

Defying Age: HUR HEALTH AND FITNESS EQUIPMENT THE ACTIVE AGING COMPANY

AS A SOCIETY, WE HAVE HEARD THE TERM “AGING GRACEFULLY,” BUT MOST ATTRIBUTE IT TO A PERSON’S APPEARANCE. HOWEVER, “AGING GRACEFULLY” SHOULD BE DEFINED AS A WAY TO STAY HEALTHY AND ACTIVE. FURTHERMORE, IT’S ABOUT MOVEMENT, MOTION AND INDEPENDENCE.

The concept of staying healthy and active as one ages is the foundation of HUR Health and Fitness Equipment. HUR provides strength exercise machines and balance testing platforms to implement active aging programs to promote independence, mobility, fall prevention and incontinence reduction.

Interestingly, most of today’s exercise machines are designed for 18 to 35 year olds. However, the need for exercise doesn’t stop at 35. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), older adults need at least 150 minutes of moderate to intense aerobic activity per week and two or more days per week of muscle-strengthening activity. As the older adult community grows, HUR’s mission is to support this segment’s needs with low resistant and low impact equipment.

As an active aging company, HUR’s products are designed to fit the needs of older adults as they age.

“We are not in the business of saying our machines are better than other machines,” explains Juha Vaisanen, president HUR Health and Fitness Equipment USA. “Our approach is entirely different. We ask ‘what are the issues facing older adults?’ This is why we focus on senior housing communities, medical fitness centers and physical therapy centers. We provide the whole solution.”

VISIONARY BEGINNINGS

Founded in 1989 at the University of Technology, Helsinki, HUR provides air resistance fitness equipment now found in 250 facilities in the United States and more than 5,000 global locations.

While other exercise equipment manufacturers focus on the entertainment component, such as machines built with television or music capabilities, explains Vaisanen, HUR is fundamentally different. The company provides technology to measure activity and progression. “The key to exercise is feedback,” he says. “If you don’t receive feedback [from exercising], you’ll get frustrated.”

For more than 15 years, HUR has collaborated with the leading research centers in the United States, Canada, Europe and Japan to develop innovative software. Users receive a Smart Card for exercise planning, recording and feedback. With a Smart Card, instructors support the users’ needs more efficiently by tracking their progress. This reporting feature also is convenient for Medicare, Medicaid or insurance reimbursement. As for the hardware, the machines are low impact and allow for easy-on, easy-off movement.

Currently, HUR equipment can be found in a variety of facilities throughout the United States. From rehabilitation and long-term care facilities to health club and wellness centers for older adults, to retirement communities and medical fitness centers, HUR equipment is transforming lives in tangible ways.

BELONG TO STRONG®

According to the CDC, one in three adults, age 65 and older, fall each year. Of those who fall, 20% to 30% suffer moderate to severe injuries, which limits independent living and increases the risk of an early death.

Suzy Boerboom, co-owner and chief operating officer of Welcyon, Fitness After 50®, is well aware of the statistics. As a registered nurse, Boerboom has spent the majority of her career in the health care industry, specifically in long-term care. For many years, she worked in nursing homes and assisted living homes. “One thing I saw in these facilities,” she explains, “is that people came in very weak and normally did not improve in strength. This led to falls, fractured hips and overall decline. People would come in with a cane, and in a few months, they would be wheelchair bound.”

In the late 1990s, Suzy and her husband, Tom, owned six Curves Health Clubs and Fitness Centers. “This was my first opportunity to combine my nursing and medical background with fitness,” she says. Tom Boerboom,

co-owner and chief executive officer of Welcyon, has spent his entire career in long-term care.

After selling their Curves facilities in 2003, Suzy and Tom decided to embark on another business venture along with Paul Contris. “Tom always had this vision that our country needed a place where people over 50 could come and feel welcomed and not intimidated,” explains Suzy. Safe equipment, proper assistance and connectedness were elements that needed to be incorporated. Tom embarked on research to find the right equipment for their future facility, and soon he came upon HUR. “He felt this was the equipment we had been looking for. It’s quiet, low impact and stable, and the Smart Card offers people a great opportunity to keep track of their progress,” Suzy elaborates. Welcyon was built around the HUR equipment.



PHOTO COURTESY OF WELCYON, FITNESS AFTER 50

In 2010, Suzy and Tom opened Welcyon. The goal was to establish a fitness club where older adults could customize their workouts depending on fitness level, overall health and, more importantly, where they could feel comfortable exercising. Welcyon is not targeted to a specific fitness level. People join with varying goals—from hiking or riding a bike to something much simpler such as every day chores. Some have health concerns and join to regulate diabetes or control arthritis pain.

With two corporate clubs in Edina and Bloomington, Minn., Welcyon employs 12 part-time fitness coaches. In September, Welcyon opened its first franchise in Sioux Falls, S.D., and there are three more franchises in planning stages. The Boerbooms’ future goals are to open franchises throughout the country and to have 1 million members.

One of the features Suzy emphasizes the most is the ability to watch people progress and experience “real results.” To gain muscle strength, weight load needs to be increased. “The HUR equipment gave us a very solid way to watch people progress,” she explains. When an individual joins, they receive an initial assessment. A fitness coach discusses an individual’s goals, or what they hope to accomplish. An orientation session follows, and weights are set on the HUR equipment, so an individual can begin their program. The Boerbooms hired Mark Richards, MS, PT, as vice president of programming. Richards designed Welcyon’s exercise protocols based on the American College of Sports Medicine guidelines.

Welcyon is setting out to change America.

STAYING STRONG

Located in Davis, Calif., University Retirement Community (URC) is a retirement community that offers skilled nursing, independent living, assisted living and special care—a memory unit.

Once a month, new residences meet with Ignacio Estrada, rehabilitation manager, to learn the machines, in particular the facility’s HUR machines, and the wellness program. “When I teach people how to use the machines,” explains Estrada, “I tell them not to use the machines as traditional weight machines. Pneumatic machines provide constant pressure throughout the entire range of joint.”

When URC’s corporate company, Pacific Retirement Services decided to expand the wellness center, Estrada was sent to a conference to look at additional equipment. After meeting with HUR and testing the machines, Estrada thought HUR equipment “would be very appropriate for URC’s population.” He was attracted to the machine’s ease and low profile, as well as the Smart Card and the touch screen feature.

Now, URC has several HUR machines; three of which are wheelchair accessible.

When a person first arrives, Estrada develops a program for them. He finds out what activities are appropriate for the individual. After weight levels and resistance are programmed to HUR Smart Card, Estrada and his staff monitor an individual’s progression; results are reviewed quarterly. Estrada finds the HUR equipment to be versatile for all his patients. For instance, he can individualize a person’s lower extremities, so if someone’s left knee is

sore, he only will exercise the right knee.

At URC, all the HUR equipment is located in a room adjacent to an empty classroom where residents work on balance activities. Residents respond well to the circuit training and have become more aware of personal wellness. As a result, some residents have spearheaded their own wellness programs, such as walking groups, cycling, tennis and golf.

Estrada has spent his career in long-term care. He understands the importance of helping individuals progress through injuries, so they can function independently.

“Facilities need to consider investing in equipment like HUR to experience future results,” says Estrada, “and then more facilities would be known as places to go for seniors to thrive in their retirement years.”

LUXURY LIVING

Riviera Health Resort is redefining the way health care is delivered. One of Florida’s oldest retirement homes, Riviera was the first licensed nursing home in Florida in 1952.

Located in Coral Gables, Fla., Riviera Health Resort is a 223-bed, state-of-the-art facility offering post-acute and rehabilitation services. Riviera offers a first-floor gym for acute residents, who need more help, and an upstairs gym and wellness area that offers functional active aging programs. Riviera employs approximately 45 full-time therapists.

Richard E. Stacey, Sr., chief executive officer and co-founder of Riviera, bought the property with the promise to the community to rebuild a better facility. His vision was to continue its rich tradition of innovative care in providing health care services via a health resort for over 50 adults. Stacey’s vision was to change the stigma of long-term care facilities by marrying the hospitality philosophy to the health care concept with elements such as a concierge service and staff referring to individuals as “guests” not patients.

Prior to Riviera, Stacey founded Victoria Nursing & Rehabilitation Center, a 264-bed facility for medically complex patients in Miami, Fla. “We first put our HUR equipment at Victoria,” explains Lydia Gomez-Bamford, DPT, MBA, director of operations of rehabilitation services at Riviera so it was an easy decision to incorporate HUR equipment at Riviera. “It was a good fit for our new center,” says Dr. Gomez-Bamford. “The concept is that you’re in a resort not an institution.”

When Dr. Gomez-Bamford set out to research equipment, she discovered it a challenge to find machines appropriate for fragile and petite individuals. However, once she discovered the HUR equipment, she was attracted to its zero-load feature, in addition to the software functions of the Smart Card. Working with an exercise physiologist,



TOP PHOTO COURTESY OF UNIVERSITY RETIREMENT COMMUNITY
BOTTOM PHOTO COURTESY OF RIVIERA HEALTH RESORT

Dr. Gomez-Bamford developed customized protocol. Every resident and guest receives a Smart Card and follows a custom program based on the established protocols.

“What’s exciting about the HUR equipment,” she explains, “is that you can put someone who is very weak at zero load and start them on a rehab or conditioning program.” She points out that many older adults are not sick, just weak, and strength training is a critical aspect to their emotional and physical health. Residents and guests are impressed by the simplicity and safety of the machines.

“We enjoy the HUR equipment,” says Dr. Gomez-Bamford. “It’s a great fit for our residents and guests and their quality of life. The equipment is a beautiful complement as we redefine our health care system.”

FUTURE OF WELLNESS AND DISEASE MANAGEMENT

For more than 25 years, Tiziano Marovino, MPH, DPT, has worked as an educator, researcher and health care professional. "I have always been involved in program development with physical activity at the core," he says. "My academic degrees reflect my love and passion for movement and physical fitness."



PHOTO COURTESY OF BIOGENESIS GROUP MEDICAL FITNESS CENTER

And it is Dr. Marovino's commitment to activity that has influenced his career and the advice he dispenses to his staff. "I've always told my therapists that I feel like I've done my job, not when I have rehabbed a knee, but when I turn a person on to more sustainable strategies for the knee, such as lifelong exercise," he explains.

With a background in physical therapy, Dr. Marovino started Quantum Physical Therapy (QPT) in 2004. QPT's approach to therapy is what separated them from other rehabilitation facilities. "We have always approached physical therapy within the context of total wellness."

As the wellness component of QPT grew, there was a need to form Biogenesis Group, which started as an onsite corporate wellness program. Clients included GE, Ford Motor and Google.

In May 2012, Biogenesis Group opened their Medical Fitness Center, which is staffed with physical therapists, athletic trainers and physicians trained in functional medicine. The Medical Fitness Center offers general exercise programs, metabolic testing, strength training and weight management, to name a few.

"We decided we needed to do something different," explains Dr. Marovino. "We needed a product line that would reflect our core values including a heavy emphasis on data capture." Biogenesis programs are centered on

outcomes. As the idea for a medical fitness center grew, Dr. Marovino aimed for a strategy to differentiate what they did from other medical services or community-based gyms and health clubs. "Our Medical Fitness Center may look like a gym, but our service line offerings are much more comprehensive."

At QPT, Dr. Marovino and his staff tested HUR equipment for a year and loved the machines. "It is so friendly on the rehab population," he says. It was an easy decision to incorporate HUR as part of the wellness prevention and disease management initiatives at Biogenesis Medical Fitness Center, which now has 11 HUR machines. "I have 25 years of product testing," he says, "and I can't say enough good things about HUR."

Another compelling feature, says Dr. Marovino, is HUR's software component. The data capture element is the key to the HUR product line, as it tracks, organizes and quantifies the selected outcome measures of interest. Typically, Biogenesis staff runs monthly reports for their clients to track progress.

In addition to the software component, Dr. Marovino notes that the safety aspect of HUR equipment is to be commended. It is a safe form of resistance, he says, with no soreness associated with typical weight training.

By establishing programs that combine HUR equipment with Biogenesis' other programming, Dr. Marovino has seen an individual's metabolic rate lowered. "When we are able to affect the body's metabolic machinery through strength training, weight loss and improved cardiovascular fitness, I think we have intervened in a more natural and permanent manner."

More facilities now understand the benefits of using HUR equipment as part of their programming. As the 50-year-old-plus population continues to grow, it is important to focus on fitness, movement and health in revolutionary ways. ■

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