

Group Fitness Classes Welcome Safety Protocols



Faten Faraj of Springfield makes fitness a priority, even during a pandemic. The first-time BodyPump student at Providence RECenter says a friend encouraged her to sign up. She says she is impressed with the Park Authority's COVID-19 safety protocols that include a large fitness room, small class size to enable appropriate social distancing, temperature checks and frequent cleaning.

"The safety precautions are good," she said as she prepared for her third class. "We are only six people here, and it feels like you're in a personalized class! I'm ready to register for the next session."

Across the room are classmates Anna and Scott Toney, a husband-and-wife team from Springfield. The longtime BodyPump participants carefully considered their choice to workout in a public facility. Ultimately, they decided that the benefits of regular exercise outweighed any pandemic-related concerns.

"You have to be cautious, but if you're a healthy person, then it's better to keep moving and exercise," Scott Toney said. "Otherwise, you're sitting around and not being healthy, and that's worse."

Research shows that regular exercises reduces stress and boosts the immune system, and mask wearing reduces the risk of spreading germs. Since widespread mask mandates went into effect in Virginia, Toney says he's noticed his health has actually improved.

"I usually get a cold three or four times a year," he said. "Since the pandemic and mask-wearing and social distancing, I have been healthy all year."

To help assure safety, RECenter visitors are required to wear a mask at all times except when actively exercising. For social distancing reasons, visitors are limited only to those who are registered for a class or those who have a reservation for the pool or fitness room, and every part of the facility is sanitized between classes and reservation times.

"I think they're doing a good job," Anna Toney said. "Once you're in, you can see how safe it is."



COVID-19 safety protocols are the same at all nine Park Authority RECenters. To find a fitness class near you, turn to the Exercise and Fitness section. To make a fitness room or pool reservation, call the RECenter of your choice or reserve a time online: www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/recenter.

WINTER CAMPS TO CHANGE WITH THE TIMES

For years, campers have enjoyed the fun and excitement Park Authority winter break camps have offered while school is out. This year will be no exception with a lineup of specialty camps for children ages 5 and older. All camps will be conducted with appropriate social distancing and other pandemic-related safety recommendations.

"Our camp staff has worked very hard to establish new safety practices that would enable us to offer winter break camp programs in accordance with current state and federal health guidelines," said Youth Services Section Manager Ellen Werthmann. "Enrollment will be limited to enable appropriate social distancing, and masks will be required for non-athletic indoor camps, but there will be no limit on fun!"

Camps offer an important educational, social and emotional outlet for children, and staff members are looking forward to seeing campers learn new skills, make new friends and have fun. Werthmann says this year's winter break camps are sure to be especially meaningful for campers after being at home in front of a computer for so long.

"We know the situation is fluid, and our ability to offer camps may change as a result of changing public health concerns," Werthmann said. "For now, our plan is to offer winter break camps that are both fun and enriching while ensuring safety and well-being for campers and staff. Online camps are also being offered to give families a variety of options.

In the event camps are canceled for pandemic-related reasons, customers will receive a refund to their account with no cancellation penalty. To register, visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes or call (703) 222-4664.

For a quick look at in-person and virtual Park Authority winter break camps, turn to the Camps section.

