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BY **MARTY PRIMEAU**  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **JOHNNY QUIRIN**

Want to get fit?

## **FOLLOW THE LEADER**

Personal trainers can take your workout regimen to new levels.



**Brian Dokter, 26**  
CoachMeFit  
2166 Wealthy St. SE  
356-2030

**Education:** B.S. in exercise science, Cornerstone University

**Certification:** National Strength and Conditioning Association Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist. High performance sports training.

**Personal achievement:** Finished in top 10 percent in the 2008 Millennium Triathlon.

**Favorite workout:** "I run about five triathalons each summer, so I lift weights and run, and do swimming and spin classes in winter."

It happens every January. Fitness centers and health clubs see a surge in memberships as well-intentioned folks try to make good on their New Year's resolutions.

They sign up, invest in workout attire, and head to gyms stocked with free weights, treadmills and Bosu balls.

By March, however, most become sore and weary — especially if they're not seeing dramatic results. Attendance begins to slide until the whole fitness venture is merely a memory.

Sound familiar?

Don't give up. Hire a personal trainer, a guru who will evaluate your needs, design an individualized exercise program and supervise your workouts.

If thoughts of a meaty body builder come to mind, think again.

"At the YMCA we're rolling out a program to improve awareness of what personal training can do for you," said Gary Strehlke, health and wellness director at the David D. Hunting branch.

"It's not just body building or weight loss. Working one-on-one with a trainer can help anybody improve quality of life."

Personal trainers today are highly skilled professionals certified to work with various types of clients for everything from improving posture to cancer recovery.

Hiring a PT can be pricey: Fees range from \$25 to \$75 an hour. But most clients will show up for a workout if they're paying for the time.

So how do you find a personal trainer?

They're everywhere, from large fitness centers to smaller, private studios. At many places, clients pay by the session instead of a yearly membership.

There are several things to consider. Convenience is key — you're more likely to work out if the facility is close to home or office. Certifications and experience also are important. Get refer-





University, said she tries to be a role model. If she can find time to work out, so can her clients.

Many personal trainers also offer some type of lifestyle coaching.

"If someone is looking to lose weight, about 90 percent is going to be related to diet," Strehlke said. "Most of us aren't dietitians, but we can ask clients to keep a food log and show them how to make better choices."

Functional training is another buzzword in the fitness world.

"We're training your body to do activities you do in everyday life," Strehlke said. Like teaching balance skills to senior citizens, or showing a mom how to properly scoop up her 30-pound toddler.

"It's all about strengthening the body so you don't hurt yourself. Looking good is just the byproduct."

At Full Strength, Steger and Makinen do a lot of bodyweight exercises. And they tend to stay away from machines in favor of stability balls, kettlebells, rings and straps.

"We take a wide-ranging approach," Steger said. "Training should be a straight-forward experience. We like to use the odd piece of equipment."

Brian Dokter, manager and personal trainer at CoachMeFit, says he'll go out and run with clients who want to compete in a 5K race. He also trains marathon runners and triathletes.

"But I also have a 78-year-old client who just wants to stay fit," he said. "We're in the business of helping people achieve their goals — whatever they are."

Crawley, who competes in figure competitions (in which participants are judged on muscular symmetry and tone rather than muscle size) also will incorporate yoga into her training.

"The nice thing about working with a trainer is that you absolve yourself of responsibility," Crawley said. "We have all the tools. You just have to show up."

**GR**

*Marty Primeau is managing editor of Grand Rapids Magazine.*



**Amy Crawley, 31**  
Endurance Fitness Alpine  
1040 Four Mile Road NW  
784-9000

**Education:** Master's in biomedical science, Grand Valley State University. B.S. in exercise science and psychology, University of Nebraska.

**Certification:** Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist, National Strength and Conditioning Association. Certified Personal Trainer. Yogafit certified.

**Personal achievement:** Second place in the 2006 Michigan State Figure Championships.

**Favorite workout:** "Resistance training: I like putting together five to six supersets in a row with no rest. It's a killer conditioning workout. I'm all about getting as much done in the least amount of time possible."