

Hereabouts: Zumba motivates couple

By Beth Anspach
Contributing Writer

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Joan Jones vividly remembers the moment she first heard the word "Zumba."

"I was sitting at home waiting for my husband Doug to come home from his job at Fed Ex," Jones said. "And I was channel surfing when an info-mercial came on."

It was at that moment, five years ago this December, that Jones heard the music and saw the dancing that would draw her interest and her passion. "I remember thinking the music sounded so upbeat and happy," Jones said.

Jones, then a personal trainer and dedicated to fitness and helping people learn to transform their lives, immediately called about this new exercise program called Zumba. Zumba was born in the mid-1990s in Columbia when creator "Beto" Perez forgot his exercise class music one day and improvised using his own Latin-inspired favorites. This first class evolved into a dance-based exercise phenomenon that offers a total body workout in a "party" atmosphere.

"I was hooked immediately," said Jones, who ordered her first Zumba video that December. "It was the first and only cardio workout that I have ever loved."

Though Doug had always been a dedicated body builder, he was resistant about a new exercise program. But Jones' passion drew him in. "Doug has always been a showman," Jones said. "So he added his own style to the routines."

The Joneses started teaching Zumba classes at both the Vandalia Recreation Center and the Kleptz YMCA in Englewood. Their Zumba classes soon swelled to more than 100 people.

"I went to Florida to become Zumba certified," Jones said. "And Doug and I started thinking about opening our own Zumba studio, incorporating all the features we liked from all the places we'd seen."

On Jan. 15, the world's first Studio Zumba opened in Vandalia.

"We are a prototype and now only one of three worldwide," Jones said. "This makes us a destination for any Zumba professional who comes to town."

Studio Zumba offers one-hour classes for all ages and for both men and women. "We have a lower intensity beginner class and a new class designed for senior citizens who aren't used to much activity," Jones said.

New to the studio over the next few months will be a juice bar, and male and female massage therapists. Besides Zumba, the studio offers belly dancing and yoga classes.

And Jones' passion as well as the music is contagious. She loves to share stories about people who have changed their lives by finding a physical activity they love and want to stick with. "One of our customers has followed us everywhere we have taught and has lost half her body weight," Jones said. "She is so happy now!"

For more information, log on to www.studiozumbaohio.com.

Contact this reporter at (937) 475-8212 or banspach@woh.rr.com.