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Strengthening body and mind

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Brett Bondlow left the world of social work behind when he got into fitness training several years ago. But he couldn't leave the children he had worked with and grown to love. So now Bondlow incorporates his love of physical fitness with his experience with special needs children and adults, helping people focus on the physical aspect of disorders like autism and Down's Syndrome that are often overlooked by doctors.

Bondlow, a Duxbury resident, owns Compelling Fitness in Hanover. In addition to his regular clientele, he works with developmentally disabled people from ages 4-75.

Working with an 11-year-old autistic child, Erik, Bondlow points out the boy's gait issues, and the fact that he has trouble holding his head up while walking.

"If you don't correct this, by the time he's in his 20s he'll have chronic knee and back problems," Bondlow said. "Autism isn't just not being able to speak or make eye contact ... there's a big physical part of it."

Exercises with Erik include walking backwards with a weighted sled, and crawling on a mat. Bondlow said that autistic kids often have a short crawling phase, which can affect their posture and balance later in life.

Erik's mother, Margaret Iverson, said that she hadn't really spent much time on physical fitness before coming to Bondlow.

"My child's gone to a lot of doctors. No one ever brought it up," she said.

She said that she's seen the positive effect the therapy has had on her son.

"He gets some exercise," she said. "It teaches him discipline."

Before he got into training, Bondlow was a social worker and counselor. He worked with abuse victims as well as developmentally delayed kids.

"After a period of time I got burned out," he said. "I wanted to figure out a way to get back to working with these kids and adults ... It's my passion."

Bondlow said that autistic kids will often get some therapy from their doctor, but it will be mostly fine motor skills - getting dressed, learning how to hold a spoon, etc.

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â€œIf theyâ€™re able to stand and function, theyâ€™re not going to get therapy,â€ he said.

The training has more than a physical effect, however.

Julie Quill, whose son Sean has been coming to Bondlow since the summer, said she has seen a change in her sonâ€™s behavior as well.

â€œBrett is helping Sean in ways I never expected,â€ Quill said.

Sean has lost some significant weight since he started his training. He also plays on a special needs hockey team coached by his father.

â€œHe loves to swim, loves to ride his bike ... heâ€™s pretty active,â€ Quill said. â€œI think it releases his frustration.â€

Bondlow said the way he approaches each student is varied.

â€œWith every student itâ€™s different,â€ he said. the most important thing is to be consistent.â€

He also said he tried to teach parents how to implement physical fitness at home.

â€œThereâ€™s a need for it, I am just trying to do one child, one person at a time,â€ he said.

He believes he is one of the the only trainers in the country working with special needs children and adults.

â€œIf I didnâ€™t have my background, I wouldnâ€™t be able to do this work,â€ Bondlow said.

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- Motion denied
- Unintentional law violation
- Grazing Duxbury's fields
- Sea level rise study presented
- Flood map meeting packed
- Dragon soccer back on track
- Girls' soccer suffers setback
- Field hockey firepower sinks Sailors
- Conflict-of-interest training

This month

- Duxbury Community Preservation Committee Annual Public Forum
- Longer year a hardship
- A Clipper Visit: Laurie Hunter
- School Committee prepares for new school year
- A spot with a view
- An uncertain future
- Lt. Timothy J. Steele Athletic Building Dedication
- Stranger danger: Man attempts to lure girl into vehicle
- Stranger Danger
- National Sandpiper Catboat Regatta this weekend in Duxbury

This Year

- Board of Selectmen Support all Eight CPA articles
- Duxbury Weathers Hurricane Sandy
- Parent Connection Panel Discusses Teen Alcohol and Drug Use
- Many on edge after 'gropings'
- BOS discuss Duxbury Beach
- Primary Day Results
- In memory of Barbara Geer Kennedy
- Celebration of Life: John Puopolo
- Duxbury Community Preservation

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Committee Annual Public Forum

• Duxbury athletes named to Winter

All-Star Six

All-Time

- Board of Selectmen Support all Eight CPA articles
- Duxbury Weathers Hurricane Sandy
- Parent Connection Panel Discusses Teen Alcohol and Drug Use
- Duxbury attorney named to Atlantic Symphony Board
- UPDATED: Duxbury serviceman killed in Afghanistan
- Annual banding of the Osprey
- Who knew? Town officials stood by when Troy made statements officials considered to be inaccurate
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