

Why are these women smiling while exercising?

October 02, 2008 6:00 AM

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Editor

FAIRHAVEN — If you close your eyes and listen, you are sure you are at a Carnivale street party in Rio; people are dancing, the palm trees are swaying, people are happy. But, when you open your eyes and look around, you are surrounded by dozens of happy South Coast women of all ages with smiles on their faces. While exercising? This isn't your normal morning exercise class, this is Zumba, a Latin inspired cardio workout that is attracting a wide range of people and inspiring them to get healthy by dancing their way to fitness.

"I took a Zumba class at the Y and I was hooked," smiles Zumba instructor, Christine Pedersen, who just led a class of 15 women one fall morning in Fairhaven at Susan's Dance Academy. While she loved the class, she was disappointed when her favorite instructor left, so she took matters into her own hands. "I loved it so much, I decided to get certified, although I wasn't sure I was going to do anything with it."

When Susan opened her dance studio on Route 6, Christine was taking her evening hip hop class and broached the idea with Susan, who said let's try it; the first introductory night over 40 people showed up for the class.

"Oh, my gosh, I love it," gushes Patricia Wynne who was taking Christine's Zumba class for the first time along with her aunt, Noreen. "My aunt comes, her sister comes, my whole family comes. I love it."

"I hope she adds classes," smiles Noreen. "This is a great way to exercise."

Vanessa, who has taken Christine's class since the beginning raves about the benefits of Zumba, noting her pedometer counted over 3600 steps in class. "I can appreciate Dancing with the Stars, with the stars learning something totally new," said Vanessa about learning the initial steps of Zumba. "But it's lots of fun and Christine's presence makes you secure."

"You can jump in at any time," Christine touts as one of the benefits of Zumba. Created in the 1990s by 'Beto' Perez, a celebrity fitness trainer from Colombia, Zumba is touted as 'the best party around'. As legend goes, Beto forgot his music for an aerobics class, instead playing his own personal music with Latin beats that were usually paired with the salsa instead of aerobics classes. The class loved it, leading Zumba to become the brand name that it is today.

Zumba is based on a small series of steps that promote the individual to make the most of it, putting as little or as much into the dance as they want.

"It is a dance moved based on exercise," smiles Christine. "But it's fun, that's why we call it exercise in disguise."

"Once you get into the music, you are not thinking about the moves and start forgetting about everyone else," says Christine, adding the typical class burns between 500 and 800 calories. Along with diet and Zumba, Christine herself shed several pounds.

After a morning class, a woman wandered in, "I was looking for information on that new class, what is it called?" "Zumba!" Despite minimal advertising, Christine's classes have become a word of mouth sensation, prompting the consideration of more Zumba classes.

"My sister and I were certified in February 2008," says Christine who has danced her whole life. "The music is infectious."

"I was never one to go to the Y and do step aerobics. But after taking Zumba classes I was looking online to find classes and taking them wherever I could."

Want to ditch the workout and join the Zumba party? Christine holds classes on Wednesday and Friday at 9 a.m. and Monday and Thursday evenings at 8 p.m. For more information on Zumba classes at Susan's Dance Academy, 67 Huttleston Avenue, Fairhaven you can telephone them at (508) 995-9690.

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