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Exercises for the Under-18 Set

Fit To Be Tried

By GABRIELLE BIRKNER, Special to the Sun | September 8, 2008

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PERSONAL TRAINERS, CUSTOMIZED RUNNING PROGRAMS, AND GROUP fitness classes aren't the exclusive domains of the over-18 set. The city is home to a wide range of creative exercise programs for toddlers, children, and teenagers. Details about several of these programs follow.

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Karma Kids Yoga



Eric Lorenz students participating in a group fitness class at Karma Kids on West 14th Street.

For the city's youngest yogis, there's Karma Kids Yoga — a West Village yoga studio that offers parent-child programs for infants and drop-off classes for children ages 3 to 18.

Children learn yoga movements through a variety of games and role-playing activities, according to the studio manager of Karma Kids, Jessica Carr Phillips. For example, the certified children's yoga instructors may ask students to make barking noises in the basic "downward dog" pose, or to imagine they're smelling flowers during breathing exercises. The

studio also offers private, home-based lessons for up to six people, as well as free "Storytime Yoga" sessions for children ages 5 and younger.

Courses for teenagers closely resemble adult yoga classes, but incorporate more playful music, and have a stronger focus on partner poses and relaxation techniques. "In my life, everything is always go-go-go, and yoga is great for stress," 13-year-old Lauren Gurland, an eighth-grader at the United Nations International School who has been taking classes at Karma Kids for about two years, said. "It gives you this amazing sense of calmness."

104 W. 14th St., 2nd floor, between Sixth and Seventh avenues, 646-638-1444, karmakidsyoga.com, satellite classes on Upper East and Upper West sides and in TriBeCa and Brooklyn, \$25 a class or 10 classes for \$220; parent-baby yoga, \$20 a class or 10 classes for \$180; private lessons, \$100 an hour for up to six participants, family class rates vary.

Kids Fitness NYC

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About three years ago, after fielding a number of calls from parents worried about their children's weight, personal trainer Elle Shindler decided to devote herself to training children and teenagers, teaching them in small-group exercise classes at gyms, city parks, and in private homes. "A lot of children were starting school early and ending very late," she said. "Between school and television, computers and Game Boys, they didn't have an outlet for exercise."

Today, Ms. Shindler and her team of instructors train some 150 clients ages 7 to 17, working with them to assess their fitness levels and goals, and to develop age-appropriate exercise regimens that take into account youngsters' preferences. Sessions may include hopping in a potato sack, jumping rope, and variations on yoga and Pilates exercises.

For more information, call 212-396-3478 or visit kidsfitnessnyc.com.

Personal training sessions, \$85 a child; home- or gym-based group sessions, \$30 a child, with a minimum of five children.

Mighty Milers

This academic year, tens of thousands of elementary- and middle-school students will be coached to run or walk upwards of a half-mile several times a week, with the goal of incrementally covering at least 26.2 miles, or the distance of marathon. The Mighty Milers training program, sponsored by the New York Road Runners Foundation, is provided free of charge to more than 150 city elementary schools and community centers, including the East River Community Center in Harlem, and the Kips Bay Boys & Girls Club in the Castle Hill section of the Bronx. During the 2007-08 school year, participants ran a total of nearly 850,000 miles.

The foundation also hosts quarterly Youth Track & Field Jamborees, public events that are open to families with children ages 4 to 15; the next Jamboree will be October 18 at Icahn Stadium on Randall's Island.

"Our mission is to improve the physical fitness, emotional well-being, and personal achievement" of city youth, particularly in underserved communities, the organization's executive director, Cliff Sperber, told The New York Sun.

For more information about its free youth fitness programs, call the New York City Road Runners Foundation at 212-423-2227 or visit nyrrf.org.

Lava

The all-female dance and theater troupe Lava offers small group fitness classes for children ages 3 to 12, as well as for adults, at its Prospect Heights studio. Over the course of 10 weeks, youth program participants will learn Lava's artistic brand of tumbling, trapeze, and inversions. These mixed-level classes meet once a week, and parents and friends are invited to watch the final session. The studio also offers courses for toddlers and their caregivers, as well as free, weekly "open workouts," during which youngsters can practice what they learned in class. Fall classes begin September 17.

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524 Bergen St., between Sixth and Carlton avenues, 718-399-3161, lavalove.org, \$195 for a 10-class session.

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