



Life Fitness Management:

A Holistic Approach to Wellness

Written by **Sara Mullins**
Photography by **Lance C. Bell**

We know that exercise is good for us. We realize that we could lose weight, gain energy, improve our health and feel a whole lot better if we could just get moving. But it can be tough to figure out where and how to get started—and stay motivated.

The staff at Life Fitness Management, a state-of-the-art health club in LaVale, Md., understand. A trio of fitness aficionados—Amy Schwab Owens, Brenda Owens and Greg Dull—created the LFM concept in 2005 to help others reach their fitness goals.

“We are passionate about helping people create a healthy lifestyle,” says Amy. “Many people are intimidated by gyms, and think they have to be a size 2 and wear a teensy bikini to work out. We welcome people of all sizes and shapes. Everyone is different, and we work with the individual.”

Clients can select from a variety of specialty services, attend group classes or work out in the gym with a wide range of weight training and cardio equipment. Classes are included with the membership fee.



Ashlee Brown (left) and Tanya Ottaviani in one of the High Intensity Training Rooms.

Personalized services are customized to each client. Each new client is offered an initial assessment to determine a baseline measurement of his or her current fitness status as a way to gauge the efficacy of his or her workout program. Questionnaires are also used to gather information that helps the staff provide services best suited to each client.

What makes the LFM approach unique is a focus on what Brenda describes as “the whole person – physical, mental and spiritual. We put it all together. It’s a complete lifestyle approach.”

That approach reflects the combined expertise and synergy of the three owners. Amy, LFM’s president, is a licensed professional counselor and certified wellness coach. Greg, the previous manager of Kinetix Health Club and an x-ray technician, serves as LFM’s manager and chief personal trainer. Brenda, a certified nurse practitioner and professor at Allegany College of Maryland, provides nutritional counseling services.

The LFM concept began in 2005 when Amy, Greg and Brenda pooled their expertise to create LEAP, the Lifestyle Eating Activity Program. They soon realized the program’s potential as a model for weight loss and creating a whole new strategy for healthy living through the combination of personal training, nutrition and wellness. The LEAP program continues to be a mainstay of LFM.

“We decided to create a seamless experience for clients to achieve whole person fitness, a holistic mix including social connections and an environment that involves the emotional, mental and spiritual aspects of fitness,” Amy

says of LFM’s evolution. All three earned certification as personal trainers and began offering their services in a private office in the Kinetix building.

As their clientele grew, they saw the need for their own facility. Thus began an intensive planning process that resulted in the renovation of the former warehouse once

used by the now-defunct County Market, located just off the National Highway. The 14,000 square foot LFM facility just celebrated its fourth birthday in April. Clients enjoy easy access and plentiful parking in a relatively secluded area.

“People should feel nurtured and welcomed when they come in,” Amy says. The LFM facility design reflects this philosophy, with an attractive entry area featuring big windows and skylights, lots of wood, comfy lounge area—and an impressive bar that resembles a big smile. Offerings include all-natural, fat-free performance enhancing smoothies and juices, plus coffee and espresso drinks. Other amenities include a pro

shop, free wireless internet, and spacious, well appointed locker rooms offering showers equipped with personal care products, plus a sauna/steam room. Socializing is welcomed, even encouraged.

To the right of the entrance is the main gym area, featuring two levels with large windows for plentiful natural light, and a huge ceiling fan. Clients can choose from an impressive array of Human Sport and Star Trac strength-training equipment. The upper level offers a variety of cardio equipment – elliptical machines, treadmills,



Life Fitness Management offers a variety of cardio equipment.

stationary bikes and rowing machines, many with their own TVs. A spacious free weight area features a rubber padded floor, plus an assortment of dumbbells, workout stations, benches and assorted equipment to work every muscle. For those who prefer privacy, a smaller and more secluded gym area equipped with a small assortment of cardio and weight training items, plus TV, can be found to the left of the entrance.

Group classes are held in several specialty rooms to the rear of the facility. Schedules and offerings vary by month. Studios A and B feature hardwood floors and mirrors helpful for yoga, Zumba and Pilates. Fitness classes, including Les Mills Body Pump and Les Mills Body Combat, are held in the larger HIT (High Intensity Training) Room. Another room is equipped with stationary bikes dedicated to spinning classes. Each room has its own sound system, customized and maintained by Amy's husband Steve, a retired computer science professor who also serves as resident computer guru and lead barista/beverage consultant.

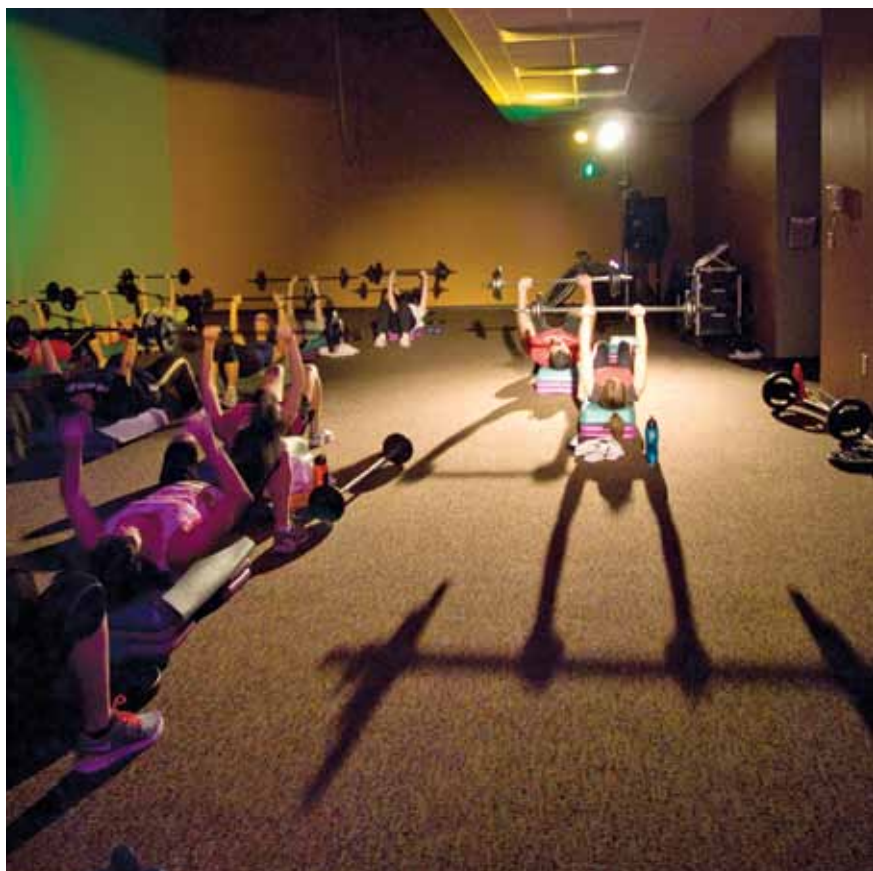
LFM features several specialty programs. The LFM Triathlon Club and Athletic Achievement Program are geared for those seeking a higher level of personal training for competition or personal goals. The Workplace Wellness program now has eight corporate members. A variety of massage services are also by appointment seven days a week.

A unique aspect of LFM is its commitment to support local farmers and artists as part of its dedication to optimal nutrition and overall wellness. Its annual Friday after Black Friday Event showcases local artists and farmers. Local honey, maple syrup, apple butter, ramp mustard and similar products are now available year-round.

Top photo (l to r): Heather Helmstetter, Melody Kentrus, and Shauna McQuade spinning.

Middle photo: Greg Dull leads a Body Pump.

Bottom photo: Gina Lindelof balances on the ball in a Core Strength Class.



“We want to meet clients’ needs and expectations,” says Greg. “We’ve survived the economic down-turn and now have close to 600 members. We started with about 100, and most of the originals are still here.”

LFM’s owners have been recognized for their efforts. They received the Allegany Chamber of Commerce Entrepreneurial Spirit Award for 2011. In 2010, Amy was one of three Cumberland women cited as one of Maryland’s Top 100 Women and a model of wellness by the Daily Record newspaper.

“It’s all about creating a healthy community,” says Amy. “We want to promote health and wellness inside and outside of our four walls.”



Top photo (l to r): Owners Brenda Owens, Greg Dull and Amy Schwab Owens.

Bottom photo (l to r): Amy Wollan, Danny Crites and Troy James; some of the staff at Life Fitness Management.

Top photo: Megan Foy on strength-training equipment.

Middle photo: Hoopla Class (Hula Hooping).
Bottom photo: Kaileigh Lamontagne (left) and Megan Foy in a Yoga Class.