

# Local Health Clubs Using Group Exercise to Spark Motivation, by Mark Sutro

By Mark Sutro, Co-Founder, CRUfit Montclair

Recent statistics show that 69 percent of the U.S. adult population is overweight. Not only is the overweight rate high, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the rate has been moving in the wrong direction for many years. Higher rates of metabolic disorders, heart disease and other medical conditions are correlated with being overweight. Beyond the medical issues, Americans seem to understand that a more active lifestyle will likely lead to more quality years of life. According to one 2012 study, 81 percent of the U.S. population wants to be more active in some way. Despite the facts, IHRSA (a fitness industry association) reports that health club members represent only 17 percent of the U.S. population. Unfortunately, clubs have historically done a better job of serving those who are fit as opposed to those who are out-of-shape and most in need of assistance. Three key reasons may explain why commercial health clubs have not connected with those who are most in need:

- **Convenience:** Historically there have not been enough attractive health club options near to where people live. If the location is not convenient, those who are not highly motivated will not join.
- **Lack of Community Connection:** Health clubs have done a poor job of connecting members with one another and with their trainers to create a friendly social environment which embraces newcomers. Poorly connected members do not persist.
- **Training Options:** Self-paced training does not work for the novice, personal training is too expensive to be sustainable for most and group exercise classes are often not a comfortable place for the poorly conditioned.

When you ask people what they want when they join a gym, you commonly get answers like “to lose weight,” “to get in shape” or “to improve my health.” They want results. But people are social creatures. What those who are not yet aboard the fitness train really need is social connection and inspiration to spark their motivation. During my eleven years in health and fitness, the most powerful social connection and inspiration I have seen has come in a group exercise setting. The inspiration starts with an outstanding trainer and is amplified by the personalities of the participants. In this scenario, inspiration and social connections grow and feed each other as the training group matures from session to session. When you ask enthusiastic club members what they are going to do at their health club today, you will get answers like “train with my friends.” Well-connected members will stick with their commitment longer, train more frequently and realize better results.

Help is on the way. Local, small-footprint clubs have begun to spring up all over the country. These clubs are responding to the market demand for Convenience, Community Connection and more approachable

Training Options. Group Exercise in a friendly, inclusive social environment is the common thread that runs through many of the new breed neighborhood clubs.

*CRUfit Montclair is part of the new breed. Opening in October 2013 at 6125 Medau Place, CRUfit's team of experienced training leaders will offer a variety of group exercise programs geared to meet the needs of all ages and fitness levels. See [www.crufit.net](http://www.crufit.net) for more information.*