

Free Food & 76er's Dancers

What more could he want?

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By Jon Campisi



Working out is hard work, but so is having fun. Just ask Jami Appenzeller, publisher of PhillyFit Magazine, and, as I found out last weekend, ball of energy extraordinaire.

Jami and her crew dropped by Spring Mill Manor in Ivyland for their tri-annual “PhillyFit Bash,” an all-encompassing health and exercise informational expo.

And while the borough of Ivyland is quite small, the event was anything but. (A Spring Mill Manor employee who was handing out drinks casually remarked to me that around 2,000 or so were expected. In an email from Jami the next day, I found out it was more like 10,000).

So it shouldn’t come as any surprise that by the time I finally caught up with Jami (on my way out the door to search for my car parked amongst the mass of vehicles), I had already pretty much seen all there was to see — and tasted all there was to taste. That’s what was so enjoyable about the event; the food was all billed as “healthy,” so this journalist, who has perfected the eat-if-it’s-free outlook in covering assignments, didn’t feel the least bit guilty about taking seconds. And besides, I’m sure I burned everything off during the trek to my car.

And though I joke about the perks of the job, the Bash really was something to behold. Especially when I found out during our conversation later that Jami donates all proceeds to the March of Dimes and the SPCA, an action that, in my book, reaches the commendable level.

Yet the money isn’t really what it’s all about. And the fact that the free publication, (which I first came across on display at my own gym), is only a year-and-a-half-old, is impressive in itself.

“I work it 24-seven. I don’t leave any stone unturned,” the working mom said about her magazine, which covers Bucks, Montgomery, Philadelphia, Chester and Delaware counties.

And while the Bash itself had Jami running around tending to this, that and the other, she reminded me just what it was supposed to be.

“This is a party — this is a charity event,” Ms. Fitness said, noting that the success of the Bash isn’t measured by how much money was brought in, but rather by the fact that people with a common goal and interest came together and enjoyed themselves.

As I made my way through the packed crowd, I was impressed to see a wide variety of topics being represented by various vendors.

(It’s not just food that lures me in, all right? I do have other priorities).

My mom and old man were even exhibiting; the “financially fit” pitch for their financial planning business, Campisi Financial Network, fit right in with one of the goals of the Bash — to make sure one is in good shape in all aspects of one’s life.

As I continued, I came across beauty products and healthy pet food, jewelry and magazines. There were numerous demonstrations ranging from yoga to dancing to martial arts to self-defense.

And then there was the informational booth on the controversial Body Worlds exhibit running at the Franklin Institute. So I guess the Bash offered another first for me; the first time I got to touch a human lung. (Don’t worry, folks, I won’t make a habit of it. Besides, the organ was plastinated — that method that eccentric German artist/anatomist Dr.

Gunther von Hagens came up with to preserve body parts for educational purposes.)

And if you could believe it, I did chuckle at one point while standing over the display table. Not because of immaturity, but because some woman with her little boy, who couldn't have been more than 5 or 6, was trying to move along and the youngster wouldn't have any of it. She told me he wants to be a doctor someday; quite an entry into the world of biology. Just when they were about to resume their walking, the boy picked up what turned out to be a cross-section of a fatty, human forearm.

"That's why mommy works out six days a week," the mother told her son, being met with laughter by the rest of us. And then it was time to move on, for her, little doctor kindergartner, and me.

Walking through the venue was sort of surreal. There were muscle-bound folks wearing little in the way of clothing, and then there was some guy wearing a heavy, oversized costume of a muscle-bound man. I guess it just comes with the territory.

When I reached the party room, I got more than I bargained for. There were DJs playing music, ultra-fit girls from the Philadelphia 76ers dance squad doing unfathomable dance moves with their ultra-fit bodies, and, of course, adult beverages. But they only seemed to have Michelob Ultra, and new Michelob Ultra Amber. Go figure, a health expo that only has healthy booze. Oh, well.

Outside of the "party room" there were even more exhibitors. There was a guy talking sports medicine, another talking physical therapy and massage. And there were beauticians giving salon demonstrations such as hair coloring and extensions.

Beyond all this there was a lecture hall where passersby could learn a little bit about a lot of things with regard to health and exercise.

I must say, the PhillyFit Bash was like nothing I've ever experience before. But that's a good thing, and, if I could speak for her, I think that's what Jami may have been going for all along. The idea of getting people out, meeting others and learning new things is probably very appealing to this physical fitness guru.

In ending, I'd like to say thanks to Jami Appenzeller, for helping us to remember that we should take care of our bodies. After all, we're only in them for so long.

And one group that has clearly lived by these words are those girls from the 76ers dance team.

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