



'This isn't just about exercise'

Jennifer Burden
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At first, urban poling was a way for Terri Lawlor to exercise and keep herself busy in retirement; now it has become a way of living.

The Kanata woman joined Nordic Walkfit, a Kanata urban poling group, a little over a year ago after attending a free clinic with Wendi Patterson, the group's leader.

"I haven't stopped since," said Lawlor. "It's the best activity, and Wendi is the best instructor."

She said that since she began not only is her health better, but her overall well-being has improved. Lawlor has made great new friends and retirement isn't as lonely as it once was.

Urban poling is a new exercise trend that is growing rapidly in North America. The only equipment needed for the activity is two special urban poles and good pair of walking shoes. It can be done anywhere, whether on a paved street or a beautiful forest path.

Patterson said that two years ago, there were only 50 urban poling instructors in Canada and now there are over 500 spanning the country.

The Kanata Nordic Walkfit program, run by Patterson, has 80 registered members and is continually growing. Patterson's group ranges from ages 30 all the way up to 80.

Urban poling is a great draw for seniors who want to stay healthy and active because it provides a low impact, full-body workout that is easily learned and can be tailored to fit any skill level.

"By using the poles you work about 90 per cent of the muscles in your body instead of just walking," said Patterson, adding that in one mile of walking with poles, you do 1,800 abdominal contractions and 900 lateral muscle contractions.

Patterson also incorporates fundamental exercise techniques throughout the class such as lunges, balance techniques, and core building.

Wayne Moulton, one of the few men in Wendi's classes, said his blood pressure has dropped significantly since he started urban poling. Before urban poling, he was at about 130 over 180 and is now down to 118 over 180.

MAKING FRIENDS

Despite the great health benefits of urban poling, the members of Patterson's level one and two walking group keep coming back because of the social aspect of the activity.

"This isn't just about exercise," said Patterson. "It's about meeting people, making friends, and a healthy lifestyle. It's an enthusiasm to be outdoors and to be with other people."



'This isn't just about exercise'. Wendi Patterson demonstrates balancing skills to her Nordic Walkfit class on Oct. 16 at Riverfront Park. Urban poling is a new exercise trend that is taking off in Kanata. *Jennifer Burden*

Mary Tregunno said that the biggest benefit she has received from urban poling is friendship.

"There's a lot of support here," said Tregunno. "People are going through life changes. They are going into retirement and maybe thought it was the end of the world but we support each other."

With the winter season fast approaching, Patterson's urban poling group is holding their last class on Oct. 30, but that doesn't mean they are done for the season.

Patterson is offering snowshoeing classes starting the second week of January. Anyone interested in getting involved can contact Patterson at 613-832-4407 or visit www.nordicwalkfit.com for more details.

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