

Studio Zumba offers exercise 'party'

By Lauren Farnsworth

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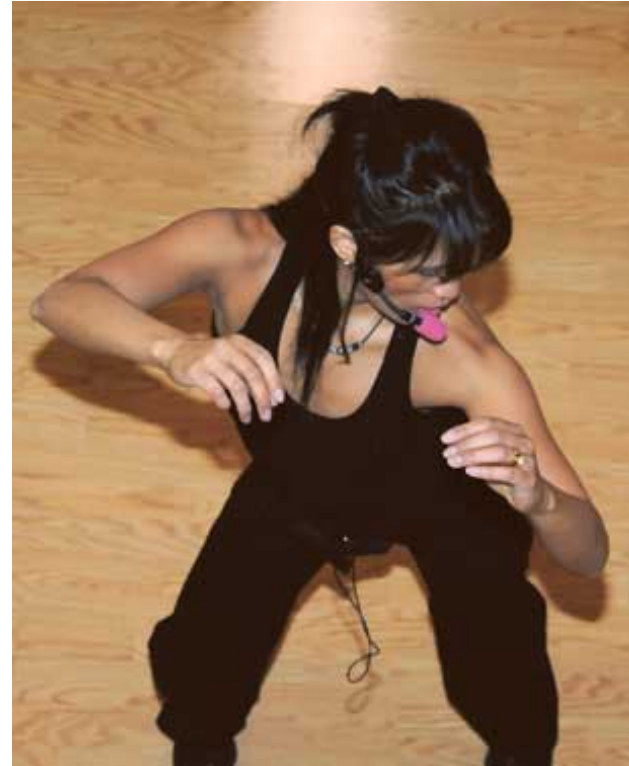
During his lunch break, FedEx driver Doug Jones exercises in the back of his truck. One day, his high-intensity workout drew the suspicion of security guards from the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton. The guards weren't sure what they would find as they approached the trembling vehicle. What they found was Doug, engaged in Zumba, a Latin exercise program sweeping across America.

"It's a party. You don't even know you're working out because it feels like a party," Jones said.

Zumba, which comes from a Colombian word, means to move fast and have fun. It is described as half dance and half fitness. Zumba incorporates dances such as the salsa, cha-cha, meringue, flamenco and many others with Latin beats to provide participants with a full-body workout.

Jones and his wife Joan, own Studio Zumba in Dayton, which hosts 35 Zumba classes a week. The studio, which they opened a little over a year ago, is the only Zumba Studio in the world. Joan and Doug are Zumba education specialists, a title they said belongs to 30 people worldwide.

Julie Oberhaus has taught Zumba at the YMCA in Maumee since September. Oberhaus said, "Zumba is the type of workout that anyone can do, but everyone wants to do it because it is so much fun," she said. "People need variety and Zumba is a class that is very different from your typical fitness class. You can get a total body workout while dancing and having fun."



Bonnie Blankinship, a Bowling Green State University employee and Zumba enthusiast, said Zumba is "sexv." She said the rhythm moves



participants along and it leaves her wanting more.

Although Studio Zumba has made Dayton, Ohio's center for Zumba, the Latin rhythm is gyrating into Northwest Ohio. The official Zumba Web site lists several locations which offer classes in Toledo and the surrounding areas.

BGSU graduate student Michelle Cook brought Zumba to the Bowling Green campus last fall. She said she learned to Zumba about two years ago and when she realized the university didn't offer it, she decided to start her own class.

During her 45-minute classes, hearts are pumping, toes are tapping, hips are swiveling and arms are flowing to the Latin beat.

"It's not about exercise alone," Joan Jones said. "There is something magical about it; it tricks you into working out."

According to Cook, anyone can Zumba. She recommends working on the correct form and then "adding a little flavor by incorporating arms and a lot of hip movements."

Zumba instructor Myra Marangi, who teaches at Lifestyles for Ladies in Maumee and at the YMCA in Perrysburg, believes the fan base will continue to grow.

"I've heard that Zumba is the next Richard Simmons craze, and I believe it," she said.

Last year, MSNBC reported that almost 1 million Americans had taken a Zumba class.

Zumba was created by Beto Perez in the 1990s. About to begin his exercise class, Perez realized he didn't have his music with him. Perez, originally from Colombia, improvised using the Latin music he found in his car.

Participants enjoyed the class so much that he decided to create a new fitness program, which he originally named Rumbacize. His program was brought to Miami, Fla., and the name was changed to Zumba.

The music, according to Marangi, is the reason people enjoy Zumba. She said the songs have different beats than the songs used in aerobics.

Kathleen Rarey, BGSU employee and Zumba participant, said she was drawn to Zumba because of the music. She said she really enjoys Latin music and Zumba seemed more fun than regular aerobics.

“Aerobics is more like a cheerleading routine; this is more like a dance class,” Rarey said.

Zumba utilizes slow and fast-paced songs and incorporates the entire body.

“There are many reasons to work out, but the best reason is to feel better and have a healthier lifestyle,” Oberhaus said. “If you can work out and have fun at the same time, then achieving your goals just seems that much easier.”

Although Zumba is fun, it can be challenging.

“Be prepared to be really sweaty,” Rarey said. “It looks like it will be easy, but it’s high energy and you get a really good workout.”

A typical Zumba workout can burn between 500 and 700 calories, according to instructors.

Instructor Maria Machado is an example of one Zumba success story. She began running to lose the weight she gained during pregnancy. Unhappy with the results, she switched to Zumba and she has been doing it ever since.

“I’ve completely transformed my body. I’ve lost over 20 pounds, flattened my stomach and have great sculpted arms,” she said.

However, Zumba is much more than a physical workout. Doug Jones said it is psychological and helps people to forget their worries.

“It’s like therapy — people have to have it,” he said.