



Children Activity Centers Fun and Healthy

Getting in shape and being healthy is important for all ages, shapes and sizes. Today more and more children are diagnosed with obesity, so it is a good idea to participate in healthy activities from the start.

Parents want their children to be healthy and kids just want to have fun, so children activity centers that offer gymnastics, dance, karate, swimming, rock climbing and other physical activities make everyone happy.

Joseph Zapata, head instructor at Team Zapata Karate, teaches students to believe in themselves and uses positive reinforcement to help create good habits:

"We use a variety of life skills to reinforce the good habits that are necessary for success in life. When you do this, it keeps kids wanting to come back," he says. "We stress having a strong mind and body. We believe that too many kids spend too much time on the sofa and not enough time building their bodies."

Team Zapata Karate offers classes six days a week and starts kids as young as three. Classes are offered in the afternoon and early evening. Zapata says he believes that it is very important for everyone to know how to keep themselves safe. Instructors have gone through a background check as well as an intensive internship program.

Lincoln All American offers a variety of activities that kids can choose from. Dani Donnachie has been their since it's opening this past April.

"Because all kids are different, we offer a variety of physical activity choices," she says.

All American has classes in gymnastics, dance, cheer, karate, trampoline, tumbling and sport-specific readiness such as board sports. It also offers "Fitnastics," which is a tailor-made fitness program for kids using the gym equipment. All their classes offer fundamentals of a healthy lifestyle through health education regarding nutrition, body awareness and good choices.

The classes are for children from walking through teenage years of age. It provides a schedule for families with multiple siblings to enjoy different activities at the same time. Along with fundamental gymnastic and dance classes, progressive classes are offered that include trampoline, tumbling, board sports, hip-hop, ballet, tap and lyrical.

"A negative sports experience can turn a child away from exercise, whereas a positive experience helps develop life-long fitness habits," Donnachie says. "If it's not fun, kids won't want to be active."

Lincoln All American has trained experienced staff and a secure physical environ-

Kimberly Horg-Webb

ment (and has two nurses on their staff). Their coaches are safety, CPR and first-aid certified. It has mats covering the entire activity area to assure safe landings. It also has health guidelines that do not allow children who have been sick 24 hours before class to participate and have a no nit lice policy.

Another way kids can have fun and stay in shape is by getting involved in local area gymnastic centers including Pozsar's Gymnastics. Joe Rovegno, competitive teams director, has been coaching gymnastics for about 25 years. He believes there is no other sport that provides as good of an overall foundation for balance, strength and coordination.

"Kids involved in gymnastics and other sports means they are stimulating their mind and body simultaneously by interacting with classmates and teachers, and thus promoting gross motor skill development, coordination, balance, social skills and many other character-building traits," Rovegno says.



Sky Zone jumpers at Sky Zone in Rocklin.

It offers a broad spectrum of classes; from the very basic where the parent participates (under the supervision of an instructor) to the advanced competitive gymnast.

Pozsar's has trained staff, planned progressions for teaching skills, mats and soft landing surfaces, as well as hands-on spotting techniques. It is careful to evaluate the children to be sure that they are in a class appropriate for their ability and it teaches gymnastics in a step-by-step fashion, which its teachers are required to follow. Pozsar's has classes for children from 2 to 18 years.

"Being active doesn't just grow your physical strength, it also helps you develop the ability to focus for longer periods of time

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on academic activities," Rovegno says. "Perhaps most beneficial of all, children who are developing and living an active lifestyle are most likely developing habits, such as eating healthy, and understanding the importance of exercise, are also setting the stage to be a healthy adult."

Kim Bruns, co-owner and director for Byers Gymnastics in Roseville, says there is no other sport quite like gymnastics.

"It's one of the closest things you can get to flying! You get the opportunity to go upside down, learn total body control, gain those cool muscles, and gymnastics will put you ahead in whatever sport you decide to focus on," Bruns says.

She thinks it's important for kids to be involved in physical activities because it helps the brain develop and there have been studies to show that participating in a sport such as gymnastics, helps prepare the brain for learning to read. It also increases self-esteem by creating a better body image and being involved in something that requires discipline, hard work and teamwork.

Bruns says safety is number one. Their instructors are safety, first aid and CPR certified, and are accredited by the USA Gymnastics. Instructors have specific-skill lists that must be completed before each gymnast moves from one level to the next.

It offers gymnastics instruction for children ages walking through teen. It also offers birthday parties, camps (summer/winter), field trips, off premise programs, tumbling and trampoline, tumbling for cheer, group gymnastics teams, women's competitive gymnastics teams (USAG Levels 4-Elite) and parents night outs.

"Byers Gymnastics Center's goal is to promote happy, healthy children, and we strive to make a difference in the lives of children," Bruns says. "Being physically active as a child creates healthy active adults. Plus, it's so much fun!"

Debbie and Eli Rodriguez, owners of Byers Gymnastics in Elk Grove, are proud to announce that their All American Gymnastics Team for the United States was ranked number one. Debbie says that it is the only gym in the area to have elite gymnasts who compete for the Olympics.

She says every coach there has gone through the USA Gymnastics safety program for coaches and is certified. Students only move up a level when they pass their skills testing. It has classes for children of walking age to competitive classes for students up to 22 years of age.

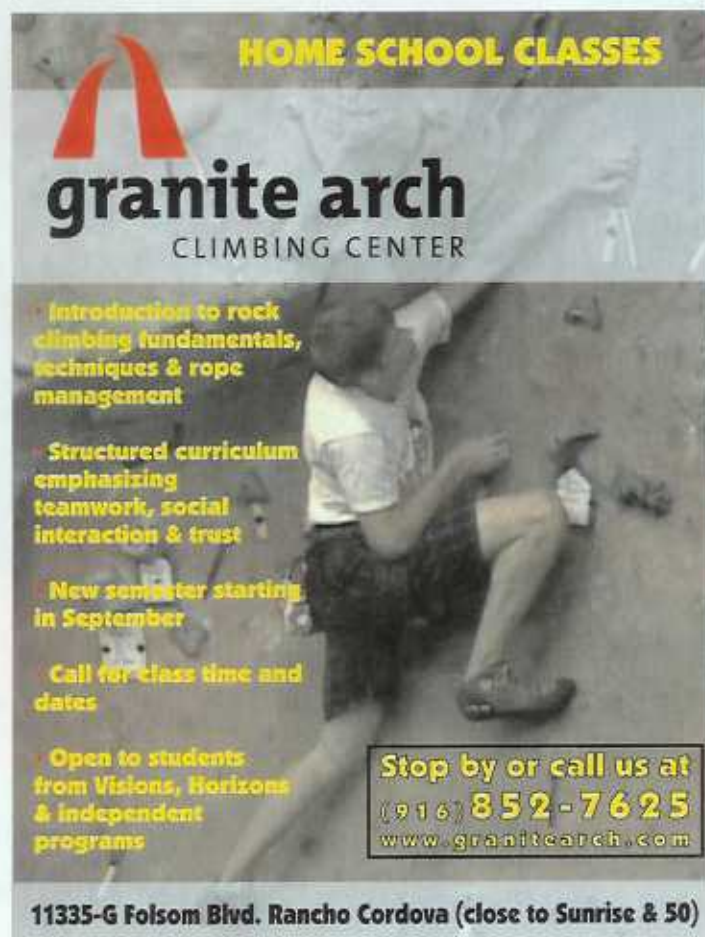
"Gymnastics helps build kids socialization skills," Rodriguez says. "Especially for young children; it gets them ready for reading and toddlers ready for preschool."

There is a gym next to their facility so many parents drop their kids off while they work out themselves, too.

Owner of Granite Arch Climbing Center, Bob Balzhiser, thinks the physical dimension of our life is easy to ignore. He believes it is important to develop a well-rounded lifestyle that includes being physically active, young or old.

"I believe that the younger we establish a lifestyle that includes the physical dimension of our being, the more likely it will carry forward into our adult years," Balzhiser says.

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Jake Jacobson on the trampoline at American Powerhouse, in Rocklin. Photo credit: Kelly Reed.

It offers a home school program from September through May for kids ages 7 to 18; a youth climbing club that meets twice a week (Tuesday and Thursday from 4 to 6 p.m.), also for kids ages 7 to 18; it offers coaching for kids who want to compete in local, regional and national competitions. Granite Arch Climbing Center also does birthday parties, scouting events and overnights for groups.

"Our adventure village is hugely popular with kids. It includes tubes, slides, ropes and host of other obstacles and things to climb on. Anyone who likes to climb things or challenge themselves – young or old – cannot help but like Granite Arch," Balzhiser says.

Tricks Gymnastics offers a wide variety of programs to get your kids moving. For gymnastics, it has a preschool-age program called Tumblebunny Gymnastics. In addition, there are gymnastics classes for school-age kids from ages 6 to 17. Tricks also features competitive gymnastic teams offered for both boys and girls.

The Tricks Gymnastics facility in Folsom features a variety of swimming classes for preschoolers and school-age kids. The swimming classes are offered year round and are done in an indoor pool.

Tricks also has dance classes for all ages that include "Fairytale Dance" for 3- and 4- year-olds, as well as tap, jazz, ballet, hip hop, B-Boy and –Girl for all ages.

"With all three of the sports we offer, all four limbs are used, which benefits brain and body," says Barbara Jo Taylor, co-owner with her husband of Tricks. "We teach our sports with correct technique, well-designed lesson plans and highly trained coaches/teachers – and when we add fun to that foundation, it adds up to pure magic."

At the Sky Zone Recreational Center, fun is also the key.

"It is so hard to get kids to exercise today," says Jeff Platt, General Manager at Sky Zone. "We offer an activity that is both healthy and undeniably fun. Every kid loves jumping on a trampoline. They do not realize the unbelievable health benefits associated with trampoline fitness. Some are: strengthens every muscle, organ and cell in your body; enhances overall coordination, strength, flexibility, timing, agility and balance; stimulates your lymphatic system."

Activities at the Sky Zone range from open jumping, 3-dimensional volleyball and dodgeball, SkyRobics 4Kids fitness classes to birthday parties and sports tournaments and leagues.

"Our center is very unique in that we offer classes for those at any level of physical fitness," adds Platt. "People young and old, athletic and not athletic, abled or disabled can all benefit from one of our fitness classes."

Its SkyRobics 4Kids class is like aerobics on trampolines. The SkyRobics session also features a five-week program for ages 4 to 14 in which a nutritionist comes to speak to the kids and adults about how to eat healthier food and live a healthier lifestyle.

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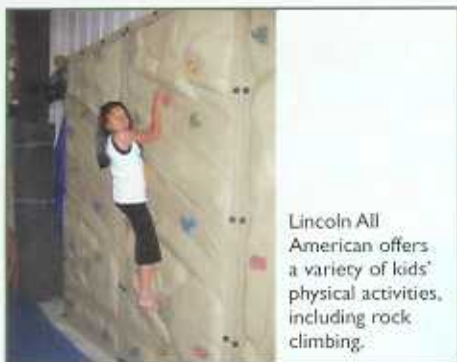
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Lincoln All American offers a variety of kids' physical activities, including rock climbing.

Also, coming soon to Sky Zone are Sky-Therapy classes for kids with disabilities such as autism or CP.

Owner of American Powerhouse T&T (Trampoline & Tumbling), Susan Jacobson, also believes in and promotes the importance of the mind-body connection.

"Research has also proven that jumping and spinning activates the brain and promotes academic learning," says Jacobson. "Brain development tools are used that build memory, encourage coordination of both sides of the brain, promote spatial awareness and develop critical-thinking skills."

At American Powerhouse T&T, both spinning and jumping for kids are encouraged, as the center offers a range of trampoline and tumbling classes -- from Parent & Tot Classes and BounceFit Children's Fitness to Home School Tramp 'n' Tumble and Rolling into Reading.

"Classes at American Powerhouse T&T provide an excellent cardio and core strength workout while having fun," says Jacobson. "Children increase fitness while following a safe progression that facilitates skill development leading to higher self-esteem."

Notably, the center's BounceFit class is specifically developed for overweight children. The coach who is a personal trainer has the kids use the trampoline as well as Thera-Bands, balls, games and other fitness activities. She also teaches the kids and their parents about healthy eating and making healthy lifestyle changes.

The Hardwood Palace Sports & Events Center offers a long list of indoor activities: basketball, futsal (indoor soccer), volleyball, dodgeball, as well as birthday parties and events. It also has youth leagues available for all of the various sports and provides personal training, clinics and camps. In

addition, the center offers skill development training three times a week for youth basketball players.

"Our programs have been developed to provide all participants a competitive, safe and fun experience within a beautiful state-of-the-art facility, while instilling the values of teamwork and sportsmanship," says Justin LeGrand-Logan, Assistant General Manager at Hardwood Palace.

LeGrand-Logan adds that "[Hardwood Palace] is the perfect location for all families, especially those with multiple children: one drop-off and pick-up location for practices, training sessions, games and tournaments."

Physical activities are not only fun but are imperative. A new documentary *Killer at Large* examines the details of the American obesity epidemic and why it has crossed from a public health crisis to a national security issue. When asked in the film what the most pressing issue facing America, former Surgeon General Richard Carmona said, "Obesity, because obesity is a terror within. It is destroying our society from within and unless we do something about it, the magnitude of the dilemma will dwarf 9/11 or any other terrorist event you can point out."

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