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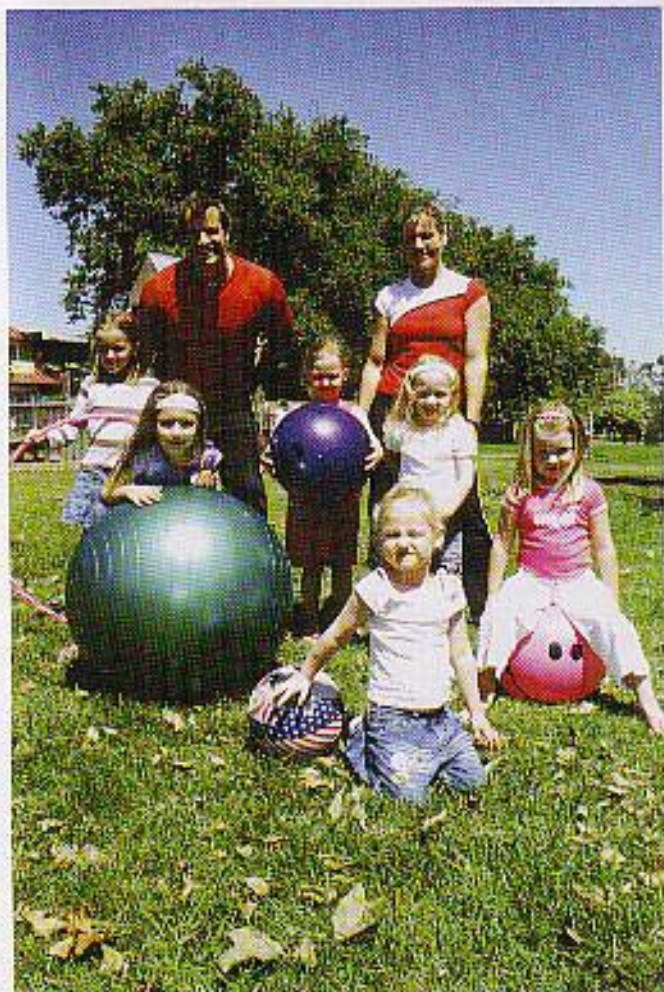
From meetings in the boardroom to **meeting in the park...**

For Simone Minett days used to be about office meetings, e-mail in-boxes filled to the brim, tight deadlines, political power plays and lots of caffeine to stay awake. Nine years later, Simone has waved goodbye to the fast-paced corporate world of business and marketing to embrace a new career in fitness and, with it, many new and interesting challenges.

For the last six years of her office career, Simone worked in the alcohol industry developing and marketing new alcoholic drinks such as Sky Blue vodka, lime and soda. Changing from the alcohol to fitness industry proved quite a leap as well as a paradox. Keeping fit had always been a personal passion of Simone's however, as was her desire to do something about the increasingly sedentary lifestyle of today's youth and the resulting rapid rise in childhood obesity.

Back to school

With a marketing degree but no official qualifications in fitness, Simone's first goal was to go back and study. After researching all available options Simone chose the Fitnation Certificate III and IV in Fitness. The course was exactly what she was looking for in terms of convenience and flexibility and could be completed at her own pace, from home, while still having easy access to knowledgeable staff and small group clinics. The material covered by this program was extremely comprehensive. To further develop skills specific to exercise and children, Simone completed Personal Training for Children (Prestige PT) and Designing Kids Fitness Programs (Fitnation), both Fitness Australia and VicFit accredited courses.



With qualifications complete, Simone developed Fitnesswork Pty Ltd, in order to help Australian children and families see the benefits, and experience the fun, of an active and healthy lifestyle. Fitnesswork is comprised of two core services: a mobile program for schools, and a family fitness centre.

Simone explains: "Regular physical activity is part of a child's foundation for a long, healthy life. Helping children adopt a healthy lifestyle early will have a tremendous impact on their physical, intellectual, emotional and social development. Fitnesswork for Schools is all about making fitness fun, and offering children of varying levels of fitness and skill an alternative to sport-specific

activity. Sport is not for everyone – but physical activity needs to be a regular part of a child's life."

The specialised Fitnessworx activity programs cater for children and adolescents, from pre-school through to secondary school. The programs may not be sport-oriented, but are designed to encourage fitness improvement and increased exercise. The sessions improve and/or teach: concentration and learning ability; cardiovascular fitness; hand-eye co-ordination; fundamental motor skills; confidence and self-esteem; team and social skills; increased energy; running technique; posture and weight management.

"The reason why a lot of young children shy away from sport and 'accidentally' leave their sports uniforms at home is not so much due to a fear of being active but rather a fear of competition and the competitive nature of team sports," says Simone. "Many believe that they never developed the basic skills such as hand-eye coordination when they were younger and don't want to stand out or let the team down."

"Fitnessworx allows schools the opportunity to provide these children with a non-sport specific alternative that focuses on non-competitive exercise and just being active and having fun."

The mobile program will be offered to schools and can be conducted as an extra-curricular activity or incorporated into an existing program or curriculum.

One on One and beyond

Fitnessworx also offers one-on-one personal training for children and adolescents, and small group or family sessions. "We have even had some teachers from the schools get together and book in small group personal training sessions during their lunch breaks to ensure they are still able to fit exercise into their busy lifestyles," adds Simone.

"Parent and child sessions are also becoming very popular and are a fun and interactive way to get families more active and aware of fun games that they can take away to play with their children in their own time."

Schools have offered these sessions to their broader school community and have found them a great way to involve and educate the parents on the benefits of regular exercise. These sessions tend to run on weekends, but can also be offered before and after school.

Presentations to school groups are also offered and include topics such as 'the benefits of exercise' and 'dealing with exam stress'.

The Fitnessworx school's program will commence officially in 2005. Simone has been doing some trial sessions and says she is very excited about the year ahead. "It is so enjoyable to see young children playing, being active, throwing and kicking balls, dancing, jumping, boxing, laughing and just having a lot of fun," she says.

The second component to Fitnessworx is the family fitness centre. "Busy lifestyles and the demands of a young family often make it hard to fit in exercise. This centre will cater to everyone's fitness and development needs from infants through to parents. It will not only be a convenient exercise solution for the busy family, but a place that people will want to come to for the great facilities and safe, encouraging environment," says Simone.

Specialised exercise programs have been scientifically developed and pre-planned to cater for infants through to adolescents and their parents. The sessions focus on: early childhood development, the teaching of fundamental motor skills and developing general fitness. Explains Simone: "It is important to remember that young children do not naturally develop fundamental motor skills – they need to be taught, and this can begin from the age of three months. The centre will also provide a range of alternative activities for the older children and young adults such as teen yoga, aerodance and boxercise."

The centre itself has an area dedicated to young children that is safe, soft and colourful, with loads of interactive pieces and play

items to inspire children to be active. The area for young adults and parents is comprised of a stylish and modern fitness studio/boutique gym.

Simone says: "Children and adolescents can develop an enthusiasm for exercise, build confidence and self-esteem, interact with others, improve their health and fitness but most importantly be encouraged to



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create a lifestyle habit of regular physical activity and general wellbeing in their early years that can be carried through into adult life." The first Fitnessworx centre is due to open in Melbourne in early 2005.

No regrets

Simone continues: "Boardroom meetings that last hours and go nowhere, advertising agencies delivering a pitch that does not meet the brief and countless debates over the correct PM5 colour to use for a new bottle label have happily become a distant memory and have been replaced with very early mornings, learning how to record and keep produce BAS statements and deal with councils on policies and legislations. So, whilst the challenges have changed they are challenges all the same and to be honest there are probably more challenges requiring a broader knowledge base when it comes to setting up your own business. However, when you get to work with children outside in the fresh air, watching them develop their skill set and their confidence, hearing them laugh and interact with others and just enjoy physical activity, it is all worth while."

Leaving the security of the corporate world is a risk that is too great for many people to take, but Simone says she would do it all over again if given the chance. "It is all about finding something you enjoy and a subject on which you are passionate, the rest is easy (well sort of)," she laughs.

To register the interest of your school, or to enquire about the location of the first Fitnessworx family fitness centre, please contact the Fitnessworx office on (03) 9531 6923 or simone@fitnessworx.com.au

If you are a personal trainer or teacher and are keen to work with children and be involved in this exciting venture, contact Fitnessworx to discuss existing opportunities. For information on Fitness Courses for Instructors visit www.fitnessworx.com.au