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## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY-- THE NEW PRESCRIPTION FOR AGING BOOMER POPULATION

Vintage Fitness, a Toronto based fitness service for adults 50 plus turned two today with an extensive list of programs suited specifically to seniors wanting to address and prevent health concerns. Founder and Director, Erin Billowits, a seasoned athlete and certified personal trainer with specialized accreditation in "older adult fitness", says her company philosophy and approach understands that the needs of older adults encompasses more than just exercise.

Health practitioners and news headlines inundate seniors with warnings about age-related risks of disease and injury and the unequivocal benefits of exercise. In the year 2000, 85 per cent of admissions to Canadian hospitals of people over the age of 65 were due to falls.<sup>1</sup> Conversely, an eight year study of nearly 7300 women ages 40 to 65 found that women who exercised vigorously for 90 minutes a week had a 30 to 40 per cent lower risk of heart attack than sedentary women.

"Older adults are generally well educated about their health issues, " explains thirty-four year-old Billowits, whose interest in fitness began as a teenager and has lead to boxing and running marathons. "Aging adults need the reassurance of one-on-one attention from a certified personal trainer. Most fear they will injure themselves if they initiate an exercise regimen on their own. They also seek an opportunity to interact with others. We offer both the physical and social elements they need within a framework catering exclusively to their age group."

Billowits, a certified fitness instructor for more than a decade, has a specialized accreditation in "older adult fitness". The credential separates her from other trainers with specific knowledge of medical conditions more likely to affect seniors such as osteoporosis, heart disease and arthritis. Her training makes her more attentive to the symptoms of such diseases and able to modify exercises appropriately.

"It's encouraging to see retirement residences support and facilitate exercise for their tenants," says Billowits. "Adult children of aging parents are pleasantly surprised to see fitness memberships and exercise rooms available. Gift certificates of personal training sessions are a popular incentive to get exercise routines established."

Billowits has trained clients ranging from aged 65 to 79, all with varying ailments or reasons to start exercising. After replacing both knees and suffering a heart attack, the doctor of a 79 year old client commented on how significantly her heart had strengthened since implementing a fitness program with Billowits. A 66 year old woman who started exercise following the death of her husband was feeling isolated and worried that she wouldn't have enough energy to play with her grandchildren. Exercising with Billowits has created a new network of friends and the endurance of a super granny.