

by Jill Taylor

School Daze

Recovering from summer break, many parents use extra time to improve their health.

School is back into full swing, and you can almost hear parents breathe a collective sigh of relief. Although kids are naturally sad to say goodbye to carefree summer days, the stress of organizing activities, shuffling little ones to summer camp, and planning perfect summer vacations are enough to drive even the most patient parents to dream of the day they'll have personal time again.

According to Maria Kugelman of Fitness Together at Bridge-Mill, fall marks the time that parents often begin to work on the goals they've put off for the summer, such as investing in their



PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROBIN NELSON

The Fitness Together team at the Bridgemill location is (from left) Maria Kugelman, Vanessa Barker, Mike Lowder, Shannon Papesic, Jennifer Caso and Mark Tidwell.

health. Kugelman, a mother of three, is also PTA President at Boston Elementary School, and works hard to keep nutrition and exercise in front of the teachers, parents and students.

For Kugelman, taking time out for her own passion is a necessity. "I've been working out my whole life and have been in the fitness industry for 20 years," she says. As a personal trainer, Kugelman has found that working out in a private studio is exactly what many people need to stay motivated to reach fitness goals, whether they want to feel better, look better, improve in sports, or all three. "I came to Fitness Together because I wanted to help people who really don't feel good about working out in front of a lot of other people. And of people who go to health clubs, about 90 percent don't know how to use fitness equipment, which also hurts their chances of success."

"When you have a personal trainer, you get support in a lot of different areas—nutrition, proper use of equipment, workout routine, encouragement, all of these things," Kugelman continues. "It's a one-on-one relationship that most of us need for goals that require hard work and dedication. And, in many ways, it's a friendship." The trainer, she explains, has to get to know each individual client on some level in order to learn what works for the client and what doesn't. For the client, working out in a private studio with a trusted fitness advisor can make the difference between success and wishful thinking.

Mark Tidwell, area manager for Fitness Together, agrees that people are more likely to succeed in their fitness goals when there's someone waiting at an appointed time just for them. "You're more likely to show up when someone is waiting on you. And a trainer is going to make sure you get what you're investing in."

Fitness Together at BridgeMill is unique, says Tidwell, not only because it offers



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personal, spa-like attention, but it is the only studio in Cherokee County that offers private training sessions. In addition, clients exercise in a room that is virtually secluded from every other part of the facility.

Kugelman, who believes exercise should be a family affair, sees adults burned out from work and parenthood gain a new lease on life through just a single session. "Many people don't realize how stressed out they are, and what a little bit of exercise can do to provide emotional and physical relief," she says. "Stress also makes people eat poorly—when you don't feel like you have two minutes to rub together, you tend to eat what's available instead of what's good for you. And this affects your kids, who learn your habits at a very early age."

Kugelman's message is ringing true for many parents, because children as young as 12 are now coming to Fitness Together to work on their personal goals. Some work to improve their appearance while others work to improve sports performance,

but the important thing, according to Kugelman, is that the kids are off the couch, improving their health and learning how to succeed.

"Parents so easily miss time with their children, because they grow up so fast. Having kids of my own, I see how easy it is to get caught up in stress and lose sight of what's really important," Kugelman says. "But kids need to know that there's much more to life than getting on the Internet or watching TV after school. Families that focus on a healthy lifestyle together have something in common, and develop a really strong bond."

For more information about Fitness Together at BridgeMill, or to schedule an appointment with a trainer, call 770-345-3883. You can also learn more online at www.ftbridgemill.com.

Jill Taylor is an Alpharetta-based freelance writer who specializes in medical and healthcare topics.