



PHOTO BY GLENN COOK, SAINT CITY NEWS

Jada Avon runs Back Yard Boot Camps, a fitness company based in St. Albert. Her company provides intense workouts for people getting into a new fitness routine.

Boot camp a fun way to keep fit

by GLENN COOK

Saint City News

There are boot camps out there for more experienced fitness freaks, but what Back Yard Boot Camps offers is more like basic training.

Back Yard Boot Camps is the brainchild of St. Albert single mom Jada Avon, who said that, while the workouts are intense, they're geared towards people who are just starting on their journey to fitness.

"A lot of people feel they have to get in shape or lose weight before starting a boot camp," she said. "I wanted to have that boot camp that starts them off. We do see a lot of results. ... I didn't go into boot camps thinking I would target beginners; it just happened by accident, but I'm very pleased with it."

Avon got started in the boot camp business this past winter with her brother Jeff when they ran a trial session and found that "it was a lot of fun," and decided to go full-bore in the spring.

"Both of us had lost some weight between the two of us, and we knew that boot camps were starting to become a trend, so we thought we would give it a try," she said.

Since then, the response has been overwhelming — Avon runs classes six days a week, and is always looking to add more.

"Over the summer, I felt really bad — I had to turn people away," she said. "I'm a single parent, but I wasn't working any other job; this was my main focus. And I was able to ... accommodate people."

But, as much as she would like to see the bottom line met, the real measure of success for her is seeing her clients, who span a wide range of ages, reach their goals.

"That is my favourite thing, because I know where they're coming from — I've been overweight, I've struggled with my weight after having three kids," Avon said. "To see these people ... encourage each other and high-five each other after a workout, come and say 'I've lost six pounds!' and everyone's cheering them on, I love it."

Balancing boot camps with raising her kids can be tricky sometimes, but

With "boot camp" in the name, though, there's still the misconception that the classes are led by a drill sergeant barking instructions for an hour. But Avon said that's certainly not the case.

"I've had a lot of people phone me

up and say, 'Am I going to puke? Are you going to yell at me? Are we going to carry heavy tires and logs?'" she said.

"For me, it's just a bunch of women getting together — a lot of them complain, and it's hilarious. We laugh," she added. "They'll complain as they're working out, but when they're done, they say, 'That felt great.'"

But participants do need some toughness, as Back Yard Boot Camps run year-round. Avon said that, if the temperature drops below a certain point, she'll rent out a church basement, but otherwise, she and her troops are out there in the snow.

As for the future, Avon said she'd like to see Back Yard Boot Camps taking over green spaces all over St. Albert, but she wants to make sure the program is in ship shape when they do.

"I'd love to get little Back Yard Boot Camps in all the little fields in St. Albert, all over the place," she said. "And I would love to run all of them, because I would want them done the way we are doing them."

Back Yard Boot Camps can be reached by phone at 780-915-3071 or by email at jjsbackyardbootcamp@gmail.com. You can also visit their website at www.backyardbootcamp.ca.