**, a *Board Member of The Aesthetic Syndicate*, a portfolio company of *Lorient Capital*. "He's arguably the most influential consultant in the history of the club industry."

Eschbach has known Caro, a *Co-Founder of the HFA (then IHRSA)* and a

Former President of its Board of Directors, for 37 years.

"He's single-handedly responsible for introducing billions of investment capital by connecting relationships with Wall Street," says **Matthew Stevens**, *President and CEO of The Bay Club Company*, who has known Caro for 35 years.

In fact, Caro is widely credited with helping to create the modern fitness industry when he and the leaders of the *National Tennis Association* and the *National Court Clubs Association* merged the two groups to form a new association in 1981. First named the *International Racquet and Sportsclub Association (IRSA)*, it later became *IHRSA* to incorporate "health," and is now the *Health & Fitness Association*.

A Trusted Expert

The merger resulted after two meetings in Chicago and a third at his office in New York City, topped off with a celebration at *Windows on the World*, a restaurant at the *former World Trade Center*. The group chose **John McCarthy** as its *Executive Director*, a position he held until his retirement in 2006.

Caro's foresight helped to create an association that supports fitness facilities around the world, creating a stronger, more unified and successful industry. He served on the Board twice, including once as President. He has also served on many other Boards, including those of two major club company brands, the *American Council on Exercise (ACE)* and seven nonprofits.

Caro earned a B.S. from *Tufts University* and an MBA with distinction from *New York University*. He went on to own and operate a chain of eight clubs, six of which were multisport, in the northeast, which he sold in 1983. He also served as the *Chairman of Spectrum Clubs, Inc.*, the parent of two major club groups in Texas and California, with revenues of more than \$60 million at that time.

Leveraging that experience, Caro established *Management Vision, Inc.*, in New York City, an industry consultancy that is respected across the globe. Since then, he has consulted with facility operators,

developers, entrepreneurs and investors, providing club valuations, market analyses and financial guidance for thousands of fitness brands.

Tom Fiorini, *CEO Emeritus of the Cincinnati Sports Club*, in Cincinnati, Ohio, recalls that, in 1995, Fiorini took over the Cincinnati Club when it was hemorrhaging cash and turned to Caro for guidance. "We essentially followed Rick's blueprint and advice, which stopped our cash bleed immediately and retired our unsecured debt, paying in full within five years," Fiorini says.

Since then, he has consulted Caro many times. "He has completed market studies which allowed us to create master plans and pivot to meet the needs of our evolving market," Fiorini says. "He has provided advice on debt, rent, financial ratios, facility design, programming, staffing and is an endless source of referrals and contacts in the industry. He is very generous with his praise and is willing to suggest who else to call for advice."

Caro has also been a resource for multiple HFA research studies. He has authored 200 articles in the industry, as well as the book, *Financial Management*, the "bible" for the fitness business, which helped to standardize financial practices across the industry.

Bringing Major Investors Into the Industry

Caro has presented at some 400 industry events. And, for nearly three decades, he has assembled and moderated the annual *Financial Panel* at The HFA Show. He invites a distinguished group of investment experts to the annual convention to provide clarity on the financial state of the global industry. In turn, Caro has helped introduce influential members of the financial world to the potential of the fitness industry, breaking through concerns about its credibility and opening eyes to its numerous investment opportunities.

The financial panel's reputation as a must-attend event continues to grow. Typically, it's standing room only.

"I've attended all of them," says **Joe Cirulli**, *Owner and CEO of Gainesville Health & Fitness* in Gainesville, Florida. "It's helpful to me as an independent operator to see where the power players are placing their bets."

"The panel was a watershed event that significantly moved the industry forward," says Eschbach. "This program, which he moderates beautifully, brings together club owners and investment professionals and gives industry operators/owners a front row seat to the investment process, to valuation and important access to these professionals."

Stevens says, "Rick's opinion is highly respected, and he has opened an unbelievable number of doors for countless people. The financial panel creates access where it wouldn't otherwise exist."



Caro has conducted market research surveys on multiple markets and coordinated endless introductions to financial sources: private equity, banking and investment banks. Caro was also a member of an industry roundtable and developed other roundtables. He helped create the hosted buyer event *SIBEC*, as well as *Club Industry's CEO Summit*. "I've known Rick for well over 30 years," Cirulli says.

"His concern is that the entire industry becomes as successful as it possibly can. Like my closest friends, you can depend on him to keep his word and to hold everyone accountable. He can come across as serious, but it's always great to hear him laugh."

Long-time friends, Cirulli and Caro see each other often at an informal breakfast group that includes industry veterans **Art Curtis**, **Gale Landers** and **Geoff Dyer**, among others. "We discuss industry trends, how each of us is doing and what we're working on," Cirulli says. "It's like a mini roundtable, so the ideas are flowing."

Fiorini says Caro is not afraid to recognize others and seek advice. "More than anything else, Rick makes connections," Fiorini says. "He opens doors, puts people together and makes introductions, all with the intent of making the industry better. His legacy will last well beyond his lifetime."

In recognition of his role as a visionary leader with a passion for making others better, Caro was awarded the first-ever *HFA Lifetime Achievement Award* in 2013. Now, the Association he co-founded is recognizing his vast contributions by selecting him for the first class of inductees of the HFA Hall of Fame.

"Rick has helped to build hundreds of careers, businesses, and friendships over his life. He is a builder and a giver," says Eschbach. "Those two qualities rarely co-exist."

Rick Caro's HFA HOF Inaugural Video can be viewed at: youtu.be/V1auOPOJU64

John McCarthy: The Visionary Leader Who Made the HFA
By: Kristen Walsh

John McCarthy is best known as the first Executive Director of the *International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association (IHRSA)*, which was renamed *(See HFA Show 2025 Page 12)*



Rick Caro

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**HEALTH & FITNESS
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the Health & Fitness Association (HFA) in 2024. He was hired shortly after the organization was founded in 1981. In fact, McCarthy was the first hire at the new Association.

On his first day as Executive Director, McCarthy had no office, no employees and virtually no members. What he did have was a vision, one that was supported by his remarkable organizational skills, an ability to bring people together and a leadership style that combined a fierce determination with a soft touch.

"From day one, he exceeded our expectations," recalls Rick Caro, one of the Founders of HFA who hired McCarthy. "With a minimal base salary, few staff and no headquarters, he literally created a successful nonprofit trade association."

For 25 years, McCarthy led the growth of the trade association for commercial clubs, and really, the entire fitness industry. He was a symbol of stability through booms and busts, growing the HFA's membership while enhancing the credibility of a still-young industry, an industry that almost missed out on benefiting from his visionary leadership.

A Slam Dunk

McCarthy grew up in Chicago and was a standout basketball player for the *University of Notre Dame*. He even played on a college all-star team that toured with the *Harlem Globetrotters*. In 1958, he was drafted by the *New York Knicks*, but instead of joining the team, he decided to go into the seminary. He studied to be a Catholic priest for six years, was ordained and served in the Catholic ministry for five years. When he realized he wasn't cut out to be a single person, he left the ministry.

McCarthy moved into a new role as Owner and Manager of a tennis and fitness club in Walpole, Massachusetts, and the part-time *Executive Director of the New England Racquet Sports Association*, a regional association comprised of tennis clubs, racquetball clubs and fitness clubs that existed before the HFA was founded.

The "I" in IHRSA stood for "International" and McCarthy made it a priority for the Association. During his tenure, he traveled extensively, developing international relations in Europe, Asia, Australia, New Zealand and South America, helping clubs in those regions to be served with a variety of publications, trade shows and services.

Michael Levy fondly remembers meeting McCarthy at the Association's 1982 convention in Las Vegas when Levy was with *The Sports Clubs of Canada*. "He was extremely friendly and took a great deal of time to introduce me to other club owners," Levy says. "This was important as my company was located in Toronto, Canada, and I didn't know any American

club operators." He credits McCarthy with helping him to create lifelong relationships with other fitness facility owners.

Levy went on to serve as HFA Board Chair for two years and is still in awe of McCarthy's leadership skills. "John has this incredible ability to make you comfortable, even when you disagree with his positions," he says. "He is a great listener and open to new ideas, even when these contradict his own position."

Making Advocacy a Priority

McCarthy was active on Capitol Hill, advocating for fitness tax credits, among other things. Levy recalls watching him convince members of Congress to sponsor something that was not popular: *fitness instead of drugs*.

As the 10th HFA Board President, **Mitch Wald** worked closely with McCarthy. Wald, who served as *COO of Maryland Athletic Club* among other roles in the industry, describes McCarthy as "the glue" that held the Association together and says he had no ego. "It was never about John; it was about what was best for our members and the association," he says.

"Back then, in the 1990s, our industry was second only to used cars as far as the number of consumer complaints," Wald recalls. "John knew we needed to establish best practices and to professionalize the industry."

Under McCarthy's leadership, HFA did just that. "He created the first research reports and provided basic industry booklets, which he authored, sometimes aimed at the financial community and future club owners," Caro says.

McCarthy also realized that the industry needed to be educated, so he created a four-day educational program called the *IHRSA Institute*. In addition, he built up the staff in the Boston headquarters and grew the annual convention and trade show.

Unmatched People Skills

During his career, McCarthy often emphasized that the fitness business is a hospitality business. He practiced what he



John McCarthy

preached. At each HFA event, McCarthy could be found at the entrance of the trade show and the opening reception, personally greeting every person who walked by.

Wald, a self-described introvert, was apprehensive about walking the trade show floor and shaking hands with each vendor, but he knew he needed to as the HFA Board President. "John grabbed me by the hand and walked the show floor with me, and together, we greeted and thanked each exhibiting company," he recalls.

Larry Krieger, who worked for *Saw Mill River Club* and *Wellbridge*, served as IHRSA Board President in 1994. He describes McCarthy as being special to work with, "because he could always see around the corner to envision the next move or the next solution."

He adds, "John had fantastic people skills and leadership skills, plus an unassuming, kind nature. But, he got stuff done." Krieger credits McCarthy with moving the industry into the mainstream, from a mom-and-pop association to a world-class health and fitness organization.

A Man of Decency Who Made a Difference

Those who were lucky enough to work for him are grateful for that opportunity.

Tom Richards, *HFA Government Affairs Support*, met McCarthy as a 21-year-old HFA intern.

"He was already a giant in the industry, and from my cubicle vantage point, he truly looked the part, bounding through the office with purpose and enthusiasm," recalls Richards, who later founded *The Activist in Motion*. "One of my first and most enduring impressions of great leadership came from him, a gentle and brilliant giant who inspired greatness through kindness, positivity and an unwavering commitment to the cause."

Marc Gagnon, *HFA Vice President of Meetings and Trade Shows*, lauds McCarthy's ability to make everyone feel like a true friend. "His leadership wasn't just about guiding the organization; it was about creating a community where everyone felt they belonged."

When McCarthy was preparing to retire, the HFA staff decided to feature him on the cover of *Club Business International*. "We had to keep it a secret from him, as he disliked attention and was always quick to deflect praise onto others," recalls **Michele Eynon**, *HFA Vice President of Advertising*.

Since his retirement in 2006, McCarthy has remained active in the industry, most notably with *Augie's Quest to Cure ALS*, which raises funds to fight the disease.

"The industry as a whole benefited from John every day," Caro says. "When he retired, at too young an age, it lost a true leader who never knew how gifted he was and the difference he made."

John McCarthy's HFA HOF Inaugural Video can be viewed at: youtu.be/PzMk4a1nW2Y

Dr. Kenneth Cooper: The Understated Father of Aerobics
 By: HFA Staff

It's widely accepted that regular aerobic exercise can reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease and extend longevity. But, when fitness pioneer, **Dr. Kenneth Cooper**, introduced this concept in the 1960s, it was considered controversial... or worse.

Cooper spent years at odds with the mainstream medical establishment, even once being threatened with losing his medical license. But, he persevered as he gathered research from consented patients that proved the link between physical activity and improved health outcomes.

Today, Cooper, now 94 years old, is recognized as a visionary whose contributions to the world of health and wellness changed the way we all think about exercise.

Discovering 'Aerobics'

Cooper served as a *Surgeon in the U.S. Army* for two years before transferring to the *U.S. Air Force* in 1959. There, he helped create the conditioning program to prepare astronauts for space, along with a series of fitness tests that are still used today, including the 12-minute treadmill stress test and the *Aerobics Points System*.

These tests gave him insights into the relationship between exercise and cardiovascular fitness. It led him to coin the term "aerobics," which he would later introduce to the world with the book, *Aerobics*, the first of his what will soon be 20 books.

In 1970, Cooper left the Air Force and moved with his family to Dallas, where he opened the *Cooper Aerobics Center*, a preventive medicine and research institute.

In June 1970, he established *The Cooper Institute*, a nonprofit education and research institute focused on preventive medicine and physical activity and opened *Cooper Clinic* six months later to bridge the gap between scientific legitimacy and faddism (In 2024, The Cooper Institute partnered with *Texas Tech University* (See *HFA Show 2025* Page 13)



Dr. Kenneth Cooper

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Health Sciences Center and became the Kenneth H. Cooper Institute).

Cooper began by experimenting with treadmill stress testing, which was unheard of at the time. Based on his tests of Air Force members, Cooper and his team made a groundbreaking discovery.

"We showed that stress testing on a maximal performance treadmill stress test can not only determine level of fitness, but it can pick up early coronary disease," he says.

Today, the research is known as the *Cooper Center Longitudinal Study*, the largest of its kind.

Defying the Establishment

Despite this progress, his experiments were not well received by the medical community. Cooper championed shifting the field of medicine from treatment to prevention, which alarmed many of his colleagues. The *Dallas Board of Censures* even considered revoking his medical license for conducting treadmill tests on people with heart disease.

When he was called before the board, Cooper presented the treadmill stress test data he had collected on people with and without coronary disease, demonstrating such a convincing case for the benefits of these tests that the Board voted against revoking his license.

Despite winning the battle, Cooper still faced tremendous resistance from the establishment. Then, the tide shifted. Through his books, international speaking tours, and most importantly, the health benefits patients gained from his treatment recommendations, Cooper earned the trust of people all over the world. Tens of thousands would travel to Texas to consult with him, and those who didn't visit in person wrote letters of appreciation.

Cooper's determination during the dark times was fueled by his devout Christian faith, according to his son, **Dr. Tyler Cooper**. "He wants to serve other people through the gifts he's been given," Tyler says.

Today, the Cooper Aerobics Center, which began as a two-room office, now encompasses six businesses, including a fitness center with more than 56,000 square feet of indoor amenities and 30 acres of outdoor space. The center is home to Cooper Clinic, a comprehensive care center with many specialties, from cardiology to sleep medicine to nutrition, as well as a day spa, hotel, supplements company and B2B arm.

"They told me 54 years ago that I could not be successful in limiting my practice to taking care of healthy people," Cooper says. Now, the Cooper Clinic boasts a six-month waiting list and a 74% return rate of patients.

Cooper is now routinely honored

by the groups that once shunned him, including the *Dallas County Medical Society* and the *Texas Medical Association*, which recently offered him an honorary lifetime membership.

"My first response was, 'You're sure you have the right Dr. Cooper?'" Cooper recalls.

His contributions fundamentally changed the way physicians and other healthcare professionals practice medicine, says **Tedd L. Mitchell, MD, Chancellor of Texas Tech University System**.

"We take for granted that physical fitness and lifestyle habits are important components of a healthy routine, but we often don't appreciate that it was the efforts of Dr. Cooper and a handful of other pioneers who, like him, created the foundation for the work we all do today," Mitchell says.

Rick Perry, Former Texas Governor, a long-time patient of Cooper, worked with him to introduce *Texas Senate Bill 530* in 2007 to make *FitnessGram*, a health-related fitness assessment program designed to combat obesity and poor health in children, a mandatory statewide program.

"No one in historic, present or future terms will have as much impact on physical health and mental health as Dr. Kenneth Cooper. His relentless drive, his substantial focus and his love for mankind as well as his vision for a better, healthier future is unequalled," Perry says.

Another of Cooper's patients, **Arthur Blank**, the Co-Founder of *The Home Depot* and Owner of the *Atlanta Falcons*, says, "From the very start of his career in the military, he has embodied a deep commitment to service. He has become a cornerstone of modern fitness, inspiring generations to embrace active lifestyles and prioritize preventive healthcare."

Cooper continues to lecture around the world and recently completed a four-part documentary series, *The Power of Prevention*. Retirement isn't an option.

Despite the data showing that regular exercise can improve health and prolong life, many people still suffer from poor health due to lack of physical activity.

There's still work to do.

Dr. Kenneth Cooper's HFA HOF Inaugural Video can be viewed at: youtu.be/N_RjycUdEsQ

Remembering Red Lerille

By: HFA Staff

"Hello, goodbye and toilet paper." According to **Lloyd "Red" Lerille**, Owner of *Red Lerille's Health & Racquet Club* in Lafayette, Louisiana, those are the three most important things in business. Considering his successful 63 years in the health and fitness industry and his induction into the HFA's inaugural Hall of Fame class, it's hard to argue with his wisdom.

From Humble Beginnings to Industry Pioneer

Red's journey began as a three-time high school wrestling champion in New Orleans. Inspired by his uncle, **Harold**, Red saw fitness as transformative. In 1953, he trained at *Ajax, Joe Gold's* New Orleans gym, honing his skills in bodybuilding and business. He began competing in contests and won the *Mr. America* title in 1960, before serving a stint in the Navy.

"When Red got out of the Navy, **Mike Stansbury** had him manage his gym in Lafayette," recalls Red's daughter **Kackie Lerille**. "He came with a bag of clothes and a unicycle. All he ever wanted was to own a little gym like that."

With a \$200 loan from his father, Red and his wife, **Emma**, opened *Red Lerille's Health & Racquet Club*, a 3,500-square-foot gym in Lafayette, in 1963.

"The first club was small. We joke it was the size of a racquetball court," says Kackie. "It was really a labor of love. My dad built his own equipment because you couldn't buy any."

He eventually moved to his current location in 1965, upgrading to 4,000 square feet. But, as with bodybuilding, staying small was never part of the plan. In 1968, Red made his first addition, adding a vinyl pool. There was no going back.

"Red decided early on he was going to reinvest in the club and do something new every month," says **Mark Lerille**, Red's son, who now manages the property. "It didn't matter if it was something small or something that would take time to finish, he was going to do something every month."

It's a tradition that continues to this day.

Building a Club... and a Community

From the beginning, Red didn't just have an aptitude for growing his business; he also grew his circle of friends and admirers.

One of them is long-time friend and fellow bodybuilding legend, **Boyer Coe**.

"When I was 16, I stopped off in



The Late Red Lerille

Lafayette at Red's club," Coe says. "Red was very nice to me. I told him as soon as I graduate from high school, I want to move to Lafayette and learn everything I can from him. True to my word, the day after I graduated, I moved to Lafayette. We have been almost like brothers ever since."

Coe remembers when Red saw women with tennis racquets walking through a local shopping mall in 1971. That's when Red decided to expand into racquet sports, a novel idea for fitness centers at the time.

"In 1973, he got a loan from the [Small Business Administration] and built three indoor tennis courts and two racquetball courts, along with a pro shop," Coe says. Coe himself opened a health food store next door to Red's gym.

When racquetball lost popularity, Red converted some of his courts into fitness class studios and advised other club owners to do the same. Red has been a member of the HFA (then IHRSA) since nearly its beginning.

"Many operators of racquet clubs that were part of IHRSA at that time were asking Red what they could do to make up for the fact that people weren't playing racquetball as much," Coe says. "He told them that they needed to convert the courts into gyms and workout areas. And, that's what they did. He helped save that industry."

Changing Lives for Generations

Red's success isn't just about anticipating trends; it's about a commitment to community. Whether it was offering free memberships during crises, helping employees with interest-free loans or working 12-hour days at the front desk, he prioritized people.

"It has never, ever been about making money or having fame and fortune for either him or my mom," says Kackie. "During Hurricane Katrina, when people came to Lafayette from New Orleans, he would let them use the club for free. Some of them stayed in Lafayette and never went back. He is a giver and wants to help everybody."

This generous spirit has also led to a unique combination of the club having long-term members and long-term employees, and sometimes long-term members become employees.

"When I was a member, I ran into the IT guy at the club, who I went to school with. He told me the club was looking for someone to work in the office and that I should apply," says **Annette Landreaux**. "I did, and here I am 43 years later. It's a testament to Red and his family. You couldn't ask for a better boss to work for."

That IT guy, **Phil Girard**, has an even longer tenure at Red's... 49 years on the job. It all started when Girard filled in for his sister cleaning racquetball courts at the club.

(See *HFA Show 2025* Page 14)

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Others who spent time with Red have used what they learned from him in their own lives and careers.

Former employee and long-term member, **Mike Guidroz**, learned from Red that hard work and attention to details lead to success. Applying these lessons helped Guidroz in his own career as COO of RR Company, a diversified group whose holdings include businesses ranging from hotels to health and wellness facilities.

"It's fitting that Red goes in with this inaugural class of the Hall of Fame," he says. **Babe Ruth** was part of the inaugural class of the Baseball Hall of Fame. Red Lerille is the Babe Ruth of the fitness industry."

Though Red recently stepped back from day-to-day operations, his legacy continues. Part of that legacy is keeping Red's a family business. Mark currently manages the 195,000-square-foot facility, and Red's grandson, Brady, is preparing to take the reins.

"We're continuing the tradition of adding to the club every month," Mark says. "Right now, we're building a 24,000-square-foot women's-only fitness area and locker room. We'll keep making improvements so people can, as Red says, 'Enjoy better health through exercise.'"

They'll also have plenty of toilet paper.

Red Lerille's HFA HOF Inaugural Video can be viewed at: youtu.be/6zQdZdRqsOE

Red Lerille passed away on March 14, 2025. May Red Rest in Peace.

Augie Nieto: A Man for All Seasons

By: Jim Schmaltz

Augie Nieto was only 19 years old when he took a risk that seemed like something only a young man in the folly of youth would attempt. He and his partner, **Ray Wilson**, bought the rights to an obscure invention called the *Lifecycle* (thank you, **Keene P. Dimick**) that was the first piece of exercise equipment with digital technology. Nieto and Wilson would go on to found *Lifecycle, Inc.*, which then became *Life Fitness* in 1984. Life Fitness would grow to be the largest manufacturer of commercial fitness equipment over the next 20 years.

The *Lifecycle* didn't just create a manufacturing giant; it also was one of the key drivers in the evolution of the health club industry from a loosely connected group of modest racquet-sport facilities to what we know today.

All this from a self-described former pudgy kid who learned the value of fitness and traveled to clubs around the country selling a strange new device, armed with only the raw talent of a born salesman with more charisma than seemed fair to

lesser men.

Nieto believed in the *Lifecycle* and its ability to revolutionize an industry. Even when club owners weren't ready to commit to buying *Lifecycles* for their facilities, Nieto would find a way to get one of the units in the club. One tactic was giving a *Lifecycle* to club owners' wives, who would fall in love with them, prompting their husbands to later buy them in bulk for their clubs.

That's what vision is, and Nieto had it, harnessed it, and made a fortune for himself and many of his colleagues.

A Legacy Is Born, With Another on the Way

Despite his youth, Nieto knew that a young industry needed structure and unity. He was an early champion of the HFA (then IHRSA) and influenced many of his peers who would be instrumental in creating the global health and fitness industry.

Mark Mastrov was one of them. Now widely acknowledged as one of the architects of the modern fitness industry, Mastrov built *24 Hour Fitness* into a global giant in the 1980s and has gone on to lead and invest in a number of successful ventures with his company, *New Evolution Ventures*.

Like Nieto, Mastrov learned to practice the art of paying it forward and has mentored many of today's industry leaders. But, back when he was learning the business in the company of Nieto, he was awed by his friend's abilities.

"Augie was truly one of the greatest salespeople of all time," Mastrov says. "He was that alpha male that we all admired. When you sat in the room with him, he was the man."

Back then, the *Lifecycle* was a cumbersome, weighty machine that took four or five people to move around on the cardio floor. But, it helped make an industry. Without Nieto, that giant step forward would have arrived years later.

"I don't think the industry would be anywhere near where it is today without him," Mastrov says. "He was the first to bring digital automation to the industry in a major way with *Lifecycle*. He will always be one of the greatest and most important



The Late Augie Nieto

entrepreneurs in our industry's history."

If Nieto's story ended there, he'd already qualify as an exceptional success story who deserved the honors bestowed on him, including the latest: being named a member of the first class of inductees to the HFA Hall of Fame.

He had already cemented his legacy as a businessman and was revered by his colleagues. He and his wife, **Lynne**, lived with their four children in a beachfront home.

Then one day, he struggled to hold on to a dumbbell during a workout, his grip failing after repeated attempts. What seemed like a minor annoyance at the time marked the beginning of Nieto's second life, one that is more well-known around the world than his accomplishments as an entrepreneur.

He was diagnosed with *amyotrophic lateral sclerosis* (ALS) in 2005. With ALS, every diagnosis is a death sentence; the average survival time with the disease is two to five years.

At first shocked and devastated, Nieto, with his family's support, did what he did best. He rolled up his sleeves, got to work and created a lasting legacy that, to this day, inspires all who know his story.

Augie's Quest for the Cure Is Born

Nieto wasted no time establishing *Augie's Quest to Cure ALS*. With the same dogged determination that drove him in business, Nieto and his team built an infrastructure for the nonprofit organization and scheduled fundraisers and campaigns to get the word out.

Nieto initially turned to the people he knew best, the fitness industry, including the HFA, which for years on the last night of its annual convention hosted *Augie's Bash*, a fundraising event that included top-name entertainers, several-course meals and inspiring stories by those battling ALS, including Nieto himself.

ALS is a devastating disease that progresses with cruel determination. Many people want to look away. But, Nieto wouldn't let them. As chairman and co-founder of Augie's Quest, Nieto's magnetic personality drew others to him. He became widely known beyond the world of ALS activists to raise funds with celebrities and organizations aligned with Augie's Quest. His strength and endurance nearly defied all belief.

Instead of succumbing to ALS in a few years, Nieto survived 18 years. On **February 22, 2023**, he died peacefully, surrounded by his family.

"I knew him since I was 16," Lynne says. "He was one of the most disciplined people I've ever met. He had a tenacity about him that just didn't stop. It was a privilege to walk with him, to see him fight. He was a real inspiration to me."

To learn more about Augie's Quest to Cure ALS, visit augiesquest.org.

Augie Nieto's HFA HOF Inaugural Video can be viewed at: youtu.be/RIMlwZ3G1PI

Julie Main: An Industry Trailblazer with a Legacy of Healing

By: Patricia Amend

Most people enter the fitness industry to make a difference in people's lives. **Julie Main** shared that commitment even when her own life became a battle for survival.

She had made her mark in the fitness industry as *Co-Owner and President of the West Coast Athletic Clubs*, a chain of five clubs in California. She was respected by her colleagues and was one of the few women industry leaders at the time.

Then, everything changed: In 1993, Julie was diagnosed with breast cancer.

"When Julie was diagnosed, it was devastating news for us all," says her husband, **Michael Main**. "She was in her mid-thirties with two small children. She was determined to not let it get her down and continued to do her workout routine."

Julie's doctor asked why she was handling the treatments so well compared to other patients. Her answer: **Dedication to Exercise**.

"She became a walking example of what an exercise routine could do to enhance one's quality of life while undergoing cancer treatment," Michael says.

Not only did Julie harness the power of exercise to help her cope with cancer treatments and rehabilitation, but she also somehow finished marathons and triathlons after her initial diagnosis.

But, she didn't stop there. Julie had the foresight to leverage a deep knowledge of both business and fitness to create a community program that continues to improve the lives of cancer patients and their families to this day.

A Natural Leader

During her career, Julie held several leadership roles, a rarity for a woman in those days. She was a Board Member and then President of the HFA (at that time, IHRSA) Board of Directors,

(See **HFA Show 2025** Page 15)



The Late Julie Main

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...HFA Show 2025

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a Member of the California Clubs of Distinction, and a Member of the Faust Roundtable group of club leaders. A popular industry speaker, she also served on the editorial advisory board for *Club Industry's Fitness Business Pro Magazine* and as a judge for the magazine's *Best of the Best* contest for two years.

"She applied for the IHRSA Board five times and was finally elected," says Rick Caro, President of Management Vision, an industry consultancy in New York City, denoting her determination. The Board later elected her as President, the second woman in that position after Annbeth Eschbach.

In 1994, Julie and her friend and business partner, **Paula Lilly**, co-founded the *Cancer Well-Fit Program* in collaboration with the *Cancer Center of Santa Barbara*. The program trains health club and healthcare professionals to offer exercise regimens that enable cancer patients to feel better and more in control.

What started some three decades ago as a local pilot program is now an internationally recognized cancer exercise rehabilitation program designed to help the first-year cancer survivor. The free, 10-week small group training program

bridges the gap between medical and fitness professionals.

"It's been a huge success. I still have people contacting me to let me know how this has helped them," Michael says. "The aspect Julie dwelled on most was the mental benefit. People feel more proactive about dealing with their disease, which has a positive effect on their recovery."

In a 2005 interview in CBI, Main explained: "What we teach through Cancer Well-Fit is that exercise can significantly improve cancer patients' quality of life. It's about people realizing that they can regain some control of their own bodies... when you're a patient, you have no control."

Changing the Course of Care

Julie battled the disease for 16 years, maintaining as close to a regular working schedule as she could.

"During one of the meetings where she was serving as Board Ex-Officio, she had to travel by plane with a portable infusion pump," Caro recalls. "And, she still showed up."

Researchers who have studied the Cancer Well-Fit Program found that participants were substantially less tired and less anxious than patients who were sedentary. They had an average of 43% improvement in their strength, they doubled

their aerobic endurance, and they boosted their energy levels.

The *American Cancer Society* now recognizes that physician-approved exercise during cancer treatment can boost energy levels, relieve stress, decrease anxiety and depression, and increase hunger.

Today, *The Cancer Well-Fit Manual* that Main co-wrote and published with Lilly is used to train health club operators and healthcare providers throughout the world. It enables club operators to deliver effective exercise programs for cancer patients, and other cancer recovery fitness programs have emerged.

A Bold Fighter to the End

Sadly, Julie's courageous battle with cancer ended on **May 4, 2009**.

"The doctors considered her in remission," explains Michael. "However, during a yoga class in 2005, she experienced a shooting pain near her kidney. She went to the emergency room for an ultrasound and found that her liver was infected with suspicious tumors. It was determined to be a rare form of cancer, leiomyosarcoma."

She bravely fought the disease for four years as it spread throughout her body. Remarkably, even as she was undergoing radiation for a tumor on her spine, she ran

the San Diego Rock 'n Roll Marathon.

"She finished in just over 4 1/2 hours," Michael says.

An inspiration to her colleagues, Julie was honored by the HFA in 2009 when it established the Woman Leader Award in Honor of Julie Main. It recognizes women who exemplify what Main stood for: professionalism, excellence, courage, perseverance and tireless contributions to the industry and community.

"She did her best to try to not let cancer compromise her life," Michael says.

Julie Main's HFA HOF Inaugural Video can be viewed at: youtu.be/QUrMOIVzIPY

Publisher's Note: Congratulations to **Rick Caro, John McCarthy, Dr. Kenneth Cooper, Red Lerille, Augie Nieto and Julie Main** for their inauguration into the first HFA HOF Class!!! **May Red Lerille, Augie Nieto and Julie Main Rest In Peace.** Continuing along the lines of our Cover Story Classics series this year, multiple cover stories have been written about each of these industry leaders and veterans. All of them can be found at www.clubinsideronline.com/archives.

Recap of HFA 2025 (formerly IHRSA)

By: Frank Guengerich

The best part of every *Health & Fitness Association Show (formerly IHRSA)* I've attended, and this is my 34th, is getting reacquainted and spending time with friends and colleagues. For example, it was so good to catch up with one of the best fitness professionals in the biz, **Carolyn Erickson** (See Photo). I met with so many colleagues in such a short period of time that it's hard to mention them all but just to name a few that I was able to spend some time with were: **Jeff Skeen** (CEO/Healthcare and Wellness Expert), **Ed Navan** (Medical Wellness/Recovery Expert), **Keith Kaminski** (Technogym), **Mike Pasquale** (Free Motion), **Steve Menzel** (Precor), **Chris Griebe** (AAG), **Tim Hipp** (Wellness Solutions), **Al Noshirvani** (ALTA/Fitech and HFA Board Member), **Matt Remick** (Owner, Rochester Athletic Club), **Rick Casselbury** (Owner, Universal Athletic Club), **Carter Green** (Les Mills), and of course, **Norm Cates** (Founder of Club Insider and Industry Icon).

My Conference started on Tues-

day evening at the *REX Roundtable* social event that was held at *Allegiant Stadium*. I was able to spend quality time talking to my old friend and health club veteran, **Herb Lipsman** (CEO, SOZO). (Publisher's Note: See Herb's Article on Page #20.) Herb was with **Dan Lynch** (Wellness Veteran and Founding Partner, SOZO) and **Rudy Fabiano** (Owner, Fabiano Architects). Herb and Dan, along with others are developing a new unique club brand that will no doubt be successful, called SOZO. Rudy is doing the design, and it's amazing as always! I was able to spend time with my *REX Leader*, **Brent Darden**, and also catch up with a great colleague, **Jeff Esswein**. The event was delightful, and everyone had a nice time.

A close second to spending time with colleagues and friends is the Trade Show and seeing all the latest and greatest equipment, products and services. I must say that this year was the largest trade show I've seen at HFA/IHRSA in many years. What was specifically notable to me was the number of weight equipment companies that attended, many of which

I've never even heard of. The other noteworthy thing was the explosion of recovery equipment and medical wellness vendors. I believe this phenomenon is not a trend and is here to stay. Among both, the interesting thing will be to see how many companies are still here next year. Then, what will be the innovation? Things are moving so fast that there will no doubt be winners and losers. Most of the interesting innovations always seem to be the small start-up vendors on the very outer edges of the trade show floor. I always make it a point to spend time with many of those vendors to not only learn about their product and what stimulated the development but also to thank them for attending and supporting our Association.

During the show, one of the best things for me is the early morning workout on Friday. It's so much fun! It's like being a kid in a candy shop because you get to work out in the world's biggest fitness center. I wore myself out in the hour and a half it was open. I easily used 20 pieces of cardio and 40 pieces of strength equipment. When can you ever do that?



Frank Guengerich and Carolyn Erickson

On the downside, I heard from several attendees that there were too many panel sessions for the educational track and that, often, some of the speakers seemed unprepared. Also, while I love Las Vegas and *Mandalay Bay* is spacious and accommodating, the constant smell of

(See Frank Guengerich Page 17)

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Attended the Health and Fitness Association Trade Show? Here Are Five Things You Must Do When You Return to Your Gym

By: Jim Thomas

The Health and Fitness Association (HFA) Trade Show is one of the most valuable events for independent gym owners, boutique studio operators and gym entrepreneurs. Attending this event is an opportunity to discover the latest industry trends, connect with suppliers and learn from top experts in fitness business management. But, the real work begins once you return to your gym.

Many gym owners make the mistake of getting caught up in the excitement of the trade show, collecting brochures, exchanging business cards and then going back to their gym without implementing anything they learned. If you want to get the most out of your experience, here are the five critical actions you must take when you return to your gym.

Review and Organize Your Notes, Contacts and Takeaways

During the trade show, you were bombarded with new information, innovative ideas and countless interactions. The first thing you need to do when you get back is to organize and prioritize everything you collected.

Action Steps:

- Sort through notes, business cards and brochures. Categorize them based on key areas: equipment, technology, marketing, member retention, etc.
- Highlight the best ideas. Identify the top three to five takeaways that can have the biggest impact on your gym.
- Digitize contacts and notes. If you networked with vendors, industry experts or fellow gym owners, add their details to your CRM, LinkedIn or a spreadsheet.

Pro Tip: If you learned something that could benefit your team, schedule a staff meeting to share key takeaways and discuss how they can be applied to your business.

Follow Up With Key Contacts and Vendors

Trade shows are great for networking, but most gym owners fail to follow up effectively. If you met someone who could help grow your business, whether it's a supplier, business coach, or industry expert, take action now.

Action Steps:

- Send follow-up emails or LinkedIn messages.
- If you found new equipment or software solutions, schedule a call with the vendor to

discuss implementation and pricing.

- If you connected with another gym owner or expert, propose a collaboration, a podcast appearance or an idea exchange.

Pro Tip: If you plan to upgrade equipment or sign up for a new software solution, negotiate trade show pricing. Many vendors offer exclusive discounts only available to attendees for a short time after the show.

Implement at Least One New Idea Immediately

Information without action is useless. After every trade show, gym owners get inspired by new marketing strategies, revenue models or service offerings, then fail to implement them. Break that cycle by executing at least one strategy right away.

Action Steps:

- Did you learn about new retention strategies? Start integrating them into your member experience today.
- Were you inspired by a new group training program? Run a test class to gauge interest.
- Did you see a social media or referral marketing tactic that works for other gyms? Launch it.

Pro Tip: Pick one initiative and set a 30-day goal to measure its impact. Small, consistent changes can create massive results over time.

Train and Educate Your Staff on Key Takeaways

Your team is the backbone of your gym. If they aren't informed about the latest industry trends and best practices, your business will fall behind. Instead of keeping your trade show experience to yourself, turn it into a learning opportunity for your staff.

Action Steps:

- Hold a staff training session to share the most valuable insights from the trade show.
- If you discovered new sales, retention or customer service tactics, create a training program around them.
- If you met an expert who offers staff coaching or workshops, consider bringing them in for a team training session.

Pro Tip: Use role-playing exercises to train your team on new sales strategies or customer engagement techniques you learned at the trade show.

Audit and Adjust Your Gym's Business Strategy

Attending a trade show should give you a fresh perspective on how your gym compares to competitors and industry leaders. Now is the perfect time to analyze where your business stands and make necessary adjustments.

Action Steps:

- Review your pricing model: Are your rates competitive based on the new insights from the trade show?
- Assess your marketing efforts: Are you using the latest digital strategies and social media trends to attract members?
- Reevaluate your member experience: Are there ways to improve gym culture, class offerings or amenities?

Pro Tip: Conduct a 30-day business audit after the trade show. Set measurable goals based on what you learned and track progress.

Final Thoughts: Execute, Don't Just Observe

Going to the Health and Fitness Association Trade Show is a valuable investment in your business, but only if you apply what you learned. Avoid falling into the trap of inspiration without action.

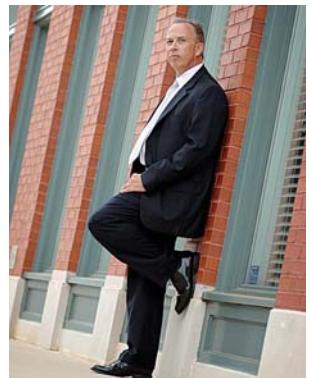
By following these five steps, you will not only make the most of your trade show experience, but you'll also set your gym up for greater success, higher retention and more revenue growth.

...Frank Guengerich

continued from page 16

smoke after a couple of days was hard to tolerate. Maybe it's just me, but it seemed like a strange venue for a health and fitness conference.

I started off by saying I've attended and been a speaker at many conferences over the years. I can recall the days when there were just a few hundred of us that attended, and it was mainly tennis clubs. **John McCarthy** would make it a point to say, "Hello," to as many attendees as he could, and it seemed like he knew everyone by name. It's fantastic to see our Association and industry grow into such a vibrant and robust industry, full of passionate professionals who are truly inspiring and want to make a difference in the health and wellbeing of individuals. So, kudos to us, the change makers! If I didn't



Jim Thomas

What's next? Take immediate action on at least one idea, follow up with key connections and keep moving forward. Success belongs to those who implement.

(An Outsourced CEO, Turnaround Expert and Author, Jim Thomas is the Founder and President of FMC USA Inc., a management consulting, turnaround, financing and brokerage firm specializing in the leisure services industry. With more than 25 years of experience owning, operating and managing facilities of all sizes, Thomas lectures and delivers seminars, webinars and workshops across the globe on the practical skills required to successfully overcome obscurity, improve gym sales, build teamwork and market fitness programs and products. Learn more at www.fmconsulting.net or www.youtube.com/gymconsultant.)

get an opportunity to say, "Hi," please send me a message to my LinkedIn profile as I'd enjoy staying in touch.

(Frank Guengerich is the President and Chief Executive Officer of Club Wellness Advisors (CWA), which specializes in exclusively serving private clubs by providing fitness and wellness design and operational consulting services. CWA is a division of Health, Wellness and Lifestyle Services (HWLS), a health club ownership and management consulting firm. HWLS specializes in assisting clubs maximize revenue and profitability, with a focus on membership marketing and sales, fitness programming and wellness/medically supervised programs. For more information about CWA or HWLS, visit the website at www.hwlservices.com or email frank@hwlservices.com.)

Fitness Forward:

Wellness, Recovery and Tech Innovations Lead the Charge at HFA 2025

By: Nancy Trent

The *HFA Show 2025*, formerly known as *IHRSA*, felt like coming home... an exhilarating gathering where industry leaders and newcomers alike created a vibrant, club-like atmosphere that showcased the future of fitness. The event highlighted the latest trends and innovations, reinforcing that fitness is here to stay, even in the age of GLP-1 weight loss drugs.

Melanie Douglass, R.D., ACE Certified Instructor, has observed an interesting shift in the fitness industry as a result of the rise of GLP-1 medications. "While weight loss can be a great motivator, it's crucial to emphasize that exercise is still key to maintaining overall health and wellbeing," Douglass explained. "I've seen many individuals join gyms after losing weight, gaining confidence and wanting to feel their best." This group, she notes, is increasingly shifting their focus toward more ambitious health goals, prioritizing performance, functional fitness and longevity, rather than just aesthetics. Douglass advocates for a balanced approach. "The most effective strategy is to use these medications in a sustainable way, ensuring the body gets the right amount of nutrition to support an active and healthy lifestyle. Fitness should remain a crucial part of the journey, supporting not just weight loss, but long-term wellness and vitality."

The fitness landscape is evolving rapidly, blending wellness, recovery, artificial intelligence and cutting-edge technology to offer more personalized, accessible and innovative solutions than ever before. Whether at the gym or at home, the emphasis is on holistic approaches that cater to individual needs, ensuring fitness remains a central part of daily life.

Wellness as the Defining Theme: At HFA 2025, wellness was the defining theme. The idea of fitness now goes beyond just physical activity, incorporating recovery and mental wellbeing into the equation. Recovery took center stage at the event, with two key approaches emerging as critical components in the evolving fitness culture: *active recovery* and *relaxation recovery*. Active recovery is movement-based and driven by technology, offering dynamic ways to recharge after intense workouts. On the other hand, relaxation recovery, including saunas, massage therapies and compression technology, focuses on reducing stress and promoting muscle recovery. Both approaches underscore a shift in the understanding that fitness is not solely about pushing boundaries; it's also

about allowing the body time to recover, rest and recharge.

Strength Training Still Rules: This evolving fitness landscape highlights the demand for innovative equipment that supports diverse training goals, a need that *SportsArt* is well-equipped to meet. As a global fitness brand, *SportsArt* combines cardio and strength equipment with sustainability at its core. Their ECO-POW'R technology converts human energy into electricity, blending performance with eco-conscious innovation. With products ranging from energy-generating cardio machines to strength training solutions, *SportsArt* offers high-quality, durable equipment designed for both gyms and rehabilitation centers. This versatility aligns with the full spectrum of fitness pricing, from budget-friendly options to elite luxury investments like the \$50K dry cold plunge bed, reflecting the varied needs of fitness enthusiasts at all income levels.

AI and Technology Reshaping Training: Artificial intelligence and technology are reshaping the personal training landscape. AI-driven companies are revolutionizing fitness by offering highly personalized, data-driven solutions that cater to individual goals and progress. In-gym trends are also making their way into home fitness, with smarter, more connected machines and gamified fitness experiences enhancing engagement and motivation. This shift highlights that fitness is no longer confined to the gym; it's increasingly becoming a part of everyday life.

Trends Spotted at HFA 2025

Walking Pads - The Trend That Keeps on Moving: Walking pads remain a standout trend, especially with their space-saving, compact designs. These versatile devices allow users to incorporate low-impact cardio while working or relaxing at home, making fitness more accessible than ever. KingSmith WalkingPads and LifeSmart Power-Touch Treadmills from SCS are top examples, offering foldable, portable options that allow users to walk, jog or run whenever they please.

Pods Resembling Tanning Beds - Light and Sleep Therapy: Pods that resemble tanning beds are being repurposed for light therapy and sleep therapy. These pods use specialized lighting to promote relaxation, improve sleep quality and enhance skin health, offering a futuristic and convenient way to address wellness needs in a controlled environment.

Fitness as Furniture - Stylish Designs for the Living Room: The concept of "fitness as furniture" is gaining traction, where sleek, stylish workout equipment is designed to blend seamlessly into home decor. These products allow individuals to stay active without sacrificing the aesthetics of their living spaces, making fitness an integrated part of daily life.

Red Light Therapy Everywhere - A Dominant Presence: Red light therapy has emerged as a dominant trend in fitness and wellness, expanding beyond gyms to recovery centers and even home devices. Known for its potential to reduce inflammation, enhance muscle recovery and promote skin health, red light therapy is quickly becoming a go-to solution for boosting wellbeing and performance.

Compression Technology - Expanding in Popularity: Compression technology is rapidly growing in popularity, with devices such as compression sleeves, boots and massage systems becoming integral parts of recovery routines. These products help reduce muscle soreness, improve circulation and accelerate recovery, making them highly sought after by athletes and fitness enthusiasts.

Plunge Pools - Hot and Cold Options on the Rise: Plunge pools are gaining popularity for their hot and cold options, which aid in muscle recovery, reduce inflammation and promote relaxation. These immersive experiences are becoming a popular addition to wellness routines for athletes and fitness enthusiasts alike. Companies like *LifeTrend Spas* and *Plunge* are making cold and hot plunge pools more accessible for home use, allowing users to immerse themselves in a thermal circuit for a multitude of health benefits.

Saunas with Added Features - Multifunctional Innovations: Saunas with added features are a hot trend, offering more than just heat therapy. Many now incorporate light therapy, aromatherapy and even sound or vibration elements, creating a multi-sensory wellness experience. For instance, SCS's brand *LifeTrend*'s full-spectrum saunas stand out because they utilize the entire range of infrared wavelengths: near (NIR), mid (MIR) and far (FIR). Each wavelength offers unique health benefits. The combination of infrared heat and exercise maximizes calorie burn and muscle recovery in a shorter amount of time. It's a fusion of fitness and wellness tailored to enhance both physical and mental health. These advanced saunas provide a personalized, holistic approach



Nancy Trent

to recovery, relaxation and detoxification, becoming sought-after additions to fitness centers and home wellness spaces alike.

Massage Everywhere - Integrated into Various Devices: Massage technology is being integrated into an increasing variety of devices, from massage chairs and beds to wearable gadgets. These innovations make it easier than ever to enjoy deep tissue massage, muscle relaxation and stress relief at home or on the go. Products like SCS' massage chairs and AI-powered office chairs are transforming how people incorporate recovery into their daily routines.

Data-Driven Fitness and Personalized Training: Data-driven fitness is on the rise, with technologies like heart rate monitors, body composition analyzers and wearable devices enabling highly personalized workout experiences. These tools offer real-time progress tracking and tailored insights that optimize workouts based on individual needs. Companies like *Evolv 360*, *Myzone* and *Uscreen.tv* are leading the way in creating personalized, data-backed fitness experiences that keep users engaged and motivated.

Personalized and Smart Wellness: The future of fitness is becoming smarter and more personalized, with brands leading the charge in integrating technology and wellness. *Centr*, founded by actor, *Thor* himself, **Chris Hemsworth**, offers a holistic platform combining tailored workouts, nutrition plans and mindfulness coaching, empowering users at all levels to achieve their health goals. Meanwhile, *Technogym* merges innovative fitness equipment with digital solutions, creating seamless, connected experiences that are both stylish and sustainable. At the same time, *EGYM* (See Nancy Trent Page 21)

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Lessons Learned from Listening to Members

By: Herb Lipsman

As a veteran club operator with more than 40 years of experience, I have witnessed firsthand the transformative power of listening to members and responding to their needs. This column encapsulates key lessons I have learned by simply observing and listening to members...

Fair and Transparent Pricing: A fundamental aspect of our relationship with members is our pricing structure. Members desire fairness and seek value that reflects their investment. Transparent pricing, combined with a commitment to quality services and facilities, fosters trust and loyalty. By regularly reviewing our pricing strategies, we can ensure they meet our members' expectations and financial realities. Neglecting this can lead to member attrition.

Eliminating Aggravations: It's essential to understand and address the common frustrations our members face. Issues like long wait times, inadequate facilities and unprofessional staff can detract from the overall experience. By establishing a process for gathering feedback and implementing changes, we can significantly enhance member satisfaction.

Treating Our Employees Well: Our staff is the backbone of our clubs. Treating employees well translates into better service for our members. By investing in staff training, offering competitive wages and benefits, and fostering a positive workplace culture, we empower our employees to thrive, and in turn, provide exceptional service to our members.

The old saying, "The beatings will continue until morale improves," is unfortunately still alive and well in the club industry by both owners and managers. I have never understood how otherwise seemingly intelligent business leaders can rationalize treating their employees poorly and then sending them out and expecting them to serve their members in a kind, caring and friendly manner?

Providing a Clean and Safe Environment: A clean environment is essential. Members expect well-maintained locker rooms, showers and equipment. Implementing strict cleaning protocols and ensuring staff are trained to maintain these standards is vital for member satisfaction. Additionally, prioritizing safety training ensures staff can identify hazards and respond to emergencies effectively, which is a top priority for our members.

Addressing Member Behavioral Issues

with Urgency: It is crucial to cultivate an environment where all members feel safe and respected. Addressing inappropriate behavior swiftly is not just a matter of policy, it is about creating a culture of accountability. Training staff to recognize and respond to such incidents swiftly ensures that our clubs remain welcoming and inclusive spaces for all.

Smart Investments: Members want to see their dues translated into tangible improvements. Spending wisely on upgrades and amenities that truly benefit the community demonstrates our commitment to enhancing their experience. Regular assessments of member needs and preferences should guide our investment decisions. Members can see easily see and don't appreciate owners who are clearly placing profit ahead of member needs.

Rapid Response: In a world that moves at lightning speed, members expect us to resolve issues promptly. Whether fixing broken equipment or addressing concerns about club policies, a rapid response demonstrates our commitment to their satisfaction. Establishing a proactive maintenance schedule and an efficient communication channel for complaints can significantly enhance the member's experience.

Hiring and Retaining "Rock Star" Instructors: Whether for group exercise programs and classes, personal trainers or racquet sports professionals, members expect excellence both in terms of instructor expertise and enthusiasm while teaching/coaching.

Effective Communication: Communication is key in any hospitality environment but especially in clubs. Members want updates about club programs, activities and policies in a way that suits them. Remember that we all respond to the barrage of messaging we receive daily differently. Clear signage at the front desk may be effective for some, whereas a text message might be more suitable for others. And, still others may respond best to the old tried and true method of direct conversation while they are in the club.

Forming Genuine Relationships Between Staff and Members: Members want to feel valued and known. Taking the time to engage with each member personally can transform their experience. Many members believe that the club prioritizes membership fees, while taking the members for granted. It is crucial to shift this perception through genuine interactions.

Conclusion: Paying attention to member

behavior and the steady flow of their comments should drive decision making in our clubs. Failure to do so will always lead to higher levels of attrition than would otherwise be the case. The good news is that member feedback is prevalent in every club. We simply must open our eyes and ears and be receptive to it.

(Herb Lipsman is a veteran of the club industry, having managed some of the most prestigious athletic clubs and golf/country clubs in the Houston, Texas market over the past 30 years, most notably The Houstonian Hotel, Club and Spa. Lipsman has served on the Board of Directors for IHRSA. He was appointed by Mayor Bill White to serve as Chairman of the Mayor's Wellness Council for the City of Houston. Lipsman has also been invited to speak at numerous industry conferences and conventions around the world, including the U.S., UK, Australia, New Zealand, Germany, Italy, Russia and Mexico. Most recently, Lipsman authored



Herb Lipsman

*and published his book, *Caring (The Sequel): Valuable Insights into Effective Club and Hospitality Management*. Learn more about Herb and order his book at bit.ly/herb-lipsman-caring.)*

After 40 Years of Wellness, Technogym Launches Healthness

CESENA, ITALY - Forty years ago, in an industry characterized first by bodybuilding, then by fitness, *Technogym* launched a new concept: *Wellness*, which, capitalizing on the experience of fitness, generated a social opportunity, involving all stakeholders (governments, companies and citizens) in building a healthier and more active society.

Since then, *Technogym* has continued to innovate relentlessly: from biomechanics, to digital, to artificial intelligence. Today, *Technogym* is a life science company, able to offer precision training programs for every individual and need.

Over the years, *Technogym* has built an ecosystem that, as of today, connects 25 million users (out of a global community of 70 million people training with *Technogym*), industry operators, doctors and trainers worldwide. Leveraging the company's years of investments in cutting-edge technologies and AI, *Nerio Alessandri* introduced the new vision of *Healthness*.

The ability to predict disease before it occurs will be the greatest revolution of our time. *Healthness* leverages *Wellness* and takes this vision even further by making health prevention programs tangible thanks to data and AI.

Scientific studies confirm that health is influenced by only 20 - 30% by genetics, while the remaining 70 - 80% depends on epigenetics (lifestyle). There are, therefore, no magic formulas to

achieve *Healthness*: it requires training that targets muscular strength, cardiovascular endurance, balance, flexibility and cognitive quality. Physical exercise is a true medicine (*Exercise Is Medicine*) and *Healthness* represents a preventative medicine to improve physical performance in the short term and guarantee healthy longevity in the long term.

Thanks to the trillions of data collected in 30 years on the *Mywellness Open Platform*, today with AI, *Technogym* is able to offer *Healthness* as products and services: *Technogym Checkup*, the new assessment station based on AI is able to analyze psycho-physical and cognitive parameters and automatically calculate Precision Training programs. The new AI-based Biostrength and Biocardio product ranges, connected to the *Technogym Ecosystem*, allows users to deliver Precision Training Programs automatically thanks to the *Technogym App*, to track data and adapt the program to progresses.

In practice, *Healthness* means Precision Wellness and thanks to data-driven customized programs it allows users to obtain results superior by approx. 30% in the same amount of time.

Healthness, in addition to helping people live longer in good health, represents a great business opportunity for fitness, sports, hospitality, corporate and medical operators and personal trainers to evolve their offering and create value through hyper-personalization.

Group Fitness Instructors: *Bartenders, Baristas or Bespoke?*

By: Jeffrey Pinkerton

You wake up early. You get a jumpstart on the morning commute. You go out of your way, but the small detour will be worth it, you know it. You pull into Starbucks and find a sign taped to the drive-through screen: "Unfortunately, there will be no 6 AM lattes available this morning. We apologize for the inconvenience. Emily's daughter is not feeling well. We hope to have them back on the menu tomorrow morning. But, please come back at 9 AM as Jacob will be here ready to serve up some amazing drinks! Thank you for your understanding." Ummm. What?! You can't cancel customers' lattes! Yet, this is how your customers feel when you cancel a group fitness workout.

You Should Never Cancel a Class: There is nothing worse for a service-based business than not being able to provide the service. It's the pool closed on your summer vacation. It's your favorite restaurant running out of Nonni's famous chocolate cake (literally happened to me last night). It's the disappointment of discovering that, after a journey of ill fate and epic challenges, Wally World is closed... and the moose out front should have told ya. When someone gets their life reorganized for the sake of working out at your facility – the one hour they have today – and their workout is, "Sorry, canceled!" they are not, in fact, as the sign suggests, understanding.

Bespoke - Cool for Suits, Not for Service: The challenge of the freestyle instructor

model is that each instructor is creating a one-of-a-kind, bespoke workout for your members. Not only is it difficult to quality-control (and market and build into any meaningful member onboarding), but it's also nearly impossible to replicate. Could your *Group Fitness Manager* step in and teach *something*? Maybe. But, it's similar to apologetically offering coconut cake as a replacement for the delicious chocolate cake you can't deliver. Hmmm. No thanks. And, yes, I'm still a little bitter.

Bartenders - Teaching Everyone the Recipe: Some Directors have built a loose framework of standard program names and descriptions, to organize their group fitness workouts around a set of shared general (See **Jeffrey Pinkerton** Page 22)



Jeffrey Pinkerton

...Nancy Trent

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is transforming gym operations with smart, automated strength and cardio equipment, providing real-time performance tracking and personalized coaching, creating a connected fitness environment for members and clubs alike. These brands are redefining how we approach fitness, making it more data-driven, accessible, and engaging.

• • •

HFA 2025 showcased the bright

future of fitness, with groundbreaking innovations in wellness, recovery and technology. As the industry continues to evolve, fitness is becoming more personalized, accessible and innovative. Whether through AI-driven training or advanced recovery methods, the fitness landscape is one of constant innovation, inclusivity and growth. The future of fitness is here, and it's brighter than ever before.

(Nancy Trent is a writer and speaker, a lifelong wellness activist, a globe-trotting trend watcher and the Founder and President of Trent & Company, a leading wellness PR firm. Trent & Company,

which launched many health and beauty brands, grew out of Nancy's personal and passionate commitment to helping people live longer and healthier lives. A former journalist for New York Magazine, Nancy has written seven books on healthy lifestyles, serves on the editorial boards of several magazines and travels around the world speaking at conferences and trade shows on trends in the marketplace. She is a recognized expert in PR with more than 30 years of experience creating and managing highly successful campaigns. Learn more at www.trentandcompany.com or contact Nancy at nancy@trentandcompany.com.)

Make It Fun!

A Cambridge, Maryland Gym is Available for FREE to a Qualified Operator

Following the upgrading of a 10,000 square-foot facility to the tune of \$200,000, the Owner is willing to turn it over to an experienced operator. It has operated for the last four months with *no manager*, and for the last two years, with *virtually no manager*. It has 518 members with an EFT of \$24,000 per month.

The gym is a fully equipped gym with locker rooms, saunas and space for classes. An additional 2,800 square feet is available next door. *Twin Oaks Gym Software* is used, and all data from last six years is available, including names, email address, phone numbers of over 2,500 members, past and present.

There are no salespeople, no manager and no marketing. An

experienced operator could easily increase the membership base. The only competition is a YMCA and a CrossFit. The members are dying for a decent operator and are extremely excited about the current upgrades and new management coming in.

Current monthly expenses are around \$33,000. The Landlord is open to offering free rent for three months. Rent is **\$12,880 per month**.

Contact:

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Inspired By My Mom

*Making other people happy
Is the ultimate high
Concentration on yourself
Will leave you high and dry*

*The sooner you get it
The more joyful you will be
It's happiness at a higher altitude
Take the flight and see!*

...Jeffrey Pinkerton

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principles. In this model, you teach people the ingredients for the workout, and then, hope your instructors put together the right recipe for music and moves.

But, in candid conversations, most of those Directors admit that what started out with great intentions has devolved into instructors teaching their own version (their own recipe), with a considerable range of expertise and innovation. You show up for David's popular Cycle 60, but he's on vacation. Is Jennifer's Cycle Dance okay? Ummm, not really. In theory, it sounds like a better solution than canceling, but it's not what the customer was looking for when their alarm went off at 5 AM.

Baristas - Consistent, Reliable, Repeatable: For any service-based business to thrive, you've got to be able to deliver an experience that is high-quality and consistent and reliable. The end product, whether you're a health club offering group fitness workouts or a Starbucks delivering premium-priced beverages, is the ability to deliver an experience that is worth the consumer's time and money (and energy and effort).

Your value proposition is a combination of the product and your people... and enough people to consistently deliver the product. A great product – consistent, high-quality workouts – allows your team to follow a specific recipe for the workout and focus their time on the delivery of the workout – clearer coaching, better movement quality, variety in scripting, and strategies for connecting.

And, it allows the Group Fitness Manager to focus their efforts on upskilling the team more than constantly auditing each and every workout. Their role moves to that of a manager and mentor, trusting that the recipe for the workout is tested

and proven and professionally developed, meaning they can spend their energy on finding and cultivating new talent, providing feedback to the team to make the experience more inclusive and inviting, and leveling up the overall member experience in group fitness.

We're in the service business. Yet, we live in the real world where things come up. Kids get sick. Cars break down. Instructors have emergencies. And, of course, they want to take vacations. But, like Starbucks, we can't stop delivering our product, even for one morning. We need a team of people trained and prepared to step in and deliver the experience that customers

want and expect and are ready to pay for. Never a canceled class, and not even a sorry-for-the-sub, lesser-than alternative. Could they work out alone on machines as a substitute for the experience? Technically, sure, there are a lot of ingredients that are similar (squats, lunges, presses, curls). But, similar ingredients do not create a similar experience. Give your members the workout they want and the connection and community they crave. Like having their chocolate cake and eating it too.



Reach out to us at MOSSA if you're interested in offering professionally developed, consistent, reliable, repeatable workouts. We'll provide a great product, and we'll help you train a talented team of people. And importantly, we'll make sure you never again have to post that dreaded "sorry, canceled!" sheet of paper on the group fitness door. Learn more at mossa.net/clubs-facilities/why-mossa.

(Jeffrey Pinkerton is the Business Development Manager for MOSSA. Jeffrey can be reached by phone at 770-989-4737 or email at jeffreypinkerton@mossa.net.)

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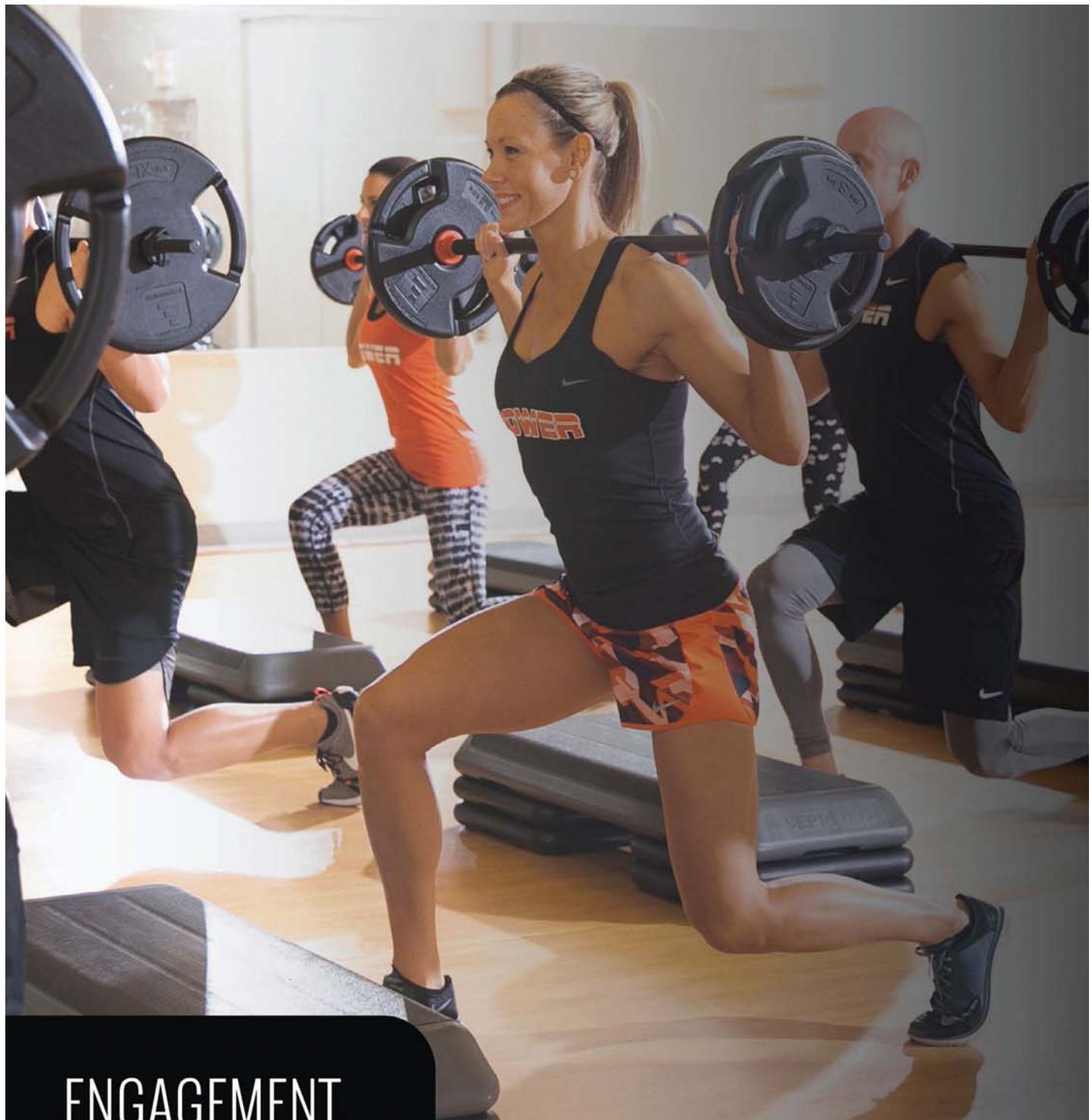


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