

Getting fit by training like an old-school boxer

By KARA HANSEN MURPHEY

Stacey Finnerty is used to new students holding back when learning how to properly punch.

"If I'm holding the focus mitts up and telling them to hit, women are usually OK ... but men sometimes do a double take," said Finnerty, the 5-foot-tall dynamo who, when not working as a real estate broker, leads boxing training classes at Fit For Life in West Linn. "After that it's no-holds-barred. I'll have somebody

pounding me with the mitts and I can handle it, and he knows I can."

It's a great way to relieve stress after a long day or at the end of the work week, she noted:

"It's a good way to let aggression out in a very controlled environment."

The classes last about 45 minutes on Mondays and Saturdays, and new students are always welcome, so long as they run through a short introduction with Finnerty and have the proper hand wraps and boxing gloves. She has coached people as young as 14 alongside folks well into their 60s.

The workouts are traditional training, for the most part, mixing bag work with cardiovascu-



Aside from providing a well-rounded workout, boxing is a great way to relieve stress, says Stacey Finnerty, whose boxing class is available twice each week at Fit For Life.

lar activity like shadow boxing, jumping rope and jogging, plus crunches and similar exercises.

"It's not kickboxing, it's not box aerobics, it's not Tae Bo," Finnerty explained. "It's old-school training."

"I think it's the best conditioning you can do," she added. "As far as hitting the bag, there's resistance. Then you do cardio with it. It's aerobic and anaerobic at the same time, and it's a really good way to get into shape and have fun."

Finnerty said she likes old-school techniques because, simply put, these methods work.

"It has always worked," she said. "You see some of these fighters – Ali, Joe Frazier – and see what great shape they're in. I don't mind implementing new

schools of thought, but the bottom line is, you're going to use your body for hitting, for doing push-ups, for doing sit-ups. Your body is probably the best resistance you have."

Finnerty got her start in the sport in the mid-1990s, when she took a class taught by a "Golden Glove," a title awarded to amateur boxing champs, in Lake Oswego.

Growing up the youngest in a family of four, she said she was a bit of a tomboy. She sometimes watched boxing matches with her dad, and she used to hit a friend of the family's speed bag. The gym class got her hooked.

"People look at me and don't get it, but I just kind of fell into it," she explained.

When the teacher was ready



Stacey Finnerty is a real estate broker by day, but she also throws a mean punch thanks to her years of experience with boxing training.

to retire, he coaxed Finnerty into making the move from student to teacher. She earned her coach's certification and led the class for a while before going on a long hiatus.

Then, about two years ago, she revived the class, bringing it to Fit For Life.

"I just love doing it," said Finnerty, who lives in West Linn. "I haven't been in the ring myself, but I've done a lot of training," including working with an Olympic hopeful.

"The class is built up from camaraderie. Everyone has a different skill level. That's one thing about boxing: At first it's intimidating, but once you get into it and you learn the moves, the proper punches, you feel confident. I see people's confidence build up."

While her current students are largely men, she has taught groups of mostly women in the past. She said she hopes more women will give boxing a shot and find it to be a fun, empowering workout.

"It seemed like a sport I would really enjoy, and it turned out I did," Finnerty said. "I got knocked into shape."

Etcetera

Fit for Life is a fitness center located at 5640 Hood St. in West Linn.

Members pay less for classes, but guests are also welcome.

Contact 503-655-7702 or visit fitforlifefitnesscenter.com for more information.