

ACTIVIST ! LERT

• “Working Together to **Build a Better Bethel**” is the topic at City Club of Eugene at noon Friday, March 18, at the UO Downtown Baker Center, 975 High Street. Speakers include Greg Evans, Ethan Nelson, Debi Farr, Colt Gill and Clayton Walker. \$5 for non-members. See cityclubofeugene.org.

• **Familias Unidas por la Justicia** (Families United for Justice), an independent farmworker union in Washington state, is on a West Coast tour and will be stopping in Eugene Saturday, March 19. The union has been fighting for a contract with Sakuma Bros berry farm, which supplies Driscoll’s berries. Details of their visit are to be announced. Email calcoffice@gmail.com.

• A free film showing of **Wag the Dog**, a presidential election parody, will be at 7:30 pm Tuesday, March 22, at the Maitreya Ecovillage Strawbale, 1641 W. Broadway.

• A free film showing of **Anne Braden: Southern Patriot** will be from 4 to 6 pm Sunday, March 20, at the Hilyard Community Center, 2580 Hilyard Street. Braden was charged with sedition for attempting to desegregate a Louisville, Kentucky neighborhood in the early 1960s. Sponsored by Showing Up for Racial Justice. Donations welcome.

CORRECTIONS/ CLARIFICATIONS

In our March 3 story “Girls Rock,” Tomoko Sekiguchi was incorrectly quoted as saying that Crux Rock Climbing Gym doesn’t “help you with the beginning” of the learning process. She actually said the gym doesn’t “just help you with the beginning” of the process. She emphasizes that the staff of Crux Rock Climbing Gym is helpful to climbers throughout the entire learning experience, including the beginning.



NEWS

BY RICK LEVIN



WOLFRAM CONALL
TRAINING WITH
GNG FITNESS
OWNER VIA
MCGRIFF

HOLISTIC FITNESS REIGNS AT LOCAL GYM

PHOTO: TODD COOPER

As owner of GNG Fitness in Eugene, Via McGriff adheres to the belief that a gym workout should mean more than simply pumping up your pecs or trimming an inch off your waistline.

McGriff, who played volleyball in college and on semi-pro teams overseas, says that fitness is not only physical but mental and spiritual as well, and to this end she started up the Holiday Give Back Challenge, a holistic routine that taps a contestant’s “mental ability to maintain or make it through the tough days.”

It was to that end that McGriff started up the challenge, in which potential contestants submit a video stating their fitness goals and those chosen receive three months of free training. Since 2013, she’s been choosing a handful of participants according to their needs: not just dropping weight, for instance, but lowering blood pressure or improving body image.

And then they get to work. The challenge runs from January to March, during which McGriff works closely with the participants, focusing not just on improving such things as cardio fitness and healthy eating but issues of mental toughness and long-term goals as well.

“I can throw a bunch of people on a cardio machine and have them drop a ton of weight, but that’s short term,” McGriff says. “On those tough days, I need to know what motivates you. That’s the key aspect for us, and what I like to think we do differently. We really care about why you’re trying to do this,” she adds.

Wolfram Conall, one of this year’s challenge participants, says that a friend suggested he send in a video to McGriff. “I have been

overweight most of my life, and was picked on for it heavily in school,” he explains. “Because of that I kind of disassociated myself from my body,” he adds, noting that being overweight caused a slew of health issues, including type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure.

Since starting the challenge, Conall, 28, has been taken off blood pressure medication and is currently “shrinking out of all the clothes I used to wear.” What’s more, he says, his attitude concerning his own well-being has been altered.

“Via is a pleasure to work with,” Conall says. “With her I’ve learned that I can get where I want to be. What seemed impossible is possible with hard work.”

Challenge participant Penny Hachee says that, at 37, she’d “hit a major stumbling block working out on my own.” After losing and then gaining back weight at a traditional gym where she was “just another number,” she became “very depressed and ashamed” about her ability to get healthy.

Hachee says the fitness challenge at GNG has given her the support she found lacking at other gyms. “The atmosphere is electric,” she says. “The members are so encouraging and the people become like family members. I have never been pushed so hard.”

McGriff’s leadership is nothing short of “awe-inspiring,” Hachee says, adding that thanks to the fitness trainer’s guidance she feels nearly as strong and in shape as she did in college.

GNG Fitness is located at 2512 Oakmont Way; for further information on upcoming challenges, visit GNG-Fitness.com or call 525-0810. ■

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