

DO YOU THINK YOU ARE UP FOR THE CHALLENGE?

BY JOHN TERRY
ILLUSTRATIONS: JIM CAPUTO



SO HOW ARE THOSE NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS WORKING OUT FOR YOU?

Surely by now you signed up for that business class, implemented a new household budget and logged some volunteer hours.

Not so much? Then maybe we shouldn't ask about your plans for losing weight this year. It's probably a safe bet you haven't had much success there either.

Yeah — same here. The only consolation is that we're not alone. According to the *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, only eight percent of people who make New Year's resolutions are successful in achieving them. And it's a bit disheartening to be among the 92 percenters.

But all joking aside, being overweight or obese puts you at serious risk for a litany of health problems including coronary heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, type 2 diabetes, osteoarthritis and cancer. Carrying too much weight can literally kill you.

Let's do something about it.

This magazine's middle name is "Healthy Living," and over the years we've lived up to it by aligning our publication with some of the most respected medical, nutritional and fitness professionals in Central Florida. Now a group of them are coming together to help two readers reach their weight-loss and fitness goals in a 12-month campaign we're calling Take The Challenge weight-loss campaign.

The initiative is dedicated to promoting healthy weight loss, effective exercise and sound eating habits throughout the community. We are looking for two ambassadors to represent and lead our audience to a healthy lifestyle. Candidates should be 100 pounds or more overweight and live in Central Florida. Our team of professionals will choose one man and one woman as the official ambassadors.

Our ambassadors will have all the support they need to succeed with the three essential components of weight loss: nutrition, exercise and psychology. You can read more about those topics elsewhere in this issue, along with profiles on the team members who will help the ambassadors achieve their goals:

ARIEL HERNANDEZ: Master Pilates Instructor / Personal Trainer; owner of Fusion Fitness

DR. KRISTINA BERGER: Family Physician with the Florida Hospital Medical Group

PETER ROBAINA: Master Pilates Instructor / Personal Trainer

DR. CELINE PASSERI: Licensed Clinical Psychologist

SHANNON KIDWELL: Personal Chef / Fitness Trainer; author of *Fit with Flavor: Your Guide to the Freshitarian Lifestyle*

TERRI TERRY: Dietitian with Florida Hospital's Center for Nutritional Excellence

You can follow the progress of the ambassadors through updates here in the magazine, as well as on our website (LakeMaryHealthyLiving.com), Facebook page (facebook.com/LakeMaryHealthyLivingMagazine) and Twitter feed (twitter.com/LMHealthyLiving). Our Take The Challenge weight-loss campaign isn't just for the two people we put in the spotlight. We want the whole community to be involved. Feel free to share stories about your own weight-loss effort, and to cheer on our ambassadors.

During the year, if weight-loss goals are met, the transformed ambassadors will be treated to gifts from our sponsors including excess skin removal/body contouring surgery from the Institute of Aesthetic Surgery and new glasses from Logan Eye Care. The contest will end in June 2014.

PHOTOGRAPHY: BETSY HANSEN (OPPOSITE PAGE)

Meet the Team Members

ARIEL HERNANDEZ
Master Pilates Instructor /
Personal Trainer



Helping clients achieve fitness and weight-loss goals is important to Ariel Hernandez. But what the owner of Fusion Fitness in Lake Mary really likes is seeing the improved self-esteem that accompanies an improved body.

He remembers what it was like to be a 250-pound 18-year-old with a 42-inch waist. That's when he attended his first Pilates class and fell in love with the fitness routine he initially perceived as being "girly." Hernandez, now 41, could tell after just one session that the exercises were lengthening his lower back and strengthening his back and shoulders.

Two years after that first class, he became a Pilates instructor.

Fast-forward a couple decades and Hernandez is an international educator for the Pilates industry. He spends a lot of time on the road conducting seminars, appearing at fitness shows and certifying instructors.

Hernandez says his Pilates-based exercise approach is ideal for overweight people because of the Reformer apparatus used at Fusion Fitness.

"Most other places offer mat-based Pilates," Hernandez says. "A lot of big gyms charge a monthly membership and include mat Pilates and yoga. Unfortunately it's easy to get injured doing those mat exercises. But the equipment we use positions you in such a way that it supports your body. The Reformer Pilates apparatus is a whole-body unit. The workout lengthens, strengthens and corrects injuries caused by poor exercise form."

Hernandez says no matter how big or small a client is, personal training at Fusion Fitness always starts with Pilates because it teaches the form and function used throughout their journey. The Reformer helps develop the body awareness necessary to move on to other types of training.

Ambassadors in the Take The Challenge weight-loss campaign will find Hernandez to be a relatable, compassionate mentor because he has been there himself.

"Growing up in South Florida, it was all about food, food and more food for me," he says. "My favorite subject in school was P.E., and I enjoyed playing sports, but my sweet tooth was overpowering. My good friends Little Debbie and Sara Lee made me gain all the weight."

Hernandez says he tried every diet imaginable, but found they only worked to a certain point. The weight eventually came back. He cautions about losing weight for short-term goals, like trying to fit into a tux or a dress. Only a true lifestyle change will usher in long-term weight loss.

"People think there is going to be some magic little pill, or some kind of laser treatment that will work. But there is no substitute for the real thing. Drink more water and fewer sweetened drinks. Eat more veggies. And of course — exercise."



TAKE THE CHALLENGE LOSE WEIGHT WITH HEALTHY LIVING

If you are ready to commit yourself to a year of hard work that will yield amazing results, and you don't mind letting Central Florida look over your shoulder during the process, then visit our website to register to Take The Challenge:

www.LakeMaryHealthyLiving.com/Take-The-Challenge

ENTRY DATES:
APRIL 1 – 30, 2013

WINNERS ANNOUNCED ON THE WEBSITE:
MAY 5, 2013

CONTEST DATES:
JUNE 1, 2013 – JUNE 1, 2014

Please refer to the website for rules.
(www.LakeMaryHealthyLiving.com/Take-The-Challenge)

PETER ROBAINA

Master Pilates Instructor / Personal Trainer



About once a week, Peter Robaina meets someone new under less than ideal circumstances. Aching exercise enthusiasts come to see him and other trainers at Fusion Fitness because they were injured while working out at what he refers to as a “warehouse type gym.”

It's familiar territory for the 29-year-old master Pilates instructor and personal trainer. Weightlifting injuries plagued him during his teenage years and spurred an interest in learning more about proper technique.

“I got into weightlifting at 13 or 14 and, like a lot of guys, I lifted too much too early,” Robaina says. “I was hurting myself — not working correctly. It messed up my shoulders and lower back. A few years later I was looking for a way to correct those issues and discovered Pilates. Not only did it fix my physical problems, it made me want to enter the fitness industry and become a certified trainer.”

Robaina says Fusion Fitness puts an emphasis on Pilates using what is called the Reformer apparatus because it helps clients develop good form first. The staff believes form is the basis of effective personal training. By using a combination of Pilates exercises, resistance machines and free weights, trainers can turn up the intensity as needed to achieve optimum exercise efficiency.

One ambassador in our Take The Challenge weight-loss campaign will team up with Robaina for ongoing training over the next year. The other will work with Fusion Fitness owner Ariel Hernandez. Both ambassadors will likely face a similar struggle.

“When you're already carrying extra weight, your body is working overtime,” Robaina says. “Big, bulky muscles get worked a lot carrying that weight. So they are often quite strong in heavy people. However the stabilizer muscles and smaller muscle groups are underworked. The ligaments and tendons have to catch up to the large muscles.”

Robaina says the trainers will work the ambassadors through certain motions and movements to fire up those connection points. Movements most people don't do with a typical workout. The ambassadors will use old-school techniques combined with new-age Pilates practices. All the Pilates movements are designed to strengthen the core and work the body from the center out.

From the moment a new client walks into the fitness studio, Robaina's goal is to make a personal connection. His philosophy is that a lifestyle change won't work if the connection isn't there.

“It's easy to focus on fitness during the 30 or 60 minutes we're together, but what's tough are the other 23 hours in the day,” he says. “Just because you walk out the door, that doesn't mean you're not my client any more. I don't mind if people call or text me. This isn't just about counting reps. I'm here to talk to them and guide them through this lifestyle change.”

When it comes to those other 23 hours a day, Robaina recommends keeping one thing in mind: Food is fuel, so just try to make the best possible choices for every meal. He challenges everyone to try cooking their own meals for one month.

“People don't always believe me when I say this. But try preparing all your meals from scratch for 30 days and see how you feel,” Robaina suggests. “I've had a couple clients try it, and they couldn't believe what a huge difference it makes. It's unreal what is added to our food. Avoid the pre-packaged stuff and actually cook for a month. Combine that with a good workout regimen and you will feel better than ever.”