

Wyndmoor Therapist Goes Virtual to Keep Patients Holding Steady

by Stacia Friedman, for the Shuttle

JOANNE FAGERSTROM IS KEEPING OUR COMMUNITY in balance—even during the pandemic. As the owner of Mindful Physical Therapy, LLC in Wyndmoor, she specializes in treating balance issues, bone health and reducing chronic pain for people suffering from osteoporosis and orthopedic problems.

“My classes are live streamed and recorded so participants can watch at any time,” she said.

Unlike ordinary exercise classes, which target building muscle strength, Fagerstrom’s are all about bone strength. She demonstrates how each exercise can be adapted, no matter your current range of movement.

As a licensed physical therapist trained in the Feldenkrais Method and Myofascial release approach, Joanne had a large following for her weekly Strong Bone classes before the pandemic. Now these same classes are available via Zoom. Each class includes back and core strengthening exercises, balance exercises for fall prevention, flexibility exercises, posture education and body awareness training. The focus is on improving bone strength, flexibility, posture, balance and body awareness.

Most online classes only consist of the therapist demonstrating each exercise. But Fagerstrom’s include a running commentary from her on the benefits of each movement, as well as suggestions for those who are experiencing discomfort.

Her agile body motivates her students, especially if they know that she was diagnosed with osteoporosis in 2009. Following her diagnosis, Fagerstrom began to research and develop her comprehensive bone health program.

Before the pandemic, Fagerstrom worked with her

patients both on an individual basis and in her weekly exercise classes. In her annual workshop, “Taking Charge of Your Bone Health,” she presented the latest information on osteoporosis; she’s looking forward to resuming the workshop post-pandemic.

Fagerstrom places a strong emphasis on wellness in her treatment programs. Her training in the Feldenkrais Method helps her look at the whole person. “It’s about mindfully assessing all the many details of your current problem and designing a program that meets you where you are,” she said.

Her loyal following indicates her patients find her approach effective. After less than a year of doing Strong Bones classes, a participant discovered that the bone density of her spine and hip has improved. In addition, Fagerstrom’s suggestions for safe ways to increase core and upper body strength have reduced her back pain flare-ups.

Working from home can result in neck, shoulder or lower back pain. Fagerstrom recommends getting up and moving around for 10 minutes for every hour you are sitting.

“Stand up, support your lower back with your hands and do a gentle back bend,” she said. “Or just lie down on the floor to realign your spine and take some deep breaths for five minutes.”

In addition to classes, Fagerstrom emphasizes the importance of outdoor exercise. “I really encourage people to get outside and walk briskly. Being in green space is helpful for stress and cardiovascular well-being,” she said.

How much is enough? “The CDC recommends walking 30 minutes a day, five days a week,” she contin-

ued. “But anything is better than nothing. It keeps frailty at bay. If you are concerned about losing your balance, hiking poles add a measure of confidence.” Hint: Stretch after you walk, not before.

Give Your Bones What They Need

Contrary to popular belief, milk does not play a role in bone health, which Fagerstrom learned as part of a certificate program in nutrition she completed in 2019 through Cornell University. “Studies found no association between consuming milk and lowering the risk of fracture,” she said. “The countries with the highest intakes of milk and calcium also have the highest rates of hip fracture.”

What about yogurt? “A large, observational study of dairy intake and bone frailty in older adults found that greater yogurt consumption was associated with high hip bone density and a significantly lower risk of osteoporosis,” Fagerstrom said. “Evidence has emerged that yogurt may help dampen chronic inflammation, which has been linked to many chronic diseases.”

For overall better health, Fagerstrom recommends keeping up your daily water intake. “Every organ needs water to function properly,” she said. “Now that we’re into winter, we’re not feeling the thirst. Make sure you are getting five to eight glasses a day.”

Lastly, she encourages seniors to steer away from supplements. “I look at my kitchen as my pharmacy,” she said. “Kale, collard greens, broccoli, tofu, nuts, beans, are just some examples. Sardines (with bones), are also a great source.”

For more information on Fagerstrom and her classes, visit <https://ourstrongbones.com/>.

South Philly Co-op Opens its Doors

people with previous interest. She did, and the group held its first organizational meeting that year. Fritz went on to serve as the first board president of SPFC.

Ten years and many obstacles later, SPFC opened on Dec. 23 as a 2,300 square-foot retail reality. It’s membership includes 1,500 households and is growing daily.

Member-ownership involves a \$300 investment which is paid either as up-front equity, or in installments. “We also have a Community Equity Fund that community members invest in to create a pool of money that is available to offset member-owner equity for those who are on a limited income,” said Lori Burge, SPFC General Manager. “So folks who are on a limited income can join with just \$5 starting out, and then can become a full member-owner with \$25 and a scholarship of \$275.”

SPFC does not have a work requirement or a structured cooperator work program. However, Burge said that it depends heavily on the volunteer contributions for outreach and other outside activities. The co-op does not have a standing member discount; instead, it features “owner-appreciation days” with 10% off all members’ groceries, and “owner-only specials.” You do not need to be a member to shop.

SPFC currently has 13 staff members and doesn’t have the capacity to prepare their own prepared foods. However, Burge said that the co-op will feature a “grab-and-go case from local vendors” once the correct refrigerator case is delivered. “There are always lots of glitches,” she added.

Right now, SPFC’s bulk bins stand empty. Burge

said the co-op plans to pre-package the products that are stored in the scoop bins, but will allow shoppers to use the gravity bins, which require less human contact. Currently, SPFC allows a maximum of 12 shoppers in the store at a time as part of its pandemic safety standards.

Most of SPFC’s local, seasonal produce is organic and comes from the Lancaster Farm Fresh Co-op, which is made up of 150 farms in the region and has a large Community Supported Agriculture network. Originally, SPFC intended to open last spring, but could not because of the pandemic. The leadership felt obligated to keep its promise to open by setting up a virtual store that included a “Basics Box” of bulk grains and other pantry staples, along with boxes of fresh, organic produce, which they arranged through LFFC.

SPFC uses laminated signs throughout the store to promote its locally-grown and produced products and services. The signs describe the evolution, location and ownership of each item and service. Many vendors, including Zsa’s Ice Cream, Crust Vegan Bakery, Dodah’s Kitchen and Bloc Delivery, are likely familiar to Weavers Way shoppers. Other vendors include Oasis Creamery organic cheeses of Ronks, Lancaster County; floral arrangements from Jig-Bee Flower Farm of North Philly, and soaps from Vellum Street Soap Company of Roxborough. Many are owned by women, LGBTQ persons and other people of color.

Burge said that Weavers Way General Manager Jon Roesser and Development Manager Kathleen Casey have been invaluable and generous resources for SPFC.

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“Whenever we need something, I call Jon, and he’ll give me the information, or route me to the right person,” she said. Woo noted that likely every staff member has provided help to SPFC at some point.

When the pandemic delayed SPFC’s opening, the co-op had to raise additional funds, and Weavers Way became the distributor of as many as 48 Basics Boxes at a time. “Without that, it would have been difficult for us to provide that service,” Burge said.

Burge has gotten donations, investment and knowledge support from all the regional co-ops, including Mariposa, Swarthmore, and Kensington. She also has made use of the ample resources of the Philadelphia Area Co-operative Alliance.

In turn, she has already started to give back to the growing community of local and regional food co-ops. She just completed the incorporation paperwork for the new Kennett Square Co-op, which does not yet have a location or opening date.

Burge has been involved in the co-op business sector for 20 years. She started as a volunteer in the produce department of People’s Food Co-op in Portland, OR and was promoted up the line. In 2010, she moved to New Orleans, where she managed the New Orleans Food Co-op for six years. She moved here in 2010 to be closer to family “and because Philly is such an amazing city.”

SPFC is located at 2031 S. Juniper St. and is open every day from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. A full list of its local products, services and other information can be found at www.southphillyfood.coop.

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