

FIT GRIT

Meet Six Locals Who Focus
on Wellness Despite Challenges

By Dawn Liles | Photos by LunahZon Photography

INJURY, LACK OF TIME AND ABSENCE OF MOTIVATION are popular excuses why many people abandon their fitness routines.

Yet, these Ballantyne-area residents prioritize exercise on their weekly calendars — no matter how busy they are or what challenges they face. Read on to see what inspires your neighbors of all ages to get fit and improve their health.





ANKUR SHAH

39, Pediatrician

Member, 9Round Ballantyne

“ With my roles as a husband, a physician in a medical practice and a father of two very young children, it’s easy to say I’m too busy to exercise. But I started to put on weight, had some back issues and knew I needed to do something consistently. I started here (9Round Ballantyne) about 18 months ago and have never wanted to quit. (Owners) Mark and Suzy made this experience transforming for me. The environment here is small and family friendly, and the workouts change daily. Three to five days a week I work out at 5 a.m. and often see the same people. My long-standing back issues have been reduced significantly since I’ve been working out. I’ve always eaten pretty healthy, but I’ve gotten better about portion control and eating more protein, which vegetarians don’t always get enough of. I’ve lost 15 pounds since April, but more importantly, I have increased energy and actually look forward to working out again. ”



NICK DECARLO

**24, Studying to Obtain his
Personal Training Certificate**

**Sales Associate,
Orangetheory Fitness**



“ I've always been an active guy, but my eating habits in college weren't the healthiest. By age 22, I weighed 315 pounds. My mom is into health food, and she made me realize you can't outrun a bad diet. You can easily get confused by all the information out there, so I keep my diet simple and basically drink only water. I lost 100 pounds in a year. I started working at Orangetheory, and I'm never bored working out, since the workouts change every day. The workout is half cardio based and half strength based and it has helped me develop lean muscle. For me, consistency is key; once you start to see things change, your motivation will definitely increase. ”



“ I have always worked out, but I've never been much of a runner. My friend DeeDee asked me if I wanted to join the Isabella Santos running team last year, but I declined due to intimidation of the distance. But this year she convinced me to try it, and I'm hooked. There are 150 of us on the team training for different half marathon races, but Coach Tom makes each of us feel individually important. I have always been thin but not muscular, so my trainer Betsy (Shuster) helped me to significantly increase my strength and muscle. I only weigh myself once a year at the doctor. I listen to my body and know I need to make a change if my clothes don't feel right. I drink mostly water or coffee and occasionally, Deep Eddy (vodka). It's all about balance! The older I get, the more I am willing to spend the money to invest in my health. I have a 4-year-old daughter and want to be able to keep up with her. ”

MARY SCHMITT

38, Works in Information Technology

Trains at The Ballantyne Hotel & Lodge



HARRY DILL

70, Retired Business Owner

Patient, Carolina Neurosurgery & Spine Associates

7.7 Golf Handicap

“ The love of golf has kept me actively in the game for 30 years. I've had back, rotator cuff and knee surgeries in order to keep living an active life. A PT (physical therapist) can get you started, but people have to be responsible for their own health and actually follow through and do the exercises prescribed for them. Every day I do a lot of stretches, core work and try and stick to a low-carb diet. I've lost 30 pounds, and being healthier helps me reach my goal every year: to shoot my age. ”



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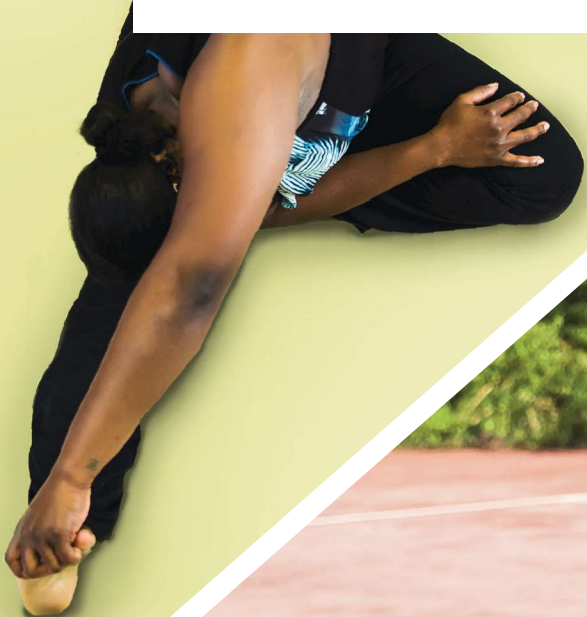


JENNIFER VAN DYKE-MENSAH

34, Co-owner, Green Village Children's Academy

Enjoys Going to Yoga One and Yoga2

“ Yoga and my faith have been constants for me. I was a competitive soccer player and by age 19 my knees were shot. While in college, I went into a depression, gained weight and hardly wanted to get off the couch. Yoga saved me when I could no longer run 10 miles a day. It only took me about a week to feel the benefits of practicing yoga. I do my best to eat organic, and I love to cook and try new foods. My business partner and I opened a new green and environmentally friendly child development center this past July. We teach yoga to the children and they love it! Kids get the same positive benefits from yoga that we do. ”





DAVID GUY

60, Retired Army Master Sergeant,
Guitar Player

Member, Blakeney Racquet and Swim Club

“ I attempt to stay active and positive. I suffer from various disorders and past injuries after serving in the military for almost 23 years, which hasn't always been easy. Being a part of this (tennis) club has in essence saved my life. I try to play mindful tennis or Zen, if you will. It helps keep me in the moment. The people keep me coming back; it's like my refuge. The social nature keeps me interested! ”

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