

Personal trainer gets bookish middle schooler back in shape

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By Chris Barber

Among the post holiday resolutions of most adults, getting back in shape is high on the list.

For personal trainer Linda Jassmond Lanfear, the chronic problem of adult overweight and obesity is just part of the problem. She said that surveys indicate about one third of children share that problem, and the present generation of youngsters will be the first not to exceed their parents' lifespan.

To that end, she added youth fitness to her array of services, and as an interesting complement to it, she wrote a book as well.

The book, just recently published, is Lanfear's third and is called "Journey to Fitness: — Chronicles of a Transformed Kid." In it she shares in words and — more prominently — pictures the three-year experience she had in coaching a local Engle middle schooler, Wills Martin, into a heightened state of physical fitness.

"He's a smart kid and excellent at school, but he sat still a lot. I was hired to be his trainer," she said.

Wills, who worked with Lanfear on the book, admitted himself what his early priorities were: "Instead of playing sports, I like to read. I read big, thick books," he wrote.

His mother, Jennifer Martin, said she was concerned three years ago that his lack of physical exercise and participation in sports was leading to her son's lack of self-confidence. She hired Lanfear to work out a program of physical fitness with him, and they have been on that project ever since.

Lanfear, 50, who teaches fitness courses at the Jennersville Y and the Kirkwood Fitness Center, said Wills was "deconditioned" and did not have much stamina. She met with him once a week and worked out a circuit exercise program that involved walking, bike riding and playing sports.

She also worked with Jennifer Martin on healthy foods.

Over a period of three years, she saw Wills get stronger and more coordinated. He was become a good swimmer and tennis player, and he can even juggle with one or two hands. He said that he intends to try out for the Avon Grove High School tennis team next year when he is in ninth grade.

For families who don't have the desire or resources to hire a personal trainer for their children, Lanfear says it's important for them to make their children's fitness a family concern. Cooking good meals is important, as is establishing a regular exercise.

While Wills says he likes to raid the cookie jar, he says the encouragement of his parents and Lanfear keep that desire in check. Absent that, he said, "I'd probably be one of the one third who are overweight."

On Tuesday, Lanfear was at the Jennersville Y, where she teaches and is having book signings. The senior director there, Bill Kanas, said the Y has many opportunities to keep kids lean and healthy, including swimming, sports teams, family workout programs and youth/teen circuit training. Many of these training opportunities are free with membership, he added.

Lanfear, who lives in Lincoln University has also published two previous books on fitness. The first, "Journey to Fitness — Chronicles of a Working Woman" deals with overcoming the challenge of having a busy life that includes a job and family while establishing a fitness routine. The other, "Journey to Fitness — Chronicles of a New Triathlete," presents the true story of a woman who was very out of shape and could not swim a stroke, and, with training she became a triathlete.

In the near future, Lanfear will have book signings at the Y and at the Borders in Concordville. For more information on the books go to www.fitnesslinda.com.



Wills Martin, left, sits with author and personal trainer Linda Jassmond Lanfear at the Jennersville Y.

— Photo by Chris Barber