



Resist-A-Ball founders Stephanie and Mike Morris are launching a new health club concept in Youngsville.

Photo by Robin May

Coming Full Circle

Local fitness experts Mike and Stephanie Morris bring their unique training approach to Sugar Mill Pond. By Lisa Hanchey

Mike and Stephanie Morris have come full circle from Opelousas to Florida and back to launch their fitness business, Full Circle Health. Now, the power couple is expanding to fast-growing Youngsville with their latest venture — Full Circle Health at Sugar Mill Pond. In addition to offering state-of-the-art workout equipment, this unique fitness studio will feature special programs that are new to Acadiana.

The couple grew up in Opelousas, but followed separate paths after graduation. Stephanie went to LSU/UNO, where she received her bachelor's degree in health and physical education with a concentration in dance. Mike played football at Nicholls State University, obtaining a degree in general studies. While Stephanie applied her PE and dance training to a career in fitness and wellness, Mike used his people skills to sell and market copiers.

In 1981, the couple was reintroduced by Mike's college roommate, who is Stephanie's brother. Mike and Stephanie married six weeks later. He packed up his belongings in Palm Beach, Fla., and moved back to Opelousas.

Stephanie convinced Mike to go back to his first love, sports, and join her at the gym where she was working. "From the time I got out of high school, I always had the idea that I wanted to open up a health club," Mike recalls. In 1983, the two opened their first gym, Opelousas Fitness Center, followed by clubs in Breaux Bridge, Eunice and New Iberia.

After relocating to Destin, Fla., the couple continued in the health club business

at Sandestin and Seaside. During this time, they created the first stability ball exercise program called Resist-A-Ball. The Morris took the oversized ball and ran with it, launching a world-wide fitness craze. They presented workshops and classes at fitness conferences for Resist-A-Ball across the U.S. and Canada, as well as Portugal, Spain, Italy and Taiwan. "We were invited to teach all these trainers core work, cardio, strength training with free weights on the ball, yoga, pilates — you name it, we did it," Stephanie says.

The couple returned to Opelousas in 2003, continuing their Resist-A-Ball business until they sold the concept to Mad Dogg Athletics, home of the Spinning brand, in 2009. That year, Opelousas General Health System hired the couple to create a wellness program for its 1,000-plus employees. In August, Mike and Stephanie received the 2009 Lifetime Achievement Award by the Canadian Fitness Professional Association.

While living in Opelousas, the couple noticed the population explosion happening south of Lafayette, and Mike saw an opportunity to launch a new fitness concept at the growing Youngsville subdivision Sugar Mill Pond. "We saw what happened at River Ranch, and I think that the same thing is going to happen at Sugar Mill Pond," Mike says. "And there are a lot of other subdivisions that wrap around this place."

The couple leased out 5,060 square feet at the Waterhouse building in Sugar Mill Pond for their new fitness training studio, Full Circle Health. The health club will consist of a workout room with Cybex state-of-the-art strength and cardio equip-

ment, including the new total body ARC Trainer, a cross-trainer offering a variety of high-intensity programs with low impact training. Full Circle Health will also offer group exercise classes, personal training and massage therapy. "This is really like a fitness studio more than it is a health club," Mike explains. "I think we are going to present something a little different than your typical health club."

Full Circle Health will introduce a unique training approach to Acadiana. Members will undergo a full assessment consisting of a body composition test and comparative assessment of joint mobility. Then, they will receive a customized program based on their individual assessments and goals. Patrons also have the option to take part in special programs including Muscle Activation Techniques, MYZONE and Kranking. Mike is currently undergoing an intense 10-month training program in Dallas to become a certified specialist in Greg Roskopf's Muscle Activation Techniques, which is designed to evaluate and treat neuromuscular imbalances that cause pain and limit performance. MAT is unique in that it addresses muscle weakness rather than muscle tightness. The three-part MAT process begins with a joint-specific range of motion exam. Next is the muscle test, which employs isolated muscle strength tests to identify positions of instability. At the final step, MAT trainers treat the neurological connection by "jump starting the muscle," using corrective isometrics and precision manual therapy techniques. "When we find a weak muscle, we go to the muscle's attachment on the bone," Mike explains. "Then, we actually scrub the bone — it's

called a palpation. The scrubbing kind of 'wakes' the central nervous system. Then, we go back and look at the range of motion. From there, we know which side's got a little bit of tweaking to do. What it does is that it enhances performance."

Once Mike becomes certified, he will be only the second MAT specialist in the state. His stepson Wesley Kretschmer and niece Allie Dupuis are also in the process of becoming MAT-certified. All three are scheduled to complete the program in April and take the certification exam in July. "There are only about 1,000 MAT specialists in the U.S.," Mike says. "So, we are on the ground floor of what I think is a whole new modality with a specific process that can restore muscle function and help many people."

Another new system offered at Full Circle is MYZONE. During workouts, users wear a MYZONE heart rate strap to monitor all concerted physical activity in real time, allowing them to view their progress in their personal account. This innovative wireless heart rate system monitors heart rate, calories burned, intensity and duration. MYZONE can also be used outside of the gym to track and monitor other physical activities.

The Morris hope to introduce their new fitness concept to Acadiana in January 2012. "This is my big question, 'Is exercise really helping you, or is it hindering you or developing compensation patterns?'" Mike says. "If we can find the things that aren't working and get them working, then we can eliminate the inflammation response, restore muscle function and improve the communication between the muscular system and the central nervous system." 