

fit



Guinea Pig | Light Reading

Seasonal cooking sounds virtuous until you realize you've fixed buttery mashed parsnips four nights in a row. But "Everyday Food Light" (\$25, Clarkson Potter) cuts the calories to less than 500 per serving for locavore-friendly fare such as summery pork chops with peach relish and wintery sweet potato-green bean salad. Clear directions, bright photos and worldly dishes (pad thai, tandoori kebabs) mean it'll stay on our bookshelf long after January.



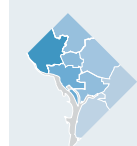
A New Definition of Y

The YWCA endeavors to stick to its mission by extending exercise to all Washingtonians

Too many folks have the wrong idea about the YWCA — and not just because they figure it's the same thing as the YMCA. (Note the "W," which stands for "women's.") "People think we're a health and fitness club. That's not it at all," says Tamara Smith, CEO of the YWCA

National Capital Area, which relocated to the U Street corridor last month from its Chinatown home of 30 years.

Since the local chapter was founded in 1905, it's been at the forefront of social change in Wash-



Fitness Deserts

A series examining disparities in physical activity opportunities in Washington.

ington. In 1907, it sponsored the city's first adult education class. In 1916, it opened the city's first swimming pool for women. In 1944, the YWCA became the city's first non-segregated food service.

But recently, despite running a variety of programs designed to help people earn their GEDs, fight domestic violence and promote social justice, what they've been chiefly known for is the Gallery Place Fitness & Aquatics Center, which shuttered in 2008. Part of the problem was money, but to Shae Agee, the YWCA's director of health and wellness programs, the bigger issue was that the center wasn't addressing its mission to eliminate racism and empower women.



Zumba classes are one of the most popular offerings at the YWCA's new location just north of U Street.

PHOTO BY TEDDY WOLFF

There's no doubt, however, that health is a critical part of this mission, Smith says, particularly when it comes to eliminating disparities in access to fitness. "So we decided to start over," Agee says. The program that's emerged is Empower Fit, which aims to encourage exercise across the city.

At the new 15,000-square-foot YWCA headquarters (2303 14th St. NW; Ywcanca.org) — which houses classrooms, computer labs and conference space — there are also dual fitness studios. Between the two rooms, the YWCA offers nearly 30 classes each week.

And at \$6 per class (or a 10-class card for \$50), they're some of the cheapest group fitness opportunities in the region. That's by design,

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— SHAE AGEE, DIRECTOR OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS PROGRAMS FOR D.C.'S YWCA

Agee says. When she worked at traditional health clubs, the goal was always to make money. "Instead, we want their assessments and outcomes. We have the mind-set that profit is success, not money," she says.

That's why she also recently introduced an innovative pricing strategy for personal training. "We talk to them about their financial situations and what they can pay, when they can pay," says Agee, who hopes to expand the pro-

gram this year.

Empower Fit also extends beyond YWCA walls by providing free fitness classes at several locations, including Mayfair Mansions, a housing complex in Ward 7. At Wheeler Terrace, a development in Ward 8, they've launched a youth soccer program. "When they saw a soccer ball, they said, 'What's this?'" Agee says.

Taking exercise directly to these neighborhoods makes it easier for a segment of the popu-

Classes



Don't Miss It

The YWCA's group fitness schedule includes classes you won't typically find at area gyms, including Club-Style Line Dancing. But the one that'll really make your jaw drop — and your abs hurt — is Spin Class With No Bikes. "The only equipment you need is your body and determination," says trainer Corey Belin, who developed the concept a year ago. He started with bicycle crunches, added other exercises with alternating leg movements (including mountain climbers and fast feet shuffles) and found his boot camp clients couldn't wait to "ride." It's offered Mondays and Wednesdays at 5 p.m.

lation that has been hit especially hard by the economic downturn. "The myth is that people are lazy and they have all of these opportunities to exercise," says Agee, who notes that Ward 8 has one of the highest unemployment rates in the country, which makes paying for fitness a luxury many people simply can't afford. And it makes the YWCA's new approach to exercise seem like the right idea.

VICKY HALLETT (EXPRESS)