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New leisure time combos for fall

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(Created: Tuesday, July 31, 2007 11:43 PM CDT)

The time to register for Plano Parks and Recreation Leisure Courses is nearing and this season an abundance of new classes for preschool age, youths and adults have been added.

"We want to offer enough new stuff in order to keep up with current trends," said Amy Fortenberry, Plano recreation service manager. "Things change over time."

She said fitness has always been a high priority, but business and art classes have evolved and peaked community interest.

Liberty Recreation Center's Financial Instructor Wayne Fink said he developed a whole thrust of business classes because he discovered he couldn't depend on Social Security and Company Pensions for retirement.

"I came to this realization at a late stage in life," Fink said. "I wish someone would have taught me that at 20."

Fink added two new classes to his list: Advanced Fundamental Analysis and Investment Introduction. He said the advanced class was added in order to develop subjects further than he had time for in his beginning class.

"It's about taking companies' annual reports and dissecting their financial statements," Fink said. "We talk about infamous corporate blowups and touch on finer points for people to look at."

Fink said his investment class is for those who know nothing and he doesn't expect any prior knowledge.

"This class assumes you know absolutely nothing about investing," Fink said. "We will talk about various ways to invest, where their investment interests lie and what their solutions are."

While the business student's minds are brewing, the highly-requested fitness gurus will be pumping iron in a fun, yet productive way.

Fitness instructor Andrea Stewart, who offers a combination of classes including dance and fitness, said all of her classes are based on the premises of being healthy and that fitness can be fun.

"A lot of people dread working out, so some people need a group environment for motivation," Stewart said. "I suggest people look for something to benefit from the class other than just working out, whether it's learning a new skill or working out with friends."

Stewart incorporates dance and fitness in her classes and said she targets certain interest levels.

"I create classes that aren't typically available," Stewart said. "I like to make mine more of a workout where people leave hurting and sweating, but in a good way."

This season, Stewart added Body After Baby Exercise (B.A.B.E.) Training, which she said focuses on abdominal exercises and strength training for post-partum clients. She also added a class for mothers and daughters to enjoy together called Misfits. She said this class will focus on interval training.

"Most classes are age-group specific," Fortenberry said. "I think it is important to make connections between the parents and children. It is a good bonding time, focusing on one activity, but with so many side benefits."

Adults can also participate in other fitness and dance classes this season including Latin dancing, social

dancing, Kung Fu self defense.

For the little ones, new courses added include Decision Making for Kids, which will teach each child to think before acting or reacting. They will also learn how to trust adults and how to ask for help when they need it.

Fortenberry said instructor Linda Boldish is continually sharing new creative ideas. This season, Boldish is offering a variety of holiday arts and crafts for preschool kids and focuses on games, songs and fun activities to enhance opportunities for parent/child interactions while learning English grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation.

"I watch what the kids are doing and hear what they are saying," Boldish said. "I also listen to parents and what they want. Some want social classes and some want academic classes."

Boldish said you works mostly with preschool aged kids and said the most important aspect for kids 3 and under is developing their social skills.

"It is important for the really young ones to learn how to take turns and share," Boldish said. "If they learn these skills, then when they are 4 and 5 you will be able to do anything with them."

Boldish said since the classes are planned six months in advance, it is important to catch the trend before it is over by getting a lead of what is up and coming. She said she stays aware of upcoming movies, which usually set popular trends and planned activities based on them.

"I love being with kids and I love my job," Boldish said. "I feel like everyday there is something new happening and it's not boring."

Shake and Shimmy Spanish classes are also offered for 4-6 year olds, where they can learn Spanish while dancing to Latin music.

Many afterschool physical activities will be offered for the youth including basketball, racquetball, bowling, soccer, gymnastics and table tennis.

Fortenberry said interest in table tennis has exploded in the past 10 years.

"There are so many amazing individuals that have great talent and want to share their talents with the community," Fortenberry said.

Registration for Plano residents begin 8 a.m. Aug. 18. Non-residents can begin signing up at 6 a.m. Aug. 20.

Visit www.planoparks.org for information on rates and classes.

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