

Zumba turns wiggling hips into a fitness trend

For all those who feel bored during their workout because they are running like a hamster on the treadmill or walking miles on the cross-trainer while staring at one of the gym's flat screen TVs, the fitness industry offers a remedy.

Zumba, a fitness class that combines dance moves like salsa, merengue, tango and cumbia with traditional exercise routines, is bringing a Latin American dance experience into local gyms, community centers and fitness clubs.

"It's a cardio-dance workout to Latin and international music. It's like you are at a party, dancing," said Valcenia Hamilton, Zumba instructor and owner of Body and Mind Fitness in Ferndale.

Zumba exercisers move around, wiggle their hips, shake their butts, wave their arms and occasionally let out a thrilled "yea" during workouts that last from 45 minutes to one hour. One of Hamilton's favorite moves is the reggaeton "which is all about the attitude," she said, moving her arms and body to demonstrate.

Zumba dancers get the most out of it if they let go and don't worry how their moves look. After taking a couple of classes, the moves will flow.

"It's fun, you don't feel like you are working out ... It makes you feel good and I recommend it to anybody," said Angelika Lewis, who comes with her mother Cynthia Lewis to the Zumba classes at Body and Mind Fitness.

Everybody sweats during the fast-paced, calorie-burning routines, but there are satisfied smiles on people's faces once the confusion is gone about which body part to shake next.

Mirza Rosado, Zumba trainer at the Madison Athletic Club and owner of Troy Dance Studio and Bodyworks, is counting to the beat in Spanish, giving the workout session an even more authentic Latin flavor.

Before the enthusiastic woman from Puerto Rico turns up the music, she teaches the basic steps in a dry run. "Bend one knee, the other one is straight. That's one of the Latin tricks," she said before she circled her hips.

Debbie Lim of Fitness Motivators has been teaching fitness classes for almost 30 years and currently holds Zumba classes at the Costick Center in Farmington Hills.

"Anyone can do it, any age can do it all the way from little kids to [...] seniors," Lim said.

Beto Perez, creative director and co-founder of Zumba Fitness L.L.C., came up with Zumba as a fitness concept and in 1999 brought it from Columbia to the U.S.

"He is still teaching it in a little studio in Miami," said Lim, who met Perez in the past and is interested in organizing a bigger Zumba event in the Detroit area.

The company says on its Web site that Zumba classes can be found at over 40,000 locations in 75 countries.

Within a distance of 25 miles of Detroit, more than 200 classes are currently taught at fitness clubs, dance studios, YMCA's, community and health centers.

At Oakland University, a Zumba class was taught in the spring; the class was filled and well received.

"Unfortunately we are not offering Zumba this fall. Our instructor moved and we do not have a current instructor who teaches Zumba," said Rachelle Pascua, Fitness Programs and Services Coordinator at OU's Rec Center. "If we do hire one, then we will probably have them teach the class in the winter."

"We have to find the right instructor," said Gregory Jordan, director of campus recreation. Jordan said that the Rec Center tries to offer classes based on students' participation, requests and needs.

Lim recommends that anyone interested in finding a Zumba class should go to the official Zumba Web site or to zumbaofmichigan.com and to make sure that the instructors have a fitness background and are authorized to teach Zumba.

The Oakland Post, online article

http://www.oaklandpostonline.com/sports/article_5ef923b1-29f5-5d32-bec7-d2285c894c6f.html