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# The Science of Fitness and Wellness

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## Be Fit, Be Well

**I**n this publication we strive to do more than just identify and describe club trends. We also try to chart their distinctive trajectory of growth and development. Fitness is a prime example.

### **The trend begins**

It wasn't too many years ago that many clubs were still debating the wisdom of moving into this area. Some thought the competitive space was already populated and well served by commercial health clubs. Did fitness distract the club from its more important priorities such as golf or dining or social activities? Did clubs have the space, the money or the expertise to deliver this benefit successfully? And, finally, would members actually support and use fitness facilities?

### **The trend builds**

Build it and they will come ... or so it proved with fitness. There are numerous examples in which early adopters have witnessed nothing less than the transformation of their clubs. Utilization increased; social interaction picked up; and many of the clubs' older members, who had resisted the initial proposal, proved to be the most enthusiastic users. One early adopter's advice to clubs considering a similar move was to think big or else begin immediately on the inevitable second-phase expansion plans.

### **The trend broadens**

In this issue we consider how quickly and irrevocably this trend has become mainstream. What may have started as a more narrow pursuit of physical fitness and some minimal support for workout routines has now blossomed into a lifestyle orientation that encompasses a more integrated and comprehensive approach to health and wellness. Diet, recreation, spa—even integrative medicine—are part of a much bigger and ambitious movement. Consider Bonita Bay Club, featured in this issue, which is poised to unveil—not just a new fitness room—but a true lifestyle center housed in a 60,000 square foot building. Jonathan Club provides another compelling case study of how the health and wellness orientation of the membership and staff drives innovations and value-added services across virtually all the club's offerings.

### **The trend gets branded**

We look for clubs to increasingly “own” this important focus on member and staff well-being. Clubs like Desert Mountain are gathering many of its programs under a branded umbrella that increases awareness of club offerings while boosting engagement and loyalty. Palo Alto Hills Golf and Country Club has its aptly named Family Fitness Center, which combines state-of-the-art fitness facilities and programs for adults with one of the most progressive and innovative family programs in the country. This branding of well-being and linking it closely to the identity and positioning of the club is a powerful strategy for delivering lasting value.

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Photo courtesy of Turnberry Isle Miami



# Wellness: A Full-Time Lifestyle

## Opportunities for a Healthier Club

By Phillip G. Mike

Not all too long ago the concepts of health and fitness involved primarily going to the gym and eating healthy. Although a healthy lifestyle will always incorporate these two components, more recently it has included an all-day, everyday approach, full of opportunities to improve one's health in both body *and* mind—wellness. Epitomized by wearables (addressed later in this issue) that track everything from heart rates to sleep cycles, wellness activities include anything from acupuncture to Zumba and are rapidly gaining popularity across the country, the club industry and beyond, generating a staggering \$3.4 trillion in global revenue, reports the Global Spa & Wellness Summit (GSWS). Here are the latest trends that you could consider implementing at your club.

### A PERFECT STORM FOR A HOLISTIC APPROACH

Why is this happening now? GSWS chairman and CEO Susie Ellis calls the time we are living in now, a “perfect storm” for

wellness. Not only do we have an aging population with better awareness of “lifestyle” diseases due to increasingly sedentary and stressful living and working habits, but also increasing wealth and a desire by Boomers to seek effective preventative care—resulting in a fertile environment for increased wellness advancements.

### WELLNESS TOURISM

An increasingly popular haven for holism is seen in the tourism industry. And although some may be skeptical of the holistic approach, they cannot be skeptical of its financial impact. Wellness tourism—travel that proactively promotes health and well-being—was a \$494 billion industry worldwide 2013, reports GSWS, up almost 13 percent from 2012. In fact, hotel spa department revenue increased by 4.6 percent in 2013, reports PFK Consulting.

According to a study by SRI International, an independent research organization, and GSWS, the United States led the world's wellness tourism market in 2013 generating \$161.1

billion in international and domestic expenditures. Second on the list is Germany at \$42.2 billion. The study also predicts that the U.S. will enjoy a significant boom in wellness vacations, adding more than 46 million trips by 2017.

This is for good reason, too, as plenty of domestic and nearby international hotels and resorts have increasingly emphasized wellness programming. Blackberry Farm, a resort in Tennessee's Smoky Mountain, offers visitors a "Wellhouse" that includes activities like yoga in the woods, meditation and hiking. In Scottsdale, Ariz., Fairmont Princess offers guests the latest in body-fat exams and spa treatments ranging from stone massages and eucalyptus inhalation rooms, to therapeutic whirlpools and craniosacral therapy, a massage technique that relieves tension in the head, neck and spine. Fairmont also offers vitamin recommendations, a juicing bar and nutritional consultation with its coaches.

The Four Seasons has instituted an "energy" campaign, which offers healthy meal choices, rejuvenating spa treatments for jet-lagged travelers, sleep consultations, a variety of fitness programs in their gyms and even liquid detoxes. With privacy on the mind, Hotel Palomar in San Diego offers personal changing rooms instead of a locker room before entering one of seven private treatment suites. And Moon Palace Golf & Spa Resort in Cancun offers extensive room service. Guests can order in-room aromatherapy and have access to a 24-hour health conscious menu.

## WELLNESS FACILITIES

More than 52.9 million Americans are health club members at more than 32,000 health clubs, reports IHRSA, the International Health Racquet & Sportsclub Association. From yoga classes to traditional (bench-press machine) and nontraditional workout equipment (kettle balls), to physical therapy treatments and stress-relieving programming, fitness centers are a hotbed for the wellness trend, allowing members to customize their visit to their exact needs. And private club members also value fitness programming: NCA's *Navigating the Future* study reports that fitness facilities are the most important activity for an increasing number of club members, surpassing dining and golf.

Indoor golf facilities are growing in popularity, giving golfers the opportunity to hone their craft during cold winter months and enter golf season with confidence. These facilities can host simulators of the world's most prestigious courses, or place you on the edge of a real driving range without having to bare harsh conditions. They are equipped with the industry's latest tracking technology, measuring form and giving instant feedback to the player and his or her coach.

Spas are now approaching an unprecedented opportunity to expand into the mainstream while introducing a series of innovative treatments and strategies. Wellness spas across the country are partnering with traditional health care practitioners like nutritionists, physical therapists, physiologists and dermatologists, and less traditional ones like

## Top 10 Global Spa + Wellness Trends for 2015

- **Forest Bathing** – The Japanese concept of quietly walking and exploring, with all senses open to nature.
- **Cannabis** – New legislation has enabled sleek dispensaries to treat numerous medical conditions and stress as well as socially acceptable recreational use of marijuana.
- **Islamic Wellness** – Authentic and global practices include super grains and medicinal plants and spices, skincare products with camel's milk or black seed oil, hamman deep-cleansing rituals—some with mud or clay, and sand baths and sand massage tables.
- **Blue-Collar Wellness Programs** – A growing number of companies in industrial and service settings are providing access to healthy activities and programs.
- **Wellness Homes, Communities and Cities** – Pioneered by high-profile spa destinations that offered condos and villas, today comprehensive concepts for planned communities embrace not only human health, but also planet health.
- **My Fitness. My Tribe. My Life.** – The shifting fitness landscape now fuels the need for community and belonging with opportunities for interactions at "yoga in the park," neighborhood boot camps and competitive spin classes.
- **Spa on Arrival (& En Route)** – Travelers now plan spa treatments and other wellness offerings to help rejuvenate upon arrival and mitigate the stress and discomfort of traveling.
- **Hyper-Personalized Beauty** – Custom colors and scents and specially formulated moisturizers feed this trend of individualism. Bespoke cosmetics, computer-generated formulas and even blood tests that provide analysis for specific nutrients that impact your health are available.
- **Gut Reaction** – The science about our digestive systems ("microbiome") is growing as the opportunity to alter the make up of our guts can improve immunity and resilience, fight off serious disease, and increase wellness.
- **Beyond the Stars** – Luxury so superlative that it defies traditional measurements is leading to curated recommendations for spectacular offerings, making the 5-star rating the new baseline.

Source: 2015 Spafinder Wellness 365, Inc.

iridologists, thermographers and biofeedback providers, to tailor treatments to their clients' needs without overwhelming them in a traditional spa environment, say Mia Mackman, founder of Arizona Spa & Wellness Association. Tammy Pabel, founder of Spa Management Solutions says, "The future lies in the fusion of these services."

These fused wellness programs include culinary classes, holistic approaches, fitness challenges, flexibility and stress reduction, detoxification and nutrition courses, according to Pabel. For instance, nutritionists may offer classes where they teach the recipes and benefits of juicing, promoting healthy lifestyle habits in a fun class setting. Fitness instructors and other certified professionals tailor programs to their

clients helping them achieve their weight-loss goals and even reduce the need for surgery.

And as shown in the "Top Wellness Trends" sidebar, these programs are wide ranging, from quiet walks through the woods and Islamic therapies like sand baths, to makeup that will feel like it was, "made for you," reports Spa Wellness, Inc.

## PERSONAL COACHES

More Americans are taking control over their health, and increasingly that means hiring a personal trainer to stay on track. According to the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM), the fifth most popular trend in health and fitness is personal training. More and more students are majoring in

# The Science of Fitness and Wellness

By Jim Fisher, PhD and Jake Fisher

The wellness movement is fusing science, technology, medicine and lifestyle modifications to promote a holistic approach to a better quality of life. Club members are eagerly seeking a plethora of practical and integrated approaches to their wellness. These approaches are now customized to individuals' fitness levels and habits through precise measurements and data collection via high-tech equipment that previously were only available in the doctor's office or in the imaginations of science fiction authors.

Here are some of the advancements that are helping improve fitness, nutrition, healing and renewal through a variety of technological and preventative care.

**Spa Treatments** have always provided a sense of relaxation and wellness; however, today's spas are partnering with physicians and health practitioners to create comprehensive and alternative approaches to health. Some types of programs offered include weight management, stress reduction, hormone replacement therapy, enzyme therapy, detoxification and cleansing, along with medical components like intravenous infusions with extensive diagnostic and laboratory testing (state of the art genetic risk factor assessment, blood and salivary testing, telomere length determination, exercise EKG, carotid intimal sonogram, resting metabolic rate, body composition analysis), and one-on-one encounters with age management and integrative wellness practitioners. Additionally, traditional treatments like massage, bathes and sauna are redefined through jade massage tables, float bathes and infrared saunas. Turnberry Isle in Miami has partnered with Optimal Wellness Physicians to create wellness day packages for members and resort guests. The partnership offers members a combination of treatments that will promote health, balanced nutrition, hormones, body, mind and detoxification.

**Cardio-machines, treadmills, ellipticals, Stairmasters and**

**other stationary equipment** have enduring appeal and are common fixtures at all manner of fitness centers and exercise rooms. The role of technology is increasingly important in improving the user's experience with these machines, whether that is with a video monitor, Internet access, a simulated exercise environment (even low gravity options) or a link with your heart monitor. Research and technology's value-add is getting broader and deeper with each succeeding generation of equipment. For instance, research by fitness equipment manufacturers regularly results in new and better-designed products that are safer and provide more effective workouts. Bonita Bay Club, in equipping its new lifestyle center, is closely considering the design aesthetic of new equipment and how those machines might be configured in "pods" that then lead to better group and social interaction.

**Wearables** in the form of miniaturized bracelets, monitors, pedometers, glasses and watches represent one of the most intriguing and rapidly morphing categories for health and fitness applications. These wearables—wristbands like Fitbit, Jawbone Up and Nike Fuel—are placing a mirror before us in which we see our "quantified self." Millions are tracking their steps, their sleep, their heart rate, their glucose levels and their caloric intake. Increasingly, either medical or personal training expertise is interacting with all these data. Rapid feedback, behavioral "nudges" and positive reinforcement are all tools that can motivate the user and improve the likelihood of better outcomes. Not to be missed in all this is the prospect for making fitness more social and community oriented—which plays into a club's strong suit. Jonathan Club is using My Zone technology in its athletic and wellness programming. It brings personalized data into the picture, which dramatically increases the member's chances of achieving results and minimizes the likelihood of strain or over-exertion. Bio-data from off-site exercise can also be merged with club workouts to get a fuller picture of one's activities and overall health.

kinesiology and other related subjects to receive proper accreditation and specialization to join more than 250,000 other personal trainers in the U.S., says *IBISWorld*. The personal trainer industry has already reached \$10 billion annually and can be expected to grow as the market continues to meet consumers' increasing health demands.

Wellness coaching is also a growing industry, indicates ACSM. Although there is no official certifying body for this niche, they can be described as a personal trainer/psychologist hybrid. Wellness coaches provide one-on-one assistance by "integrating behavioral change science into health promotion, disease prevention and rehabilitation programs." Instead of only focusing on a client's physical health,



## What's Coming Down the Road

**Better technology.** In the short run, better technology will be delivered in the form of improved monitors and smartphone applications. These will become smaller, easier to use and will have more intelligence built into them. The big picture that big data provides of your own particular health and wellness profile will look less like a scrapbook and more like a motion picture. The Apple Watch (aka, iWatch) hit the market this spring. Look for it to provide a major impetus for health and exercise monitoring. The Apple platform (and eventually its Android counterpart) is a powerful stimulus for the further development of useful and inexpensive applications and will increasingly be a major component in the advancement of highly personalized approaches to exercise, fitness and medicine.

**Better testing.** InnerAge, a fitness-tracking company, analyzes a blood sample and scores it on five biomarkers to determine whether your body is younger or older than your chronological age. Test results suggest specific foods to improve your score. The test costs \$99 and the company recommends testing 2-3 times per year to chart progress and customize the optimal diet.

**Better integration.** At the macro or societal level, we look for the convergence of technology, fitness, diet and health. The medical establishment is undergoing profound changes that challenge traditional health care providers to step into the broader arena of population health management. Their aim in so doing is to enlist the patient-consumer participation in lifestyle modifications and holistic approaches that will reduce or minimize the impact of debilitating chronic diseases or prevent the premature advance of conditions that can chip away at an active lifestyle. Health care systems are looking for partners in

these ambitious behavioral programs. One such innovative collaboration in this issue of *Club Trends* has Bonita Bay Club bringing Lee Memorial Hospital into its new Lifestyle Center. More generally, we see clubs successfully incorporating fitness into myriad interests and pursuits: food, golf, tennis and wellness treatments. Technology is burrowing deeper into modern lifestyles, reinforcing and accelerating their effectiveness while also giving these activities a dimension that is simultaneously more personal and more social.

**Better results.** For clubs there will be a cascade of benefits flowing from a commitment to fitness, health and wellness. At one level, if members perceive their club as contributing to their own health and the enjoyment of an active life, then the value of that club membership grows. As the club membership becomes more engaged and healthier, then utilization and membership tenure will expand in a way that underscores the club's own robust financial health. Clubs that place fitness, health and well-being at the center of their agenda are also likely to enhance the appeal of the club to the next generation, which has made exercise and work-out programs an essential element of their lifestyles. Finally, as clubs build a culture of health and wellness, it inevitably impacts its own employment and human resource policies. This, in turn, will have a beneficial influence on club employees: their productivity and loyalty will be strengthened, as will their satisfaction and alignment with the aims of members.

The science of fitness and wellness is building, but we are still in its early stages of development. Now is the time for clubs to set their priorities accordingly and explore the range of opportunities that exist for supporting healthy lifestyles.



**Chef teaching children how to prepare healthy dishes.**

wellness coaches tailor their programming to their clients' values, needs and goals. These trainers focus on alleviating a variety of medical conditions from anxiety to chronic pain, using tactics such as meditation, keeping a journal and yoga to help their clients, as well as regular appointments.

Though the industry is still in its fledgling phase, ACSM predicts a strong year for wellness coaches in 2015. Using responses from more than 3,400 health and fitness professionals, ACSM's annual fitness trends survey saw wellness coaching move up in rank from 17th in 2014 to 13th in 2015.

## **CUSTOMIZED FITNESS**

Age-appropriate fitness sessions provide opportunities to focus on targeted groups with specific programs. ACSM lists "functional fitness" programs that focus on strength and balance training for Boomers on their top 10 list of trends.

These programs utilize trainers who are specifically qualified to work with older adults to provide the best and safest experience for older members. With the increasing number of joint replacements among Boomers, targeted physical therapy recovery programs are also growing quickly—sometimes in tandem with medical facilities.

For youth and teens, sports-centered training, which helps to foster confidence, provide exercise, and improve skills in chosen sports falls into ACSM's top 20 list. For Millennials and Gen X, boot camps, group exercise and outdoor activities all appeal to these groups who like the competitive and social nature of fitness.

This competitive factor comes into play with new technology that allows trainers to remotely monitor their clients' physical activities; encourages people to share their goals and accomplishments on social media; and even compete during a spin class with others by showing their performance on a "TorkBoard"—helping to keep the motivation factor high.

## **LIFESTYLE DIETS**

The way Americans eat is rapidly changing, too. More Americans are selecting healthier and more socially conscious items off the menu. Fast casual restaurants, the industry's fastest growing segment, have been popularized by Chipotle and Panera and feature healthy menus and locally sourced items such as Panera's half-turkey artichoke with a bowl of garden vegetable soup, or Chipotle's hormone-free and antibiotic-free cuts of meat and local veggies. On health.com's list of healthiest restaurants, Panera ranked second and Chipotle ranked sixth.

To some, a surprise on the list is McDonald's ranking at number eight. Although the fast food chain still serves some high-in-calorie items, it has overhauled its menu to appeal to the nation's changing priorities. Happy Meals can now be ordered with apple dippers and low-fat caramel, and recently McDonald's made a commitment to sourcing chickens raised with low levels of antibiotics and cows untreated with an artificial growth hormone.

Once considered "healthier" junk food alternatives, people also are straying from diet sodas. Worldwide, Diet Coke and Diet Pepsi sales have dropped nearly 20 percent in the last decade, reports Euromonitor. The culprit is the changing attitude against artificial sweeteners, and the lifestyle trend to drink more water (and new water products).

Healthy home cooking has become convenient and easier as well. Services like Blue Apron deliver proportioned farm-fresh ingredients to your home along with instructions on how to cook them. Users go online to order these ingredients ahead of time to avoid the temptation of ordering out.

Families strapped for time who still want to eat well are increasingly finding themselves hiring personal chefs. The industry is growing quickly, with 9,000 chefs serving 72,000 clients in the U.S. alone, and that number is predicted to double by 2020, reports the American Personal and Private



Chef Association. These chefs may specialize in various cuisines from around the world and tailor their menu to the customer's needs, often focusing on healthy meals for a reasonable price.

## **OBESITY**

Despite the country's overall gains in health awareness, obesity continues to be a health concern for many Americans. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) the obesity rate has continued to grow in recent years effecting 34.9 percent of Americans, raising their risk of heart disease, diabetes and other chronic conditions. Alone, obesity-related medical treatments cost between \$147 and \$210 billion a year says America's Health, a nonprofit organization focused on disease prevention. Among children, \$14.1 billion is spent on obesity-related medical treatments, but there have been signs that childhood obesity has gone down, declining by 40 percent among children ages two to five in recent years, reports the CDC.

Many programs have sprouted up to combat the trend for both children and adults. Nationally the government-sponsored Let's Move campaign actively encourages kids to get routine physical exercise while educating parents on healthy best practices, and locally groups like the Johnston Health Foundation of the University of North Carolina's health care system does the same. One approach it uses is the Healthy Kids Program, which offers children three 45-minute workouts a week, exercise "homework" and monthly meetings between families and dieticians for 12 weeks.

The program offers fun activities for children but also educates parents on nutrition and healthy eating and cooking habits. Healthy Kids gives qualifying children in the program scholarships based on financial need and health-risk factors.

Across the pond, England's national health care provider, the National Health Service, even goes so far as to offer free cooking and exercise classes to overweight Britains.

## **EMPLOYEE WELLNESS PROGRAMS**

Wellness programs have grown into a more than \$6 billion dollar industry, reports the RAND Corporation, a nonprofit policy research institution. More health care and wellness providers are partnering with businesses to provide programming that offers a full slate of benefits that cater to employees' health needs beyond the basics, in medical coverage.

The most common wellness offering is smoking cessation at 54 percent, reports Workforce Magazine, in conjunction with wellness program provider Virgin Pulse. The second most popular benefit offered by 53 percent of employers is physical activity programs. Depression management services ranks third at 52 percent—up 14 percent from 2013—followed by health club memberships offered by half of the employers surveyed.

According to the study though, the most highly sought after wellness benefit is a physical activity component (72%), followed by healthy onsite meals (65%) and on-site fitness facilities or classes (62%).

## **PREVENTATIVE CARE**

Wellness activities all serve as a form of preventative care, and the Affordable Care Act (ACA) has encouraged expanded preventative services as well. Its marketplace plans offer blood pressure screening, alcohol addiction counseling, depression counseling and diet counseling for adults at risk for chronic disease without charging a copayment, even if the deductible has not been met. In conjunction with its wellness program incentives for business-sponsored health insurance plans, the ACA has placed a strong emphasis on a wellness culture.

## **CONCLUSION**

The wellness industry covers a multitude of activities and lifestyles, giving individuals a near infinite amount of opportunities to improve their health and well-beings. These opportunities offer clubs a wealth of options to develop the right programming for their members. ♦



# Creating a Culture of Wellness at Your Club

By Frank Vain

In many ways it is back to the future for private clubs. When the first clubs were organized in the U.S. in the mid to late 1800s, one of the prime motivations was to offer a healthy respite away from increasingly congested cities. The industrial revolution was rapidly drawing people to our shores and into the cities. The country was evolving from its agrarian roots to a manufacturing giant. Cities were becoming increasingly congested and less livable and entrepreneurs and executives had the affluence and desire to get away.

Country clubs soon began sprouting up on the fringes of these urban centers. They offered a place where the wealthy could go to experience outdoor recreation and fresh country air. While sitting on an Adirondack on the clubhouse porch is an iconic image of the time, active pursuits were a big part of the mix. This included access to newly popular recreational pursuits like golf and tennis. Golf was of course

a walking game at that time and a set of tennis one of the faster paced sports of the day. A day in the country a hundred years ago had some similarities to a 21st century trip to the fitness center or spa.

Fast forward 125 years or so and we have a whole new definition of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and physical exercise. While they were slow to adapt to the fitness revolution of the 1980s, clubs have a natural inclination toward wellness. Extensive research on aging shows that people with plentiful social connections live longer than those without such a network. The evidence is also overwhelming that people who exercise live longer on average than those who don't. According to dozens of studies, regular physical activity reduces risk of heart disease, stroke, diabetes, some forms of cancer, and depression. Exercise may even help you stay mentally sharp into old age. The more mentally active a person is, the

DESERT HIGHLANDS

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Desert Highlands in Scottsdale, Ariz., provides a full program of wellness services, classes and amenities. Its newsletter highlights special lectures, workshops and activities for members.

longer it takes for accelerated memory decline to begin. Mental stimulation delays the start of memory decline, studies show. Along with mentally challenging games like bridge, board games and other mental exercises delay the onset of dementia-related memory decline in seniors.

### DESERT HIGHLANDS STANDS AS A MODEL HEALTHY CLUB

Desert Highlands Golf Club in Scottsdale was the first residential community in Arizona to be built around a country club and golf course. It wasn't just any golf course either. Designed by golf legend Jack Nicklaus, it sat at the pinnacle of the game when for a couple of years it was the host site for the Skins Game in the days when it featured the ultimate foursome of Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer, Gary Player and Lee Trevino playing for big money. Some 40 years after its founding, Desert Highlands is again a leader among clubs. While its golf course has withstood the test of time well, the Fitness and Wellness Center provides the membership an array of programs to strengthen their body, mind and spirit. It is increasingly the central element of the membership experience.

Led by a staff of seven fitness professionals the Wellness

Center at Desert Highlands is truly that, a center for wellness. The staff has extensive certifications in fitness, nutrition, training, rehab, senior fitness, massage, Pilates, Titleist Golf Performance Institute, muscle activation therapy and nutrition. The massage program includes a full range of deep tissue and sports massage. The combination of traditional exercise and wellness programs makes the Fitness and Wellness Center a place where members can work on their body, mind and spirit.

In addition to individual workouts, personal training and traditional exercise classes, Desert Highlands members can find on a regular basis nutrition

lectures, yoga workshops for active aging bodies, muscle activation techniques to ease chronic pain or overcome injuries that prevent them from enjoying their favorite recreational activities. Programs like T'ai Chi are part of the menu for their ability to reduce stress and promote balance. Finally, the lecture series includes a wide range of topics that help with active aging including balance and mental acuity even linking up the notion of how diet and exercise that can promote healthy living. Desert Highlands continues to provide members an outstanding golf experience in a truly magical setting while it's Fitness and Wellness Center focuses on keeping them healthy and enriched.

### PALO ALTO HILLS GOLF AND COUNTRY CLUB

In the fall of 2006, the leadership at Palo Alto Hills Golf and Country Club in Palo Alto, California set out to correct a number of existing facility deficiencies while also adding amenities that would position the club to grow and thrive in the high tech world of Silicon Valley. So while the plan addressed mundane things like the aged conditions found in the pool house wing and the lack of storage throughout the clubhouse, it also included the addition of a full service fitness center, complete with exercise studios and spa facilities. These new facilities substantially increased the club's offerings well beyond its traditional golf and dining functions, and by themselves would have been a significant expansion of the club's mission.

During the design process, the strategy behind the facility expansion continued to evolve in response to member feedback about the desire to make the club more family friendly. The Committee and General Manager Dirk

Zander fully embraced this feedback and ran with the idea of creating a truly family-programmed environment. Completed in 2010, the new south wing of the club is now called the Family Fitness Center and combines state of the art fitness facilities and programs for adults with one of the most progressive and innovative family programs in the country.

Palo Alto Hills continues to evolve and grow as members express new desires. The spa aspect of the Family Fitness Centers has been one of the surprise elements here. While a four-room spa with adjacent quiet room was thought to be a nice feature of the development, it has increasingly become a more important part of the club's expansion into fitness and wellness. An unexpected program in the past year has been the emergence of acupuncture. Initially offered in response to limited requests, it has become one of the fastest growing amenities in the club. With a total environment of fitness, training, classes, massage, acupuncture and family programs, Palo Alto continue to grow membership and services. The initiation fee is rising and all membership categories are at their cap.

## TURNBERRY ISLE MIAMI

Tammy Pahel is the founder of Spa Management Solutions and the spa director for Turnberry Isle in Miami. She specializes in resort spa development and wellness integration. Tammy has found that many clubs express interest in participating in medical-wellness programs, but they struggle to get the process started. To aid clubs in this process, she has designed strategies and plans for creating and offering a complete health experience for members as well as how to connect with local health practitioners to move the club beyond traditional fitness and into full wellness solutions.

As Pahel sees it, the opportunity for clubs arises in that many club members are seeking a better more practical approach to wellness. As is the case throughout society, club members have come to realize a great deal of their health and quality of life is within their own control. While most of them have the financial means to enjoy life to the fullest, this isn't achievable without physical well-being. Pahel points to medical research studies that show that 80-90 percent of an individual's health is determined by lifestyle choices and only 10-20 percent is controlled by genetics. With the U.S. population continuing to age and degenerative diseases more prevalent, the demand for wellness options will continue to rise.

Educating members about the factors behind healthy lifestyles is key, which is why Spa Management Solutions offers an extensive lecture series featuring team members from each aspect of the wellness spectrum, including physicians, local health professionals, trainers and others from the spa staff. The team's message is that lifestyle challenges including poor nutrition, stress, sedentary lifestyles and improper sleep are all modifiable risk factors



for chronic disease. They can show how up to 80 percent of heart disease and 90 percent of type 2 diabetes, and half of all cancers are preventable with better lifestyle choices. Managing stress is also a key component of a healthy life. Some studies suggest that reducing stress can even reverse unhealthy conditions. Yoga and other mind-body programs are proven stress reducers.

Pahel and her team have identified the spa as the element of the club that provides the best atmosphere for making proper life choices. Members enter the spa with a mindset of relaxation instead of the tension they feel when they make the trip to a doctor's office. Since the spa is already offering wellness, healing and renewal, the next obvious step is to combine this with education and programs focusing on prevention. The result is a new visionary environment that combines traditional spa offerings like exercise, massage and aesthetics with the services of preventive care professionals. The aggregate package puts the club in position not only to serve as the members' exercise center but also the point of departure for their wellness journey.

Turnberry Isle has partnered with Optimal Wellness Physicians to create wellness day packages for 980 members and resort guests. In order to meet the new needs of members, Spa Management Solutions and Turnberry Isle staff worked with Dr. Ellen Lebow to organize medical and spa services into wellness day packages as well as a la carte services. Dr. Lebow has spent the last several years positioning herself in the field of Age Management and Regenerative Medicine. Her partnership with the club has allowed her to offer members a combination that she knows will truly achieve health, balanced nutrition, hormones, body,



**Top: Massage treatment at Turnberry Isle Miami**

**Bottom: Japanese anti-stress spa treatment**  
*Photo courtesy of Unique Hotels*

mind and detoxification. The packages include weight management, vital living and stress management, bio-identical hormone replacement therapy, heart health, enzyme therapy (gastrointestinal malfunctions) and detoxification and cleansing programming.

Turnberry members find that the spa environment combined with medical assessments and treatments offers the perfect setting with personal trainers, exercise programs including yoga, massage therapy and other spa services. The addition of medical services allows the spa to provide the members myriad wellness opportunities.

Under the direction of Spa Management Solutions and Dr. Lebow, Turnberry Isle has created a synergistic combination of health, fitness, spa and beauty. Members now have access to physicians and medical personnel with the mindset of prevention and wellness with the merging of a great variety of services to best accomplish this for each member. This new environment is a true holistic center for wellness where members can look healthy, feel healthy and be healthy.



## THE HEALTHY CLUB WILL BE THE NEW STANDARD

While golf formed the identity of the modern country club, health, fitness and wellness will be the overarching characteristic of the future club. This is in response to the greater awareness that exists throughout society for just how much control and influence people have over their physical and mental well-being. And while the golf culture for a time replaced wellness as a key element of the membership experience, we are simply returning to our roots with this renewed emphasis on health. It's why most clubs started and it will be a strategic pillar supporting their relevance and success in the future. ♦



# Weaving Wellness into the Club Fabric

By Bill McMahon, Sr., AIA, OAA

As we look at life around us in 2015, one issue that is everywhere is a concern and goal to have a healthy lifestyle. We see it in the food we eat and how it is prepared. We see it in everyday life with less smoking, less hard drinking, better food choices and pursuit of healthy recreation that keeps the body as active as the brain in our high tech world. Who would have thought that Whole Foods could sell groceries at a premium just because they were grown organically? How many predicted consumers' desire to pay trainers to direct their exercise or to purchase tech devices to record their daily steps? Today, society values health, feeling good and living longer. Such is the world we live in. Such is the world clubs must serve.

Private clubs started to recognize this new emphasis on health about 15 to 20 years ago when a few progressive country clubs like Boca West added their first fitness facility. Yes, there were the doubters on the fitness trend, and believe it or not, there are still many top clubs in North America whose old guard members still disdain a fitness facility. However, as Bob Dylan said, "The times are a-changing." Modern clubs that promote health and wellness lifestyles are attracting the next generation of members as well as retaining the older members who have found the closest thing to a fountain of youth.

The clubs of yesteryear—where members ate too much, drank too much and smoked too much—are quickly fading into history. Now, the whole fabric of club offerings is being

viewed through the lens of a healthy lifestyle philosophy. Is this just another fad or trend? Probably not, since the results from healthy living are so rewarding and enjoyable.

## HEALTHY LIVING IS UNIFYING CLUB OFFERINGS

When seen through the perspective of promoting good health and very enjoyable lifestyles, clubs are integrating all activities to achieve a common health goal. The trend started when clubs began adding fitness equipment in small increments, sometimes just one treadmill in each locker room, just a way to stick a toe into the fitness water. Next came limited programming and small, coed fitness facilities with five or more machines and some free weights. From a facility targeted to the "35 and younger crowd," clubs continued enhancing and promoting fitness and wellness by adding group activity studios and doubling and tripling cardio exercise areas. Today good fitness facilities are uniformly popular to all age groups with younger and older members rating fitness uniformly important.

The health and wellness culture is affecting all club offerings. Clubs are providing year-round recreation opportunities for the seasonal sports of golf, swim and tennis, and adapted to make them much more health friendly. For golf, a renewed emphasis on walking is getting so popular some clubs have even tried to levy a walking fee to

make up for the loss of cart revenue. Swimming programs have been expanded into water aerobics and water polo teams, and tennis has been expanded into less strenuous racquet games that keep members active well into their golden years, such as paddle tennis, pickleball and introductory versions of tennis for children—as well as adding cardio tennis to pump up conditioning for the sport.

Fitness is being offered in many new ways to improve members' ability in all sports. The emphasis today is not just to build a facility, but also to offer the programs and professional staff to properly run them. Year-round activities attract members and their families to the club all year long. Golfers in northern climates play paddle tennis in the winter. Hiking trails provide year-round use for members of all ages. Indoor and outdoor golf practice facilities help golfers improve their game during the offseason via year-round coaching and access to high-tech performance tracking equipment. Culinary programs offer delicious foods that are actually good for you. And don't forget that feeling good and enjoying life at the club is also a life extender—happy people live longer and better.

Progressive clubs with health and wellness offerings in southern locations like Club Pelican Bay in Naples, Fla., are adding both fitness and spa in their new clubhouse facilities. Boca West and Desert Highlands in Scottsdale are providing every conceivable health and wellness offering in truly outstanding facilities and with truly outstanding staff. And yet it is still surprising to find many good clubs ignoring what is happening in the ever-changing world in which we live. One North Carolina club board continues its “golf only” mission of spending everything for golf and leaving dining, pool, tennis and fitness to languish. Soon a new Lifetime Fitness facility will open a half-mile down the road. By the time this club wakes up to the reality that increasingly members are seeking more than just golf, it may be too late.

## THE WELLNESS CLUB OF THE FUTURE

The wellness-oriented club of the future will be the traditional country club, the city athletic club and the urban country club without a golf course; but it will have a wellness goal in its mission. The key ingredients for such clubs are unified in a wellness philosophy for all offerings, and they include:

- Providing delicious, healthy food.
- Providing year-round recreation offerings with facilities and programs for fitness and training.
- Providing a wide array of recreation that might include golf practice facilities, tennis (indoor and outdoor), paddle tennis, winter sports in Northern climates, pickleball, bocce, croquet, team sports facilities for children (supported by gymnasiums and outdoor fields), expanded racquets programs like for squash, indoor and outdoor swimming pools that promote aquatic fitness programs and swim teams, activities for the older crowd (card playing, lectures—yes, the mind is important to cultivate for health), and finally physical therapy programs that can be operated through partnerships with local hospitals or medical groups.

As noted above, there is great potential for clubs to break out of their old shells and to embrace the health and wellness that is all around. Clubs that have done this are prospering. Clubs proposing such changes are finding ready acceptance from existing members and are attracting new members. Let's get private clubs back into the main stream of society. The health and wellness theme is one of the best ways to do it. If clubs become the center of each person's life again, the membership issues of the past will disappear—but only if club boards listen to all their members and professional staff.

Let's follow the leaders—including some of leading clubs embracing health and wellness today presented throughout this issue of *Club Trends*. ♦

## Clubs Leading the Way to Wellness

- **Denver Country Club** with 800+ members, offering full service country club and city club amenities year-round with a strong health and wellness program for all ages. Special features of the program include a full-time dietitian on staff, special weight loss and control programs, full-time youth director developing programs, expanding recreation offerings to include paddle tennis, pickleball and bocce, new programs for family golf/promotion of walking golf and extensive fitness/training and conditioning programs.
- **John's Island Club** with its 1,370 members in Vero Beach, Florida, offering an extensive health and wellness program with fitness, spa, massage and physical therapy services. Innovative wellness offerings include Spa Week with a fitness emphasis, beach yoga, Warrior Dash (inclusive of running/obstacle course/swim/sand crawl) and dietary emphasis on healthy dining.
- **Wellesley Country Club** with its 720 members in the Boston suburb offering a year-round health and wellness emphasis with its fitness facility, indoor and outdoor tennis, indoor and outdoor golf practice facilities, development of new six-hole family short golf course and coordination of healthy dietary offerings.



Fresh, organic ingredients from Jonathan Club's rooftop garden

## FIT FOR LIFE: Jonathan Club

By Jim Fisher, PhD

Jonathan Club, located in southern California has both a Town Club situated in the bustling urban core of Los Angeles, and a Beach Club that is bathed in the sunlight and gentle Pacific breezes of Santa Monica. The San Andreas fault-line may lurk beneath the surface, but this area is also the epicenter of big, important lifestyle trends that are just as likely to shake the cultural landscape. So what is going on at this premier club?

First, you might be surprised to find that Jonathan Club's Town Club has a fifth floor garden roof in the heart of L.A.—and not a symbolic, decorative urban garden, either. This is a garden that might be more accurately labeled a productive farming venture. It has the scale: 2,800 square feet and 42 usable beds. It produces dozens of varieties of fruits and



vegetables: lemons, oranges, eggplants, figs, tomatoes, spinach, cilantro, sage and other herbs. It yields more than \$100,000 in food and beverage ingredients. This “farmscape” may be the first of its kind in Los Angeles, but it won't be the last. Watch for one coming to a club near you.

Jonathan Club, however, is a harbinger of things that extend beyond agricultural and its related expression in food. The club recognizes that the interest and commitment to a healthy and sustainable food cycle point to concerns that are both bigger and broader. These involve quality of life issues that organize around aspirations for wellness, for worthwhile pursuits and for participation in a broader social context that is both fun and enriching.

Thus the success of Jonathan Club and others like it traces to its “fit” with the lifestyle needs of its members and its capacity to open up new possibilities based on a thorough under-

standing of their aspirations for a well-balanced life. In this way the club becomes not an accessory to a successful life, but an essential means to that end. This is the irreducible value proposition of the modern club.

Jonathan Club does not have a formulaic approach to achieving these high levels of salience and relevance, but there are several foundational elements. Let's highlight a few:

**Nurture important values.** Traditional values can find expansion and new expression however. California has led the way in fashioning lifestyle adaptations. In the past, these have often reflected our preference for informality and physicality, but now we increasingly see these established club activities give new meaning and application. Thus, Jonathan Club has been at the vanguard of an important renewal of the private club industry: taking clubs' longstanding association with physical and athletic pursuits and linking them to something bigger, namely, an enduring need for continued good health and a sustainable lifestyle. Run down Jonathan Club's organizational chart or management departments and you'll find a unifying and holistic emphasis: as in Athletics and Wellness. Something new is sidling up to the old in a way that makes sense that just fits.

**Connect the dots.** Though Jonathan Club consistently delivers extraordinary experiences, these are not typically one-off events. Matthew Allnatt, the club's general manager/COO, explains that the club's many offerings have an important coherence and unity: "We start simple and build." The club's approach to wellness is "in front of everything we do." Physical exercise, recreational activities and athletic endeavors are all well supported with a highly trained staff and premium facilities, but notions of wellness extend into other areas like dining, spa services and education. They observe here that physical fitness is rapidly expanding with applications that focus on the mind-body connection. Wellness has a mental and even spiritual dimension that Jonathan Club unapologetically cultivates. While Allnatt will grant that L.A. has created more than a few stressful environments, Jonathan Club is not one on them—and that's by design.

**Fitness.** Jonathan Club is using My Zone technology in its athletic and wellness programming. It brings personalized data into the picture, which dramatically increases the member's chances of achieving results and minimizes the likelihood of strain or over-exertion. Bio-data from off-site exercise can also be merged with club workouts to get a fuller picture of one's activities and overall health.

**Invest in people.** Director of Athletics and Wellness Alan Krugel credits his talented staff with a unique capacity to meld passion with expertise in areas ranging from Pilates to paddle tennis to personal training. The connection between athletics and wellness gets expressed in myriad ways. Jonathan Club has its members covered from head to toe, with Pilates instruction bolstered via "Posture Check 101" and Spa Director Bill Takahashi pitching in to do his part in the *Body Sustainability Series* with a session on "Happy Feet"—all part



**Jonathan Club offers an array of fitness equipment in its Athletics and Wellness facilities**

of a larger series of membership education workshops organized under the philosophy and techniques of Yamuna Body Rolling.

The club's investment in people is not just limited to members. Jonathan Club's culture of health and wellness winds its way deep into all of its 500 employees, who similarly internalize and benefit from a heightened awareness of the habits of healthy living, which includes robust physical activity as well as nutrition and education. The club clearly views its

employees as family and works to support their aspirations as well.

**Look around the corner.** Jonathan Club has done an admirable job of anticipating important trends and responding to them in ways that have both preserved and enhanced its core identity and values. It's hard to put a finger on any single key to this organizational nimbleness. Leadership and vision are key ingredients, as is careful planning. To these sound management principles, a certain openness to the future coupled with a generosity of spirit and zest for life adds further momentum to the entire project. It ushers in new possibilities that are vital and exciting. Jonathan Club, with its embodiment of this outlook, offers others in the private club world a compelling vision of this altogether attractive and sustainable

future. In sum, Jonathan Club's health and wellness focus is farsighted. In its attention to the needs of not only its members but also those of its employees, the club is able to anticipate emergent priorities, to see around those corners and hasten the arrival of new approaches that enliven the time-honored traditions and values of the club. This 360° view of the current scene gives club leadership and management the perspective it needs to make the connections between this program and that department in order to ultimately deliver an integrated experience that reflects the club's mission and forward-looking spirit. It's an approach in step with the time, in touch with members' aspirations and in keeping with the distinctive offerings that a private club is uniquely positioned to deliver. It all fits together. ♦

## Urban and Beach Retreats

The spa is a great place to pamper yourself, but at Jonathan Club's Urban and Beach Retreats, it's also a place to promote the benefits of wellness. Massage therapy (over a half-dozen types), skin care (including "healthy glow" and LED light anti-aging) and body treatments complement the more typical offerings like manicures and pedicures. The Urban Retreat offers a full line of 30-minute services and lunch "on the run" for members with limited time.

The spa also embodies Matthew Allnatt's "start simple and build" philosophy. It has grown in popularity to the point that it's clearly not just for women anymore. There is, for example, the "Gentleman's Organic Treat" (a facial) and also the Sports Massage, which "enhances pre-event performance and rehabilitates post-event injuries." It reaches across the generations with yet another massage approach—this one Thai—that enhances flexibility, and, when it comes to loving your skin, there is the "Never Too Soon" option aimed at the pre-teen crowd.



Jonathan Club's treatment rooms for body treatments and massage therapy.



## REVITALIZATION AND REINVENTION

# Bonita Bay Club's Lifestyle Center

*Photo courtesy of Bonita Bay Club*

*By Jim Fisher, PhD*

The financial crisis that rocked the world economy in 2008 was especially devastating for the real estate market, with builders, developers and many others with a stake in the construction industry suffering losses of such magnitude that bankruptcy and exit often appeared the only feasible recourse.

The Bonita Bay Group was one such developer, with a showcase development in southwest Florida located between Naples to the south and Fort Myers to the north. Caught in the vise of a collapsing real estate market and disgruntled residents, the developer was able to negotiate a sale of the club assets to the community members in 2010, a membership that then proceeded to accomplish a remarkable turnaround.

With some 2,000 members, Bonita Bay Club is now the largest private club in its area. The path back to sound financial health and strong membership engagement has required a creative and sustainable balance between the club's



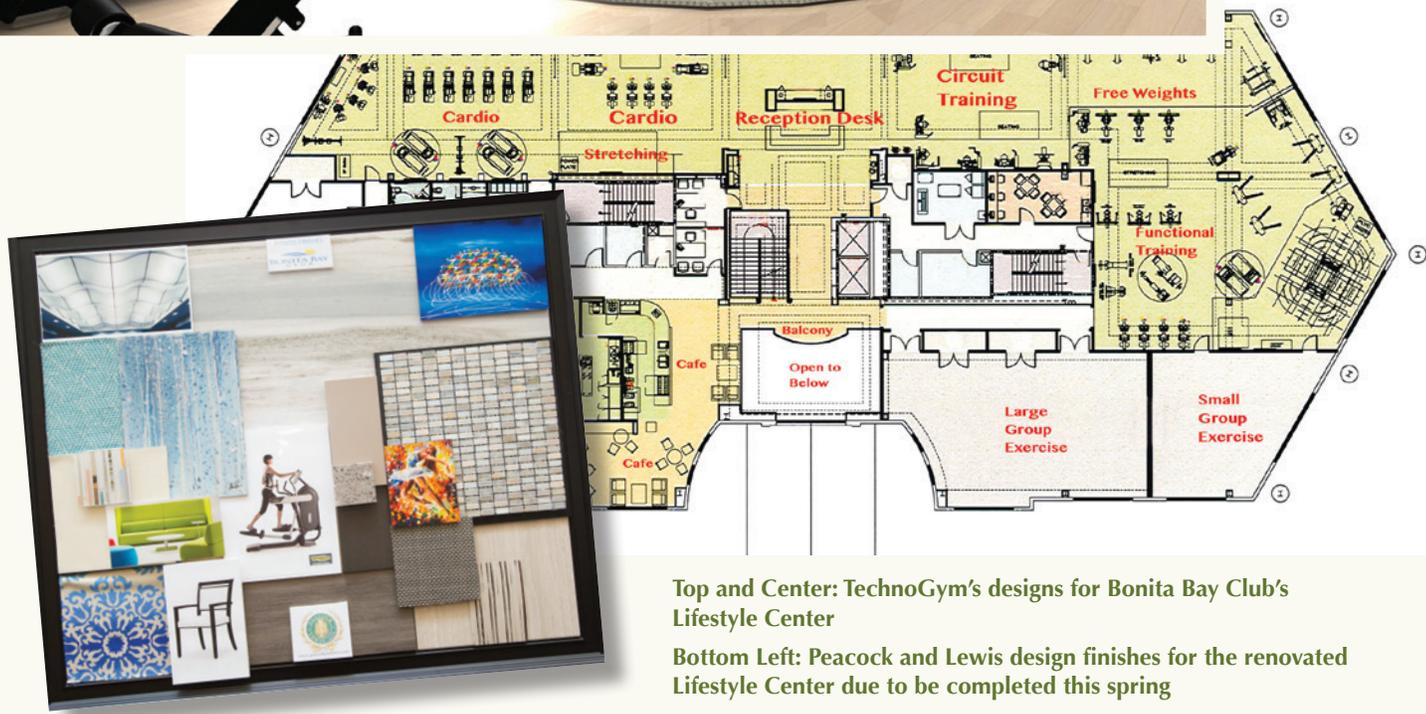
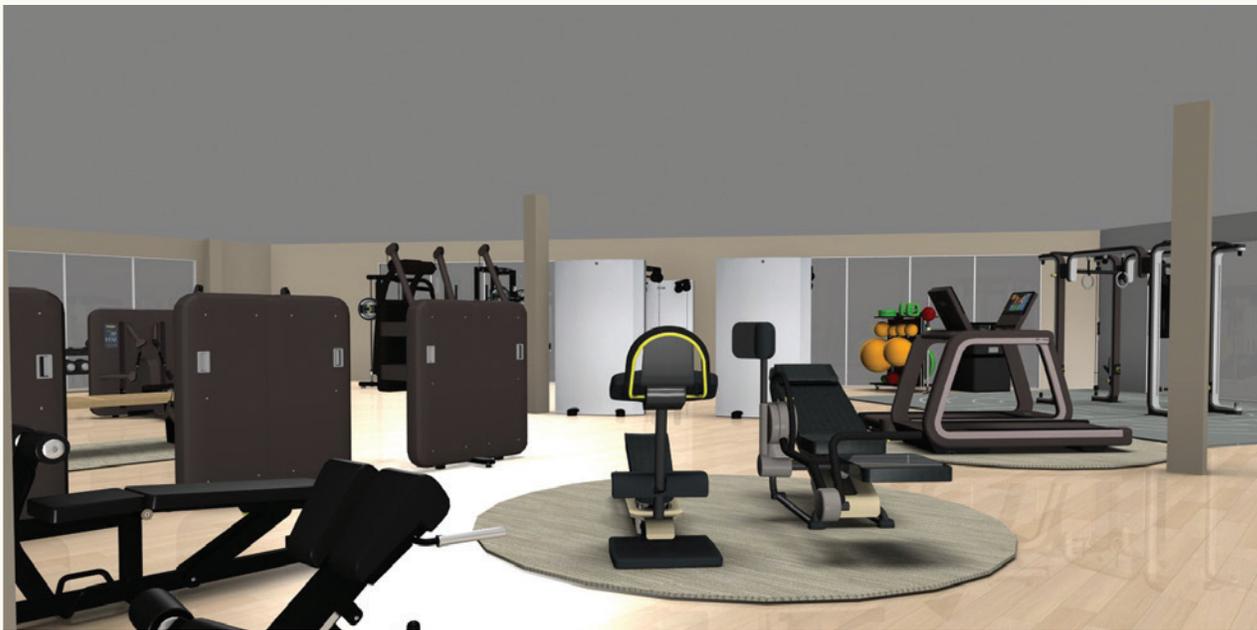
strong golf heritage and new and emerging needs.

The current general manager, Dan Miles, puts his finger on the key ingredient that drove the revival, crediting the club's leadership with a clear vision. It was the board in particular that went all-in, Miles explains, signing on for "a very aggressive rehabilitation, renovation, and upgrade of all of the facilities."

Such improvements fell under a series of stepwise vision projects, the first of which, labeled Vision 2013, focused on the clubhouse dining facilities and golf infrastructure to the tune of about \$12 million.

Next up was Vision 2015, which allocated \$17 million toward a new tennis facility (adding to Bonita's 18 preexisting courts) with an exhibition court, stadium seating, and café; a new aquatic center that is due for completion in 2016; and, most significantly, a lifestyle center about to debut this spring.

"Make no mistake, we are a golf club," says Miles. But throughout his tenure and especially when talking with potential members, the invariably reoccurring question



Top and Center: TechnoGym’s designs for Bonita Bay Club’s Lifestyle Center

Bottom Left: Peacock and Lewis design finishes for the renovated Lifestyle Center due to be completed this spring

presented itself: “What am I going to do, or what is my family going to do, when I’m not playing golf?”

### TAKING A MULLIGAN: BONITA BAY TEES UP BETTER HEALTH

For a club that has long prided itself on its top-flight golf offering, this newfound emphasis on health is perhaps a new standard by which other clubs will be measured.

Next to the first tee is the club’s “big idea,” the aptly named Bonita Bay Club’s Lifestyle Center. It is built on the bedrock that health and wellness are lifelong pursuits, representing enduring needs and wants embraced by Bonita’s core demographic.

Bottom line: Fitness and health are not fads. Fads die out; the desire to be your best and to grow stronger does not. Members are learning more and more about how to maximize their overall vitality and fitness and, by extension, their physical, mental and spiritual well-being.

While all clubs have a niche interest that caters to golf or some other avid pursuit, a common denominator is that people want to look and feel better and to truly thrive across the many stages of life.

### INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE

The purchase and subsequent creation of Bonita Bay Club’s Lifestyle Center—a 60,000-square-foot building (30,000 of

which is operated exclusively by Bonita Bay) will be fully renovated this spring—represents a conjunction not just of age and wealth demographics, but also more broadly of the club and health industry as a whole.

A watchword for this phenomenon might well be called *integrative medicine*, a trend in medicine that is casting a wide net to catch best practices from many sources, including the facilitation of the body's innate healing powers. Good health has a certain self-cultivated quality and therefore the promotion of our own well-being will most likely be the integrated processes enlisting the support of our daily routines—habits, fitness, diet and other lifestyle patterns.

At the same time context and environment are important. Our surroundings and our social interactions can contribute mightily to a sense of well-being and our motivation to move out along the path toward better health. Integrative medicine is a big tent—bridging eastern and western approaches, traditional and alternative medicine. It does not necessarily shun medications or surgery, but does shift the focus away from a reactive response to acute illness toward a more preemptive emphasis on restorative health.

"Integrated medicine, especially from the standpoint of primary care, rehabilitation, and physical therapy, is really the next step for members who are beginning to look at their health and wellness in a different frame of mind. And it's something we're extremely excited about," says Fred Fung, Bonita Bay's assistant general manager.

So how does Bonita Bay Club's Lifestyle Center accomplish this?

For one thing, they are upping the ante when it comes to health knowledge and medical expertise. The club has entered into a collaborative agreement with Lee Memorial Hospital. More than a fitness center, more than a medical facility, Bonita's lifestyle center will be one of the best new programs anywhere for a holistic approach to health and overall well-being.

"Life is no repair shop," says Miles, as he strives to offer a more natural, more compatible and more convenient approach for his members. Medicine, exercise and recovery all potentially combine seamlessly as a member could conceivably visit to get a haircut, attend a Pilates class, take a steam bath, and rehab from their hip replacement all in a single afternoon.

## GOLF GETS HEALTHIER

Not surprisingly, Bonita Bay's focus on golf also gets fully expressed in its fitness and health programs as well as in its



**Collaboration with a medical facility provides club members with a holistic opportunity for wellness.**

long-term strategic plans and investment priorities. The two programs—golf and fitness—are mutually reinforcing.

The golfing program enlists the services of no less than six Titleist Performance Institute (TPI) certified fitness professionals—nearly as many working on the physical training dimension of golf as on the mechanics of striking the ball. And thus the golf fitness facility gets high levels of utilization.

Let it also be said that healthier and more fit golfers are quite likely to play more and better golf. And this is precisely what Miles reports. Golf rounds are up a robust 22 percent, with nearly 120,000 rounds played in the sweet spot of Florida's golf season, which is January to April.

## MORE ENGAGED MEMBERS

Bonita Bay Club is a large community, with 2,000 members, 90 holes of golf spread over five courses. So the appeal of this community must remain fresh and vital if it is to continue to attract its core affluent market, which has many choices. In this competitive marketplace, Bonita Bay does more than hold its own: it attracts more than 100 new members per year and currently is at full capacity with a wait list.

According to the New World legend, the Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de León scoured the Florida landscape searching in vain for the Fountain of Youth. Perhaps he was just in the wrong place at the wrong time. When the Bonita Bay Club's Lifestyle Center officially opens this spring, we will witness a distinctively 21st century approach to longevity, one that is highly-integrated, people-focused and community-oriented. It's time to join the club. ♦

## HOW HEALTHY IS YOUR CLUB?

# An Interview with Prevo Health Solution's Rick Ladendorf

By Jim Fisher, PhD and Jake Fisher

**R**ick Ladendorf is the founder of Prevo Health Solutions, a club wellness consulting firm that helps clubs integrate health and wellness into their cultures and recognizes those that excel in this lifestyle dimension in its America's Healthiest Certification program and annual Top Ten Healthiest Clubs list.

We talked with Ladendorf about his philosophy of health and his perspective on where the private club industry is headed as it adapts to this important trend. Here are some highlights of that interview:

**Club Trends: What accounts for this great surge of interest in fitness, health and wellness in the private club industry?**

**RL:** On the one hand, it's a cultural phenomenon that is amplified by media coverage. People also see the dramatic build-out of the fitness industry. On the other hand, closer to the club scene, word is getting out that certain clubs are having success: member retention, new members, greater utilization. Clubs are looking for relevancy. To attract the 55-year old and younger member they have to have more than just golf.

**CT: What accounts for the resistance we also see in the private club industry?**

**RL:** Facilities, amenities, staff require money and other scarce resources. Many ask where is the ROI? It's there but it takes some investment and patience. Many club managers and boards see fitness as a priority, but maybe not a top priority. The golf course might get a new irrigation system or a better practice range before the club gets a new or improved fitness facility. Often influential members, typically older, will lobby



against an investment in a fitness facility, since it has not been a traditional offering of the club. Of course, in my experience, these older members who resist this momentum toward a healthier club are among the heaviest users of the health amenities and programming once they get implemented.

**CT: Prevo certifies America's Healthiest Clubs. What exactly makes a club healthy?**

**RL:** We evaluate clubs based on five criteria: the actual amenities or facilities; membership engagement; staff involvement; the fitness program, which extends into recreational activities and more; and then nutrition, which takes us into the food and beverage area and the interests that support it such as employee meals.

**CT: If I were a club manager, why would I want my club to be among the healthiest?**

**RL:** It really comes down to maintaining relevance. At the membership level, you want to retain and engage your existing members. But you should also consider the long term and ask how will you attract the new member and his or her entire family. The club is in the service business and there is some tough competition out there. Marriott, for example, is now offering membership in its facilities and amenities. Clubs need to cater and anticipate its membership needs in similar fashion. There is a blurring of lines or morphing between the resorts and the club industry.

**CT: If we look at the Top Ten Clubs among America's Healthiest Clubs, what was it that distinguished them?**

**RL:** At the leadership level, it takes vision and passion. You've often got to bring along the board and sell these ideas to the club membership itself. But the common thread is the broad and integrated nature of this vision. For example, all these clubs have great amenities and programming, but they are also tailored to the staff. This has important benefits for the club in reduced health care costs, lower turnover, and motivated employees who themselves buy-in and then deliver the club mission. They took the time to understand the importance of creating a healthy culture by educating and incentivizing their employees.

**CT: What's trending?**

**RL:** Fitness wearables, activity monitors and body composition analyzers—devices that gather data on anything from weight, heart rate and calories burned to body composition, sleep patterns, and nutrition—have really taken off. They provide better information to trainers and staff helping them to better understand their membership and personalize their approach.

**CT: What about equipment more generally?**

**RL:** Clubs are starting to emphasize functional training, which means opening up more space and relying on less equipment. The concept in functional training is to use the body and one's own weight in movements and exercises that resemble what a person does in daily life, whether that is sport-specific or not.

**CT: Is fitness trending toward wellness and health?**

**RL:** The trend is to engage the member in services that go beyond the club—and that includes offering many on-site medical facilities and life enhancement amenities like physical therapy, massage therapy, even acupuncture. The trend for



many clubs—especially those with many retirees—has been in integrating on-site medical facilities and health services that go beyond the standard club wellness amenities. Bringing in these third party providers and letting them operate as they would anywhere else—taking health plans, insurance and Medicare—has helped in keeping the baby boomer generation in the orbit of club life.

**CT: What going on in programming?**

**RL:** The trend is to place added emphasis on the club within the club, with the objective of identifying and catering to specific member interests—things like biking, hiking, or even tap-dancing. Thirty percent of members utilize their club's fitness facility on a regular basis. That leaves around two-thirds of members who certainly have other recreational interests either unengaged or headed elsewhere. Connect with these members and provide a club within a club to help improve the relevancy among these targeted populations.

**CT: Anything else?**

**RL:** The number one trend I see is farm-to-table. Local, seasonal, fresh and organic foods that are grown on the property or locally sourced are making their way to club kitchens and to members' tables. Clubs can use these ingredients and showcase them to members in a personal way, telling them the story of their meal's origin. ♦



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