

Ashland center helps those with Parkinson's

By Ellen Waldman

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One thing that life might have in store for you as you age is illness. In fact, approximately 85% of older adults have at least one chronic health condition, and 60% have at least two chronic conditions, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Coping and managing life with multiple chronic conditions is a real challenge. People naturally want to maintain a satisfying quality of life. It really needs to include not give yourself a hard time for whatever has befallen you, health-wise. And if there are sound interventions that can assist in increasing the quality of life, then of course, do those, too.

One such assistance for those who have any type of movement disorder like Parkinson's Disease (PD) is a specific type of fitness and exercise program. There actually is such a facility designed to help you in Ashland, Parkinson's Central, (541-326-1190; Pdbalance@charter.net; 905 Skylark Place). I spoke with Maria (who prefers Curly) Dykstra, the owner. Staying active is very important to delay the progression of the disease. Here's what you'll find there.

Parkinson's Central is a 3,000 sq. ft. space that offers a large area for group classes, spin bikes, Theracycles, (which are specifically designed for those with neurological disorders), various weight machines, mounted heavy bags and speed bags used for boxing, a large screen TV used for hybrid classes, and more amenities.

Some of the classes are rock-steady boxing (that got my attention), cycling, dance, and one-on-one balance and strength training. Many clients come once a week and others up to three times a week for personal sessions. Some of them have been getting fitness help from Curly for many years.

Anyone can schedule a time to visit, and are welcome to try any class free of charge. You also don't need a diagnosis of PD, as they welcome anyone who wants a more personal experience for their particular needs or fitness goals.

As for her experience, she has had 25 years working with and in the Parkinson's community, and holds several Parkinson's specific training certifications, from Ohio State University, Rock Steady Boxing in Minneapolis, and OHSU. Additionally, she is certified as a medical exercise specialist, a personal and aquatic trainer, plus others. Clearly, she's an expert in her field. Curly will be happy to discuss your personal goals and the fees for these programs with you.

The results of all her experience are that most people that come for these Parkinson's workouts and classes describe how much better they feel. Visits to their neurologists also report noticeable improvements in their symptoms.

Five years ago, I wrote another column about PD. Here's an important resource from that column that's still relevant. Parkinson's Resources of Oregon (<http://www.parkinsonsresources.org>) provides support and resources for people living with Parkinson's disease, their families, and caregivers in Oregon and Southwest Washington. They estimate that there are 25,000 people with PD in the Oregon area. The

occurrence of PD increases with age. The average onset of PD is 60; however, it does occur in adults as young as 30. There is no cure for Parkinson's disease, only symptom treatments, and the cause is unknown.

Parkinson's Central might be an important component for improving the quality of your life. Whether this specific condition, or aging alone, brings you through their front door, it's always worth a try.